

Rebuilding from the Ashes: Drawing Lessons from Past Wars to Address the Consequences of Russia's Aggression in Ukraine



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War and conflict have devastating consequences for societies, leaving behind destruction, human suffering, and long-lasting negative impacts. Countries with a history of war offer valuable lessons on how to address and mitigate these impacts. By examining their experiences, policymakers can gain insight into effective strategies to rebuild shattered societies, promote reconciliation, ensure justice, and foster peace.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine launched in 2014 imposed significant human, economic, and social costs on the affected regions. In navigating the aftermath of this conflict, Ukraine and the international community have drawn on the experiences of countries with a history of war. These experiences have informed approaches to post-conflict reconstruction, reconciliation efforts, transitional justice, diplomatic engagement, and international support.

It is, therefore, crucial to examine the lessons learned from countries that have experienced war in the past and how these lessons have been applied in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. By analyzing the strategies and measures implemented, one can better understand how countries have dealt with the negative effects of war and conflict, and adapt these lessons to the specific dynamics and challenges faced in Ukraine.

PREVENTING WARS SHOULD BE A TOP PRIORITY

Beyond simple finger-pointing and feeble sanctions, the international community must take a proactive and forceful approach to prevent wars¹. Timely and deci-

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COUNTRIES WITH A HISTORY OF WAR OFFER VALUABLE LESSONS ON HOW TO ADDRESS AND MITIGATE THESE IMPACTS

sive actions are crucial to deter potential aggressors and promote peace and stability. Early warning systems can be developed and improved to help identify potential war escalations at an early stage, enabling quick responses and diplomatic interventions before the situation worsens.

Mediation and diplomatic efforts can help disputing parties communicate and open the way for peaceful negotiations. Finding solutions that are acceptable to all parties can depend on the active involvement of impartial mediators. In cases where sanctions are deemed necessary, the international community should implement them effectively and target key actors responsible for aggression.

Another key tool here is diplomatic pressure and isolation. The former can be applied through various means, including diplomatic statements, resolutions, and joint declarations by the international community. Meanwhile, isolating aggressors

¹ <https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/46153/stop-ping-the-war-is-the-absolute-priority>



TIMELY AND DECISIVE ACTIONS ARE CRUCIAL TO DETER POTENTIAL AGGRESSORS AND PROMOTE PEACE AND STABILITY

politically and diplomatically can send powerful signals and discourage further aggression.

Equally important is deploying peacekeeping missions to help stabilize conflict zones and create conditions for peaceful dialogue. Simultaneously, supporting peacebuilding initiatives can address the root causes of conflicts and foster long-term stability.

It is also crucial to strengthen and support collective security mechanisms – such as regional organizations and international alliances. As a result, it may create a united front against aggression and promote stability.

The international community must consistently uphold international law and norms, including respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, and human rights. Impunity for aggression should be challenged. Apart

from that, investing in conflict resolution and peace building training for diplomats, mediators, and peacekeepers can enhance their effectiveness in addressing conflicts. Engaging in public diplomacy and raising awareness about the consequences of aggression can garner public support for peaceful resolutions and encourage leaders to pursue non-violent means. Furthermore, reflecting on past conflicts and learning from their failures and successes can inform better strategies for preventing future conflicts.

Overall, preventing wars is a shared responsibility of the international community. By taking proactive, coordinated, and decisive actions, the world can send powerful signals to potential aggressors and create an environment conducive to peace, stability, and conflict prevention.

As the world community witnessed, peace negotiations facilitated by EU countries and institutions have not been able to prevent wars in the cases of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as between Russia and Ukraine. The conflicts in these regions have proved to be highly complex and challenging to resolve through conservative diplomatic means alone.

