

Pylypenko Viacheslav, PhD of Science in Economics, Professor, Sumy National Agrarian University, H. Kondratiiev Str. 160, Sumy, 40021, ph.: +38(0542)70-11-70, e-mail: dozentsnay@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5995-013X>

Pylypenko Nadiia, PhD of Science in Economics, Associate Professor, Sumy National Agrarian University, +38(0542)70-11-70, e-mail: nadijapilipenko70@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1064-389X>

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION OF UKRAINE

Introduction. The issue of post-war reconstruction of Ukraine is one of the key issues in the contemporary discourse of economic science and public policy. The full-scale war destroyed not only the physical infrastructure but also significantly transformed socio-economic relations, causing large-scale migration flows, loss of production potential and a decline in trust in state institutions. In such circumstances, economic science has to answer the fundamental question: what concepts and tools should the country use to ensure not only recovery, but also qualitative modernisation of the economy.

The relevance of this issue is due to the fact that Ukraine's reconstruction will take place in a complex geopolitical environment and in the context of integration into the European space. This requires taking into account both the historical precedents of post-war reconstruction and the latest economic concepts - from Keynesianism to behavioural economics, from institutional reforms to digital transformation.

Results and Discussion. After the Second World War, Europe found itself in a deep economic and social crisis. The production potential was destroyed, the infrastructure was virtually destroyed, and the standard of living of the population plummeted. In these circumstances, the United States initiated an economic assistance programme, the so-called Marshall Plan (1948-1952), which provided for

the allocation of about \$13 billion (over \$150 billion in current prices) to Western Europe [1]. The funds were used not only to rebuild infrastructure, but also to modernise industry, develop science and technology, and stimulate international trade. The economic effect of the Marshall Plan was impressive: industrial production in Europe grew by 35%, inflation stabilised, and European economies received an impetus for integration processes that later became the European Union [2]. This example shows that large-scale foreign aid combined with economic policy can be the basis for rapid recovery.

Another example of post-war reconstruction is Japan after 1945. The country was devastated by warfare, industry and transport routes were destroyed, and the economy lost more than 40% of its pre-war production potential [3]. The United States was the main donor of financial and technological assistance, but the decisive factor was the implementation of deep institutional reforms. The land reform included redistribution of land from large landowners to peasants, which increased agricultural productivity. At the same time, the decentralisation of industrial conglomerates was launched, creating conditions for the development of competition. An important element was the modernisation of the education system, which was focused on technical sciences and innovations. As a result, in the 1950s and 1960s, Japan demonstrated an "economic miracle", becoming one of the world's leading industrialised countries [4]. This example shows that a combination of external assistance and institutional reforms can ensure long-term growth.

A more modern example of recovery is the Balkans in the 1990s and 2000s, in particular Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia and Croatia. After armed conflicts, the region was in a state of economic and political ruin. The international community (EU, World Bank, IMF) provided large-scale financial assistance, but the main focus was on institutional restructuring [5]. International governance mechanisms were established to fight corruption, build democratic institutions and integrate into European structures [6]. Although the recovery process took decades, it showed that without deep structural changes, even large financial injections do not guarantee sustainable development [7]. This experience is particularly important for

Ukraine, as reconstruction should go hand in hand with institutional reforms and anti-corruption measures.

Post-war reconstruction always involves significant public spending, as the private sector loses incentives to invest during the period of destruction. In these conditions, the theory of John Maynard Keynes, which developed in the twentieth century as a reaction to the Great Depression, becomes extremely relevant. Keynesianism emphasises that the state should act as an active economic player, using fiscal policy to stimulate aggregate demand, create jobs and develop infrastructure.

In post-war Europe, these approaches were put into practice by the Marshall Plan, which combined financial assistance with active government policies to rebuild transport routes, housing and industry. It was investments in "public goods" that drove the economic recovery. In the current context, these principles are applicable to Ukraine, as the need to restore critical infrastructure, energy and housing is dominant.

The Keynesian approach assumes that in times of crisis or post-war shocks, private business tends to reduce investment due to high risks. As a result, there is a shortage of aggregate demand, which leads to an increase in unemployment. The government's task is to compensate for the lack of private demand through government orders, subsidies, and infrastructure projects. In the context of post-war reconstruction, this means massive investments in roads, railways, the energy system, medical and educational institutions.

The 1950s and 1960s in Western Europe and Japan, where government reconstruction programmes were combined with private investment, provided historical evidence of this logic, leading to the so-called "golden decades of economic growth" [8]. In this sense, for Ukraine, the Keynesian recipe can be implemented through large public infrastructure projects in cooperation with international donors.

Neo-Keynesian approaches emerged as a response to the new challenges of the second half of the twentieth century - globalisation, financial integration, and

energy crises. Whereas classical Keynesianism focused on short-term incentives, neo-Keynesianism focuses on long-term structural imbalances. The key objectives include controlling inflation, modernising industry, developing institutions, reducing dependence on imports, and building competitive advantages.

In the post-war Balkans, these approaches were manifested in close cooperation with international organisations (IMF, World Bank, EBRD), which provided not only loans but also demanded structural reforms [9]. This is particularly relevant for Ukraine, as external financial assistance alone does not guarantee sustainable growth. Structural changes are needed in the banking sector, energy sector, and public administration.

In the Ukrainian context, post-war reconstruction should not be confined to a purely Keynesian demand-stimulus approach. While large-scale public investment is necessary to activate economic activity and mitigate unemployment, such measures alone are insufficient under current conditions. The specific challenges of reconstruction necessitate the incorporation of neo-Keynesian elements, including adaptation to global economic transformations, integration into the European economic area, and comprehensive institutional modernisation. Accordingly, an effective recovery strategy must combine short-term macroeconomic stabilisation instruments with long-term structural reforms aimed at enhancing resilience and sustainable development.

Thus, Keynesian and neo-Keynesian concepts are complementary for Ukraine. The former ensures a quick start to recovery, while the latter guarantees long-term sustainability and integration into the global economy.

Post-war reconstruction is not limited to the restoration of material resources and infrastructure. The most profound and at the same time long-lasting process is institutional modernisation - the transformation of rules, norms, and governance mechanisms that determine the functioning of the economic and social system. The experience of past conflicts shows that without stable and transparent institutions, even large-scale foreign aid and infrastructure rebuilding cannot ensure sustainable economic growth. For Ukraine, this issue is of particular importance. The war-torn

economy needs not only finance, but also a renewed institutional architecture based on the principles of the rule of law, transparency, decentralisation and European values. The existing experience of rebuilding the affected economies in Europe should be taken into account.

After the end of the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, international financial institutions invested billions of dollars in infrastructure reconstruction and financial stability: between 1996 and 2000, Bosnia and Herzegovina received over \$5 billion in foreign aid [5]. However, due to weak institutions, including an inefficient judiciary and corruption, economic recovery was uneven and private investment was slow. It was only after the EU's active involvement in shaping the policy and legal framework that the country was able to ensure more stable development. This experience shows that financial assistance without institutional reforms has a short-term effect. After the 1991-1995 war, Croatia began to actively reform its public administration, gradually bringing it closer to EU standards. Particular emphasis was placed on fighting corruption, strengthening the independence of the judiciary, and developing local self-government [6]. As a result, the country not only managed to restore its economy, but also became a member of the European Union in 2013. Its example is indicative for Ukraine: institutional transformations have become the key to long-term integration into the European space and created the basis for sustainable growth. Germany's reconstruction is often associated with the Marshall Plan, but it was not only financial resources that played a decisive role in the reconstruction, but also a profound institutional reform [11]. In this case, it is clear that the combination of external assistance and institutional reforms allowed the country to enter a sustainable development trajectory.

The priority directions of institutional modernisation in Ukraine, along with their key objectives, international benchmarks, and expected outcomes, are systematised in Table 1. The table provides a structured overview of the core reform areas that are essential for ensuring effective post-war reconstruction and long-term economic resilience.

Table 1. Priority Directions of Institutional Modernisation in Ukraine

Direction	Key objective	International benchmark	Expected effect
Judicial reform	Ensure rule of law and independent arbitration	Poland, Czech Republic	Increased investment inflows and legal certainty
Anti-corruption policy	Strengthen accountability and reduce corruption risks	Romania	Higher public trust and improved donor confidence
Decentralisation	Enhance local governance capacity	Poland	Efficient resource allocation and local development
Financial system modernisation	Develop domestic capital markets	South Korea	Reduced dependence on external financing
European integration	Align institutions with EU acquis	Baltic states	Increased competitiveness and access to EU markets