The international community employed diplomatic channels to prevent the Ukraine conflict, urging dialogue and peaceful solutions. Sanctions were imposed on Russia for its annexation of Crimea. However, tensions escalated, leading to violence.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS SHOULD KEEP A WATCHFUL EYE ON WARS

Observing wars closely and building pressure on conflicting parties through international institutions plays a crucial role in minimizing the commission of war crimes and human rights abuses. Monitoring and



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holding parties accountable for their actions during conflicts can act as a deterrent and promote adherence to international humanitarian law and human rights standards. International institutions, human rights organizations, and independent observers can document and gather evidence of potential war crimes and human rights abuses. This evidence can be crucial for holding perpetrators accountable and supporting future prosecutions².

Moreover, publicizing information about war crimes and human rights violations can raise awareness and generate international pressure to stop such actions. Media coverage and reports from reputable organizations can help mobilize public opinion and diplomatic responses.

For example, there were numerous reports of human rights abuses, war crimes, and attacks on civilians during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. These allegations have been documented by international human rights organizations and media outlets.

International organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have conducted investigations and documented incidents of war crimes, including attacks on civilian targets, extrajudicial killings, and allegations of torture and ill-treatment. These organizations have called for accountability and investigations into potential violations of international humanitarian law during the conflict.

Pressure from the international community (including calls for investigations and accountability for potential war crimes) can play a critical role in deterring further crimes and holding perpetrators accountable. The United Nations, the European Union, and other regional bodies have also condemned the violence and called for a peaceful resolution to the conflict³.

Furthermore, international institutions can impose targeted sanctions on individuals or entities involved in war crimes. Establishing accountability mechanisms, such as international tribunals or commissions of inquiry, can also deter potential perpetrators. In addition, independent fact-finding missions can be deployed to investigate allegations of war crimes and gather unbiased information about the situation on the ground.

² Karreth, J. and J. Tir (2012) "International Institutions and Civil War Prevention", [in]: *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 75, No. 1, pp. 96–109.

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/30/nagorno-karabakh-un-urges-ceasefire-as-azerbaijan-and-armenia-dismiss-talks>

Similarly, international institutions and diplomatic efforts can engage with conflicting parties to remind them of their obligations under international law and the potential consequences of committing war crimes. Observing wars closely can also help identify situations where civilians are at risk, enabling the international community to take measures to protect civilian populations from harm.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING OPEN CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CONFLICTING PARTIES AND INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

Observing wars without having a much-needed influence over the conflicting sides will hardly bring any meaningful results. For these and many other reasons, maintaining open channels of communication between conflicting parties and international actors is crucial, especially during times of war. Open communication can play a significant role in mitigating hostilities, reducing misunderstandings, and creating opportunities for dialogue and negotiation⁴.

Moreover, open communication allows conflicting parties to share information and concerns, which can help manage crises and prevent misunderstandings that may escalate tensions. Furthermore, open channels of communication provide opportunities for diplomatic engagement and mediation, allowing external actors and mediators to facilitate dialogue and peace talks. During wars, open communication is also essential for facilitating humanitarian access to affected populations, ensuring the delivery of aid, and protecting civilians.

⁴ Schech, S. (2022) "Assembling Humanitarianism in the Cold War: The Role of the Red Cross in the Bay of Pigs Prisoner Exchange", [in]: *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 78, pp. 1-11.



IN THE CASE OF UKRAINE, COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS HAVE EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE'S SOVEREIGNTY AND HAVE IMPOSED SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA TO DISCOURAGE FURTHER AGGRESSION

Additionally, it allows parties to signal their intentions, willingness to negotiate, or seek a temporary cessation of hostilities. Miscommunication or misinterpretation of actions, on the other hand, can lead to unintended escalations. Open communication helps clarify intentions and actions to avoid misunderstandings.

Open channels can facilitate prisoner exchanges during wars. One real-life example of prisoner exchanges facilitated by open channels was during the 2020

Nagorno-Karabakh war. Azerbaijan and Armenia, with the help of Russia as a mediator, exchanged prisoners of war and bodies of soldiers following the cease-fire agreement reached in November 2020. The open channels of communication enabled the parties to coordinate the logistics and ensure the safe and timely exchange of prisoners.