Source: developed by the authors

The prioritisation of institutional reforms reflects the fundamental premise that institutional quality is a decisive determinant of long-term economic performance. In the absence of effective governance structures, financial resources tend to generate inefficiencies and corruption risks, whereas robust institutions enable sustainable development even under resource constraints. Judicial reform constitutes a cornerstone of institutional transformation, as it ensures the enforcement of property rights and contractual obligations. The experience of Poland and the Czech Republic demonstrates that an independent judiciary significantly enhances investor confidence. In contrast, politically dependent judicial systems, such as in Bulgaria, have been associated with persistently low levels of foreign direct investment. Anti-corruption policy is closely linked to institutional credibility. Romania's experience illustrates that consistent enforcement of anti-corruption legislation, particularly through specialised bodies such as the National Anticorruption Directorate, can substantially increase public trust and reshape societal attitudes towards corruption. For Ukraine, strengthening anti-corruption institutions is essential for improving both domestic legitimacy and

international credibility. Decentralisation plays a critical role in improving governance efficiency by bringing decision-making closer to local communities. Ukrainian experience since 2014, alongside evidence from Poland, indicates that fiscal autonomy enhances the capacity of local governments to attract investment and implement development projects effectively. The modernisation of financial institutions is necessary to ensure sustainable financing of economic development. The case of South Korea highlights the importance of a well-developed banking sector and capital markets in mobilising long-term investment. For Ukraine, the development of domestic financial markets remains a key prerequisite for reducing reliance on external funding sources. European integration provides a comprehensive framework for institutional transformation. The Baltic states demonstrate that alignment with the EU acquis can accelerate economic restructuring and facilitate access to larger markets and financial resources. For Ukraine, this process represents both a strategic objective and a practical mechanism for enhancing economic resilience and competitiveness.

Particular attention should be devoted to the issue of restoring trust in the state and its institutions. During wartime, citizens tend to demonstrate a high level of mobilisation, solidarity, and self-sacrifice; however, in the post-war period, there is a significant risk of a reversion to entrenched patterns of distrust and social alienation. The core objective of institutional modernisation, therefore, is to establish a renewed social contract grounded in transparency in the use of international assistance, fairness and impartiality in judicial procedures, the effectiveness and predictability of the tax system, and consistent support for entrepreneurial activity. At the same time, social institutions – such as education, healthcare, and culture – must also undergo comprehensive transformation, as they constitute the foundation for long-term societal resilience and facilitate the integration of diverse social groups. These institutions play a critical role not only in human capital formation but also in shaping social cohesion, which is indispensable for sustainable economic development. Thus, international experience convincingly demonstrates that institutional reforms represent a fundamental precondition for successful post-war

economic recovery. The cases of Croatia and the Baltic states, as well as the “economic miracle” of Germany, were made possible by the establishment of effective institutional frameworks that ensured trust among citizens and businesses alike. Ukraine should take this experience into account by combining infrastructure reconstruction with deep and systemic institutional transformation, since only under such conditions can donor funding and domestic investment be translated into sustained long-term growth.

An important dimension of post-war recovery, in our view, is the application of behavioural economics principles to restore trust and stimulate the activity of economic agents. Behavioural economics examines how psychological, cognitive, and social factors influence the decision-making processes of individuals and organisations. In post-conflict societies, its relevance becomes particularly pronounced, as war fundamentally alters behavioural patterns: individuals tend to become more risk-averse, levels of interpersonal trust decline, and business activity is suppressed due to heightened uncertainty [11]. Consequently, economic recovery depends not only on financial injections but also on the capacity to rebuild social capital, restore confidence in institutions, and encourage individuals to reinvest in the future.

Trust constitutes an intangible yet fundamental resource of the economy. Empirical evidence suggests that in countries where trust in public institutions was successfully restored following conflict, economic recovery processes unfolded more rapidly. Conversely, in contexts characterised by persistent suspicion and systemic corruption, reconstruction was often prolonged over decades. From the perspective of behavioural economics, trust reduces transaction costs, enhances cooperation, and increases the propensity for innovation [17]. For Ukraine, the central task lies in designing institutional mechanisms that incentivise economic agents—ranging from small enterprises to foreign investors—to actively engage in economic activity, while simultaneously incorporating relevant international experience. For instance, following the ethnic conflicts in the Balkans during the 1990s (including Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo), international organisations

provided substantial financial assistance; however, economic development remained constrained by low levels of intergroup trust and pervasive corruption. Transaction costs associated with economic activity remained high, as agents lacked confidence in the fairness of judicial systems and the transparency of government decisions. Only the gradual implementation of programmes promoting social dialogue and civic participation contributed to partial improvements in the situation [18]. This case illustrates that financial resources, in the absence of trust restoration, do not generate sustainable long-term outcomes. By contrast, a crucial element of Japan's post-World War II recovery was the formation of a new economic culture oriented toward collective effort and mutual responsibility. In place of traditional zaibatsu conglomerates, keiretsu networks were established—interconnected groups of firms cooperating on the basis of trust and long-term contractual relationships. This institutional arrangement fostered economic dynamism and innovation [4]. From a behavioural economics perspective, such a model effectively created a “choice architecture” that incentivised cooperative behaviour among firms, thereby discouraging destructive competition and promoting coordinated economic development.