In this regard, the United Nations and Turkey's mediation in the grain and prisoner exchange deals between Russia and Ukraine has played an important role in the ongoing conflict. The grain deal allowed Ukraine to ship its grain through the Black Sea to Turkey, while the prisoner exchange saw almost 300 people released⁵.

History, politics, and geopolitical considerations all play a role in whether or not Russia and Ukraine are willing to negotiate. For Ukraine, the territorial integrity is a red line, whereas Russia considers strategic interests most important.

In today's world, preventing wars must take precedence as an overarching goal. The echoes of past conflicts remind us of the catastrophic toll wars exact on humanity – loss of lives, economic setbacks, and long-lasting trauma.

DID THE WESTERN WORLD SHOW ENOUGH SOLIDARITY?

However, when wars can be prevented, we must clearly show our support to the victims and act based on our lessons learned from the past conflicts. Countries facing aggression benefit from international support and solidarity. The lessons from past conflicts emphasize the significance of forming alliances, building coalitions,

⁵ <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/03/10/turkey-as-an-ally-and-a-mediator-in-the-russia-ukraine-war-what-does-it-want-from-it/>



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and garnering international backing to exert pressure on aggressors. In the case of Ukraine, countries and organizations have expressed support for Ukraine's sovereignty and have imposed sanctions on Russia to discourage further aggression.

According to Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, however, France and Germany were not doing enough to support Ukraine during the conflict with Russia⁶. He has raised concerns about France and Germany's lack of commitment to helping Ukraine win the war. Certainly, however, the question of whether France and Germany were not doing enough to support Ukraine is a matter of interpretation and individual perspective.

⁶ Lili, B. and B.I. Jacopo (2023) "Not as Generous": Polish Leader Hits Germany over Ukraine Support", [in]: *Politico*, March 24. Available [online]: <https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-prime-minister-mateusz-morawiecki-germany-ukraine-support-not-generous/>

Nevertheless, there is no room for interpretation regarding how slow the EU's decision-making process is. It involves multiple layers of bureaucracy and requires consensus among its member states, which can sometimes slow down the decision-making process, particularly in times of crises or emergencies. Given the volatile geopolitical environment, EU leaders can no longer afford to wait for all 27 member states to reach a consensus.

LESSONS SHOULD HAVE BEEN DRAWN FROM THE OCCUPATION OF CRIMEA IN 2014

After the occupation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, there were several aspects where the West faced criticism and scrutiny for their response and actions. Some of the points that have been raised as areas where the West could have done things differently or acted stronger include military support to Ukraine, NATO enlargement, proactive diplomacy, strengthening multilateral institutions, norm reinforcement, balancing pragmatism, and principles etc. There were calls for more substantial military aid, including advanced weaponry, to help Ukraine defend its territorial integrity⁷.

The issue of NATO enlargement was brought to the fore following the annexation of Crimea. While some argued that expanding NATO membership to Ukraine could have deterred Russian aggression, others warned that such a move could escalate tensions and further antagonize Russia⁸.

⁷ Bartles, C. K., and R.N. McDermott (2014) "Russia's Military Operation in Crimea: Road-Testing Rapid Reaction Capabilities", [in]: *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 61, No. 6, pp. 46-63.

⁸ Ted, C. (2022) Many Predicted NATO Expansion Would Lead to War. Those Warnings Were Ignored. Available [online]: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2022/feb/28/nato-expansion-war-russia-ukraine>



GIVEN THE VOLATILE GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT, EU LEADERS CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO WAIT FOR ALL 27 MEMBER STATES TO REACH A CONSENSUS

Diplomatic efforts, in particular, should be proactive and ongoing to prevent and resolve conflicts. Engaging in dialogue and negotiations early on can help prevent escalation and promote peaceful resolutions in new war zones. Moreover, the Crimea situation exposed the limitations of existing multilateral institutions in addressing the crisis effectively. Lessons should be applied to strengthen international organizations and mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution.

A serious weakness was also seen in the field of upholding international norms and principles – such as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. The international community should reinforce these norms and hold violators accountable. Addressing new war zones also requires a delicate balance between pragmatic responses to prevent further escalation and upholding principles of international law and human rights.