The behavioural dimensions of post-war recovery in Ukraine require systematic consideration, as economic decisions in a post-conflict environment are shaped not only by material conditions but also by psychological, cognitive, and social factors. War-induced uncertainty, trauma, and institutional distrust significantly influence the behaviour of households, businesses, and migrants, thereby affecting the overall pace and sustainability of economic recovery.

In this regard, identifying key behavioural challenges and aligning them with appropriate policy instruments becomes an essential component of an effective recovery strategy. A structured overview of the main behavioural constraints, their underlying mechanisms, and potential policy responses is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Behavioral Challenges of Post-War Recovery in Ukraine and Policy Responses

Behavioral challenge	Underlying behavioral mechanism	Economic consequences	Policy Instruments (behavioral approach)	Expected outcomes
Migration crisis and return uncertainty	Risk perception, loss aversion, trust deficit, future uncertainty	Labour shortages, human capital loss, slowed regional recovery	Targeted return incentives; repatriation support programs; preferential credit schemes for returnees; employment guarantees; information campaigns	Increased return migration, restoration of human capital, revitalisation of local economies
Risk aversion in business sector	Loss aversion, uncertainty avoidance, pessimistic expectations	Low investment activity, delayed business recovery, reduced innovation	State-backed risk insurance mechanisms; credit guarantees; public-private co-investment schemes; clear regulatory frameworks	Increased investment activity, business reactivation, enhanced entrepreneurial confidence
Household financial behaviour	Precautionary savings, uncertainty-driven decision-making, short-term orientation	Reduced consumption, weak domestic demand, limited capital circulation	Incentives for consumption and investment; financial literacy programs; nudging strategies	Activation of domestic demand, mobilisation of savings for investment, strengthening of economic circulation

Source: developed by the authors

Ukraine currently faces a complex set of behavioural challenges that significantly influence the trajectory of post-war economic recovery. These challenges are rooted not only in material constraints but also in deeply embedded psychological and social factors that shape decision-making processes at the level of individuals, households, and firms. One of the most critical issues is the migration crisis, particularly the uncertainty surrounding the return of displaced populations. Decisions regarding repatriation are not purely economic; they are strongly

influenced by perceptions of safety, trust in public institutions, and expectations regarding future opportunities. From a behavioural perspective, loss aversion and uncertainty play a central role, as individuals tend to overweight potential risks relative to prospective gains. Therefore, policy interventions must go beyond traditional economic incentives and incorporate behavioural tools, such as targeted support programmes, signalling mechanisms, and trust-building measures, to encourage return migration. Another significant constraint is the heightened level of risk aversion among businesses. In the aftermath of large-scale destruction and economic disruption, entrepreneurs tend to adopt conservative strategies, postponing investment decisions due to fear of further losses. This behavioural pattern leads to stagnation in business activity and delays economic recovery. Addressing this issue requires the implementation of institutional mechanisms that reduce perceived risks, including state guarantees, insurance instruments, and co-investment frameworks that share risks between the public and private sectors. At the household level, financial behaviour is similarly shaped by uncertainty. In unstable environments, households prioritise precautionary savings over consumption and investment, which in turn suppresses aggregate demand and slows economic circulation. Behavioural policy instruments can play a crucial role in redirecting these tendencies. For example, the introduction of trust-based financial instruments—such as reconstruction bonds – can transform private savings into a resource for national recovery while simultaneously reinforcing citizens’ sense of participation in rebuilding efforts. Overall, the application of behavioural economics principles provides a critical analytical lens for understanding the non-material barriers to recovery. It also offers a set of policy tools that can complement traditional macroeconomic measures by addressing the psychological determinants of economic activity. In this regard, the effectiveness of Ukraine’s post-war recovery strategy will depend not only on financial resources and institutional reforms but also on the ability to shape behavioural responses and rebuild trust across all levels of society.

Thus, behavioural economics provides Ukraine with a comprehensive set of analytical tools and policy instruments that enable not only the restoration of economic activity but also the formation of a new culture of trust and interaction among the state, business sector, and citizens. By addressing the psychological and social determinants of economic behaviour, behavioural approaches contribute to strengthening institutional credibility, stimulating participation, and enhancing the effectiveness of recovery policies.

Post-war reconstruction, by its very nature, represents a critical juncture for determining a country's long-term strategic trajectory. Whereas in the twentieth century the primary emphasis was placed on rapid industrialisation and the restoration of industrial capacity, contemporary conditions require Ukraine to combine reconstruction efforts with the principles of sustainable development and environmental security. This implies not merely the rebuilding of destroyed infrastructure, but the creation of a qualitatively new economic model in which growth is intrinsically linked with innovation, social inclusion, and environmental preservation.