IN NEW WAR ZONES, TIMELY AND ADEQUATE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IS CRUCIAL TO ADDRESS IMMEDIATE NEEDS AND PROMOTE RECOVERY

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE YUGOSLAV WARS?

After the Yugoslav Wars, there were several areas where the international community, including the West, faced criticism for their response to dealing with the negative impacts of war and conflict. Examining some of them could help in dealing with the negative impacts of the Russian occupation of Ukraine.

The international response to the Yugoslav Wars was criticized for being slow and fragmented. Delays in taking action to address the humanitarian crisis and establish peacekeeping missions contributed to prolonged suffering. In new war zones, a more coordinated and timely response is essential to address urgent humanitarian needs and prevent further escalation.

Another example of failure was the lack of robust peacekeeping. The inadequacy of

peacekeeping efforts during the Yugoslav Wars allowed atrocities and ethnic cleansing to continue. In new war zones, there should be a focus on robust and effective peacekeeping missions to protect civilians and stabilize the situation⁹.

Equally problematic was the insufficient humanitarian aid to the affected areas. The response to the humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars was criticized for not providing sufficient aid to those affected by the conflict¹⁰. In new war zones, timely and adequate humanitarian assistance is crucial to address immediate needs and promote recovery.

It is important that accountability and justice proceedings are not delayed. The pursuit of justice and accountability for war crimes committed during the Yugoslav Wars faced significant delays. In the Ukraine and other possible war zones, efforts should be made to establish mechanisms for accountability and ensure that perpetrators of war crimes are held responsible.

Furthermore, post-conflict reconstruction efforts in the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars were slow and encountered numerous challenges. The conflicts in the former Yugoslavia resulted in extensive destruction of infrastructure, loss of life, and deep-seated ethnic tensions, making the reconstruction process complex and protracted. Critical infrastructure (including roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and utilities) was severely damaged during the wars in the former Yugoslavia¹¹. The extent of the destruction necessitated a sig-

⁹ <https://www.cfr.org/excerpt-world-and-yugoslavia-as-wars>

¹⁰ Talbot, K. (2000) "The Real Reasons for War in Yugoslavia: Backing up Globalization with Military Might". [in:] *Social Justice*, Vol. 27, No. 4, pp. 94-116.

¹¹ Mandelbaum, M. (1999) "A Perfect Failure: NATO's War against Yugoslavia". [in:] *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 5, pp. 2-8.



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nificant investment of time and resources, which prolonged the total reconstruction effort.

Conflict-related economic devastation caused significant unemployment, widespread poverty, and unstable economies in the afflicted nations. It was difficult and time-consuming to rebuild the economies and provide possibilities for sustainable livelihoods. Consequently, it also resulted in large-scale population displacement and refugee flows¹². Providing assistance and support to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, and facilitating their

return and reintegration added complexity to the reconstruction efforts.

Deep-seated ethnic tensions and animosities were a defining feature of the wars in the former Yugoslavia. Achieving reconciliation and social cohesion among different ethnic and religious groups was a daunting task that required long-term engagement.

Understandably, the post-conflict political landscape in the region was often marked by fragility and competing interests. Political disagreements and power struggles among various factions complicated decision-making processes and slowed down progress in reconstruction efforts. Another obstacle that slowed down the reconstruction efforts and posed risks to the safety of the reconstruction personnel and community was the lingering security concerns and sporadic violence in certain areas of affected countries.

In addition, securing adequate funding and sustained international support for post-conflict reconstruction proved challenging. The magnitude of reconstruction needs often exceeded available resources, leading to delays and dilemmas in terms of prioritization¹³.

Other challenges are addressing the issues of justice, accountability, and dealing with the legacy of war crimes posed complex legal and political issues. Ensuring a balance between reconciliation and accountability was a delicate process.

Furthermore, rebuilding and strengthening institutions (including governance structures, legal systems, and public services) required significant efforts and ex-

¹² Weiner, M. (1996) "Bad Neighbors, Bad Neighborhoods: An Inquiry into the Causes of Refugee Flows". [in]: *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 5-42.

¹³ Del Castillo, G. (2008) *Rebuilding War-Torn States*, Oxford: OUP Oxford.

pertise. It is also important to remember that a long-term commitment is required here. After all, post-conflict reconstruction is a long-term endeavor that requires sustained commitment from both the affected countries and the international community. Maintaining momentum and sustaining efforts over an extended period proved demanding.

INCLUSIVITY IN PEACE TALKS IS CRUCIAL FOR ACHIEVING LASTING AND SUSTAINABLE RESOLUTIONS

For a permanent peace and restoration, the post-war period is an important and challenging one. Ensuring inclusivity in peace talks is crucial for achieving lasting and sustainable resolutions in new war zones. The exclusion of certain parties from peace talks can be counterproductive and hinder the effectiveness of negotiations. Inclusive peace talks ensure that the views and interests of all relevant stakeholders are heard and considered. This representation of diverse perspectives increases the likelihood of reaching comprehensive and balanced agreements¹⁴.

Including all relevant parties in peace talks can help build trust among different groups. When all parties feel represented and heard, it fosters an atmosphere of openness and cooperation, which is essential for successful negotiations. Besides, inclusive peace talks give all stakeholders a sense of ownership over the process and outcomes. When people feel invested in the negotiations, they are more likely to adhere to the agreements reached.

Additionally, the involvement of all relevant parties allows for a more thorough examination of the underlying causes of



TRUTH-TELLING PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SURVIVORS, VICTIMS' FAMILIES, AND AFFECTED COMMUNITIES TO FIND CLOSURE

the conflict. Identifying and addressing root causes is essential for developing sustainable solutions. Furthermore, inclusive peace agreements are more likely to gain broad-based support from the population. This support is crucial for the successful implementation and acceptance of the peace deal. Inclusion can help mitigate the influence of spoiler groups that might seek to undermine the peace process. Bringing these groups into the negotiations can reduce their potential to disrupt the peace talks.

Inclusive peace talks provide opportunities for stakeholders to interact and build relationships, which can contribute to trust-building and cooperation beyond the negotiations. When all relevant parties are involved in peace talks, they are more likely to commit to, and actively participate in, the implementation of the agreements reached. Most important of all is that inclusive peace talks contribute to the promotion of long-term reconciliation between conflicting parties, laying the groundwork for sustained peace.

¹⁴ Kew, D., and A.W.S. John (2008) "Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion", [in]: *International Negotiation*, Vol. 13, No.1, pp. 11-36.



IN POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES, TRUST AMONG DIFFERENT GROUPS MAY BE SEVERELY DAMAGED

Here are some examples of conflicts where the exclusion of certain parties from peace talks had negative outcomes: Syrian civil war¹⁵, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Yemeni civil war etc. In the early stages of the Syrian civil war, some key opposition groups, at various points in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, certain Palestinian factions, in the Yemeni civil war, the participation of some key parties were either limited or excluded. Consequently, the exclusion of certain factions has contributed to ongoing divisions and obstacles to a lasting peace.

Significant numbers of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers live in Ukraine. Once a peace deal is reached between Russia and Ukraine, their respective representatives should also be included into peace talks.

HONORING THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Truth and reconciliation are crucial components in addressing the aftermath of war and conflict. They play a significant role in healing societies, promoting jus-

tice, and establishing a foundation for lasting peace. Acknowledging the truth about past atrocities, human rights abuses, and war crimes is essential for the healing process. This involves a thorough and impartial examination of historical events, accepting responsibility for wrongdoing, and providing a comprehensive account of what transpired during the conflict.

Truth-telling provides an opportunity for survivors, victims' families, and affected communities to find closure. By acknowledging the suffering and injustices that occurred, individuals and communities can begin to come to terms with their experiences. Besides, truth-seeking is often linked to accountability. Identifying perpetrators of war crimes and human rights abuses is crucial for ensuring justice is served. This can be pursued through judicial mechanisms, tribunals, or truth commissions, depending on the context¹⁶.

In post-conflict societies, trust among different groups may be severely damaged. Truth and reconciliation processes can contribute to rebuilding trust by providing a platform for dialogue and understanding between former adversaries. Examining the root causes and dynamics of the conflict is equally important. Truth-seeking efforts can help identify potential triggers and work towards preventing similar conflicts from happening again in the future. Moreover, truth and reconciliation processes aim to foster reconciliation between individuals and communities affected by the conflict. Encouraging dialogue, empathy, and mutual understanding can facilitate the process of reconciliation.

¹⁵ Hellmüller, S. (2020) *Local Legitimacy and International Peacebuilding*, Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press.

¹⁶ De Ycaza, C. (2013) "A Search for Truth: A Critical Analysis of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission", [in]: *Human Rights Review*, Vol. 14, pp. 189-212.



UNDERSTANDING THE CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE AND WAR CAN INSPIRE A COMMITMENT TO PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

There is no doubt that confronting the truth and promoting reconciliation can strengthen national unity. By acknowledging past wrongs and working towards healing, societies can build a shared understanding of their history and move towards a common vision for the future. Furthermore, examining the truth of past conflicts provides valuable lessons for future generations.

Understanding the consequences of violence and war can inspire a commitment to peaceful coexistence and conflict prevention. Therefore, truth and reconciliation processes should involve the active participation of all stakeholders, including victims, perpetrators, and civil society. Inclusivity and empowerment allow individuals to have their voices heard and contribute to the collective healing and rebuilding process.

The international community should play a role in supporting truth and reconciliation efforts by providing technical expertise, financial assistance, and diplomatic support. International involvement can help ensure the integrity and impartiality of the processes.

Overall, these processes are essential tools in addressing the aftermath of war, fostering understanding, and working towards a more just and peaceful future. However, it is essential to recognize that they are complex and may require significant time and commitment to achieve meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

REBUILDING UKRAINE AFTER THE WAR

It is evident that rebuilding Ukraine after the war will pose a significant challenge. The war has led to widespread destruction of homes, schools, medical facilities, and other critical infrastructure, leaving Ukraine in need of substantial international support to finance the rebuilding effort. Additionally, Ukraine's economy has been severely impacted, with the country experiencing a drastic decline in GDP during the initial stages of the war¹⁷.

Nevertheless, economic recovery and development are critical aspects of addressing the aftermath of war and conflict. War-inflicted damage to infrastructure, disruption of economic activities, displacement of populations, and destruction of livelihoods can have long-lasting effects on a country's economy. Lessons from post-conflict situations demonstrate the importance of implementing effective economic recovery

¹⁷ Bluszcz, J. and M. Valente (2022) "The Economic Costs of Hybrid Wars: The Case of Ukraine". [in]: *Defence and Peace Economics*, Vol. 33, No.1, pp. 1-25.



WAR-INFLICTED DAMAGE TO INFRASTRUCTURE, DISRUPTION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES, DISPLACEMENT OF POPULATIONS, AND DESTRUCTION OF LIVELIHOODS CAN HAVE LONG-LASTING EFFECTS ON A COUNTRY'S ECONOMY

and development initiatives to rebuild societies and promote stability¹⁸.

Investment in rebuilding and repairing essential infrastructure (such as roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and utilities) is crucial to restoring the functioning of the economy and providing basic services to

the population. Similarly, creating employment and livelihood opportunities is essential for the economic reintegration of individuals affected by the conflict. Job creation programs, vocational training, and support for small and medium-sized enterprises can help revitalize local economies.

Macroeconomic stability is another important aspect. Ensuring macroeconomic stability is essential for attracting investment, encouraging economic growth, and maintaining fiscal discipline. Sound economic policies and prudent financial management can create an environment conducive to economic recovery.

In addition, facilitating trade and attracting foreign direct investment are critical for economic growth and development. Improving trade infrastructure, simplifying regulations, and offering incentives can enhance a country's competitiveness in the global market. It should be noted that economic development initiatives should be inclusive and address the needs of all segments of society, including marginalized groups. In turn, inclusive economic growth can contribute to social cohesion and reduce the risk of renewed conflict. Furthermore, ensuring access to financial services for entrepreneurs and small businesses is vital for stimulating economic activity and supporting new ventures.

A country can never do wrong with investing in education, healthcare, and skill development. Simply put, these fields are crucial for building human capital and equipping the workforce with the necessary skills to contribute to economic growth. Natural resource management is equally important. Responsible and sustainable management of natural resources can play a significant role in economic recovery and development. Ensuring equitable access to resources and promoting

¹⁸ Vasylyev, M. et.al. (2022) "Unified European Support Framework to Sustain the HIV Cascade of Care for People Living with HIV Including in Displaced Populations of War-Struck Ukraine", [in]: *The Lancet HIV*, Vol. 9, No 6, pp. 438-448.

environmentally friendly practices are essential considerations¹⁹.

It is crystal clear that Ukraine will need huge economic support in dealing with its challenges lying ahead. The international community can play a crucial role in providing financial assistance, technical expertise, and capacity-building support to post-conflict countries during their economic recovery efforts. Needless to say, economic recovery and development after conflict require a long-term vision and commitment from both national governments and the international community. Sustainable development initiatives that address the root causes of the conflict are essential for preventing its recurrence²⁰.

The case of Bosnia and Herzegovina illustrates the positive impact of international assistance and cooperation in helping war-torn countries recover and rebuild after devastating conflicts. Bosnia and Herzegovina faced a brutal and devastating conflict during the Bosnian War from 1992 to 1995, resulting in widespread destruction and loss of life. The conflict involved ethnic tensions and atrocities, leading to significant humanitarian crises and the displacement of large numbers of people. However, after the war, the international community (including Western countries and international organizations) played a critical role in supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina's post-war reconstruction and recovery efforts²¹.

¹⁹ Kondratov, I. S. et al. (2022) *Challenges for Chemistry in Ukraine After the War: Ukrainian Science Requires Rebuilding and Support*. Available [online]: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/epdf/10.1073/pnas.2210686119>

²⁰ <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/postwar-reconstruction-assistance-and-local-governments-ukraine>

²¹ Eastmond, M. (2006) "Transnational Returns and Reconstruction in Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina". [in]: *International Migration*, Vol. 44, No.3 pp. 141-166.



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CONCLUSIONS

Countries with past war experience offer valuable lessons on how to deal with the negative impacts of war and conflict. These lessons emphasize the importance of diplomacy, international cooperation, humanitarian assistance, truth-seeking, security reforms, and economic recovery. While each conflict is unique, these lessons can guide nations in their efforts to mitigate the consequences of war and work towards sustainable peace.

In the context of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, we have seen the application of some of these lessons. Diplomatic efforts and negotiations have been pursued to seek a peaceful resolution, with international actors engaging in talks and mediation to de-escalate tensions. In one way or other, the international community has shown solidarity with Ukraine, imposing sanctions on Russia to pressure for an end to aggression and supporting Ukraine's sovereignty.



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Humanitarian assistance has been provided to those affected by the conflict, addressing the immediate needs of displaced populations and communities impacted by violence. Additionally, efforts have been made to document human rights abuses and atrocities, laying the groundwork for potential truth and reconciliation processes in the future.

However, it is essential to recognize that the situation in Ukraine remains complex and ongoing. The lessons from countries with past war experiences can continue to guide and inform the international response and support to address the negative impacts of the war.

Meanwhile, Ukraine should accelerate its reforms – particularly in the field of economy, military, and the political system. It is, unfortunately, a brutal reality that if a country such as Russia attacks you and you are not a member of NATO, then you must have powerful and reliable partner countries, which would deter such aggressors²².

²² For example, during the second Karabakh War in 2020, the open and decisive support of Turkey (Turkey's F16 Jets were on Azerbaijani soil until the end of the war) helped Azerbaijan to stand firmly against the threats from Russia and Iran.



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