In the post-conflict context, sustainable development rests upon three interrelated dimensions: the economic dimension (including GDP growth, investment, and innovation), the social dimension (encompassing employment, inclusiveness, education, and healthcare), and the environmental dimension (focused on energy efficiency, renewable energy development, and the minimisation of environmental damage) [20]. The integration of these dimensions into the recovery strategy is essential for ensuring long-term resilience and balanced development. Even prior to the war, Ukraine had established itself as a country actively advancing digitalisation. The “state in a smartphone” initiative created a unique regional model of citizens' access to electronic public services. In the post-war period, this experience may serve as a foundation for the development of a digital economy capable of ensuring transparency, administrative efficiency, and accelerated recovery processes [21]. The case of Estonia is particularly illustrative in this regard. Following the restoration of independence, Estonia deliberately pursued a strategy

of digital transformation, implementing e-governance systems, electronic document management, and digital identification. Despite limited initial resources, this approach enabled the country to become one of Europe's leaders in digital technologies [22]. For Ukraine, a similar strategy may not only enhance the efficiency of resource management but also facilitate the emergence of a new competitive sector of the economy centred on information technologies and digital services. At the same time, the energy sector has emerged as one of the most vulnerable domains during the war. The restoration of the traditional energy system based on outdated models would constitute a strategic misstep. Instead, Ukraine has a unique opportunity to align its reconstruction efforts with the objectives of the European Green Deal. This involves the integration of renewable energy sources, the development of smart grid infrastructure, the modernisation of energy storage systems, and the decarbonisation of industrial production. Such a transformation would not only strengthen energy security but also position Ukraine within the broader European framework of sustainable and low-carbon development.

The experience of Germany following reunification demonstrates that large-scale public investment in the modernisation of formerly underdeveloped regions can be effectively combined with long-term energy and environmental transformation. During the 1990s, substantial financial resources were allocated to the integration and infrastructural renewal of East Germany, while from the late 1990s onward, increasing emphasis was placed on energy efficiency policies and the promotion of renewable energy sources [23]. This trajectory illustrates the feasibility of synchronising reconstruction efforts with sustainability-oriented reforms. A similar approach could be adopted by Ukraine, particularly through deeper integration into European programmes supporting the development of renewable energy and green technologies. Another illustrative case is Denmark. In response to the oil crises of the 1970s, the country strategically prioritised the development of wind energy. Over subsequent decades, Denmark has emerged as a global leader in this sector, not only achieving a high share of renewable energy in its domestic energy mix but also becoming a major exporter of related technologies and

equipment [24]. For Ukraine, which possesses significant potential in solar, wind, and bioenergy, the transition toward a “green” development model could serve as a key driver of post-war reconstruction and structural transformation. An equally important dimension of recovery concerns urban reconstruction. Ukrainian cities that have suffered extensive destruction during the war present an opportunity for redevelopment based on the principles of the “smart city” paradigm. This includes the integration of advanced public transport systems, digital governance solutions, and energy-efficient buildings, all of which contribute to improved quality of life and long-term urban sustainability. The post-World War II reconstruction of Warsaw provides a compelling example of how urban rebuilding can simultaneously preserve historical heritage and incorporate modern infrastructure. The Polish capital succeeded in restoring its historical centre while also developing contemporary transport networks and residential infrastructure [25]. Ukrainian cities have the potential to advance even further along this trajectory, as contemporary technologies enable the integration of digital solutions into urban planning processes, thereby facilitating more efficient, resilient, and citizen-oriented urban environments.

The conceptual model of Ukraine’s post-war reconstruction is based on the integration of sustainable development principles, digital transformation, and green energy transition, forming a foundation for long-term economic resilience and structural modernisation (Figure 1). The conceptual model of Ukraine’s post-war reconstruction reflects a shift from recovery to structural transformation, integrating sustainable development, digitalisation, and green energy transition within a unified policy framework. This approach emphasises not only the restoration of economic activity but also the reconfiguration of institutional and technological foundations of growth. The incorporation of ESG principles, expansion of digital governance tools, and transition toward renewable energy systems jointly create conditions for improved transparency, reduced transaction costs, and enhanced policy effectiveness. The interaction of these elements generates cumulative effects, whereby digital instruments reinforce institutional accountability, while sustainable

and energy-efficient practices strengthen long-term competitiveness. As a result, reconstruction is conceptualised as a process of systemic modernisation, aimed at ensuring economic resilience, integration into European structures, and the formation of a sustainable development trajectory.

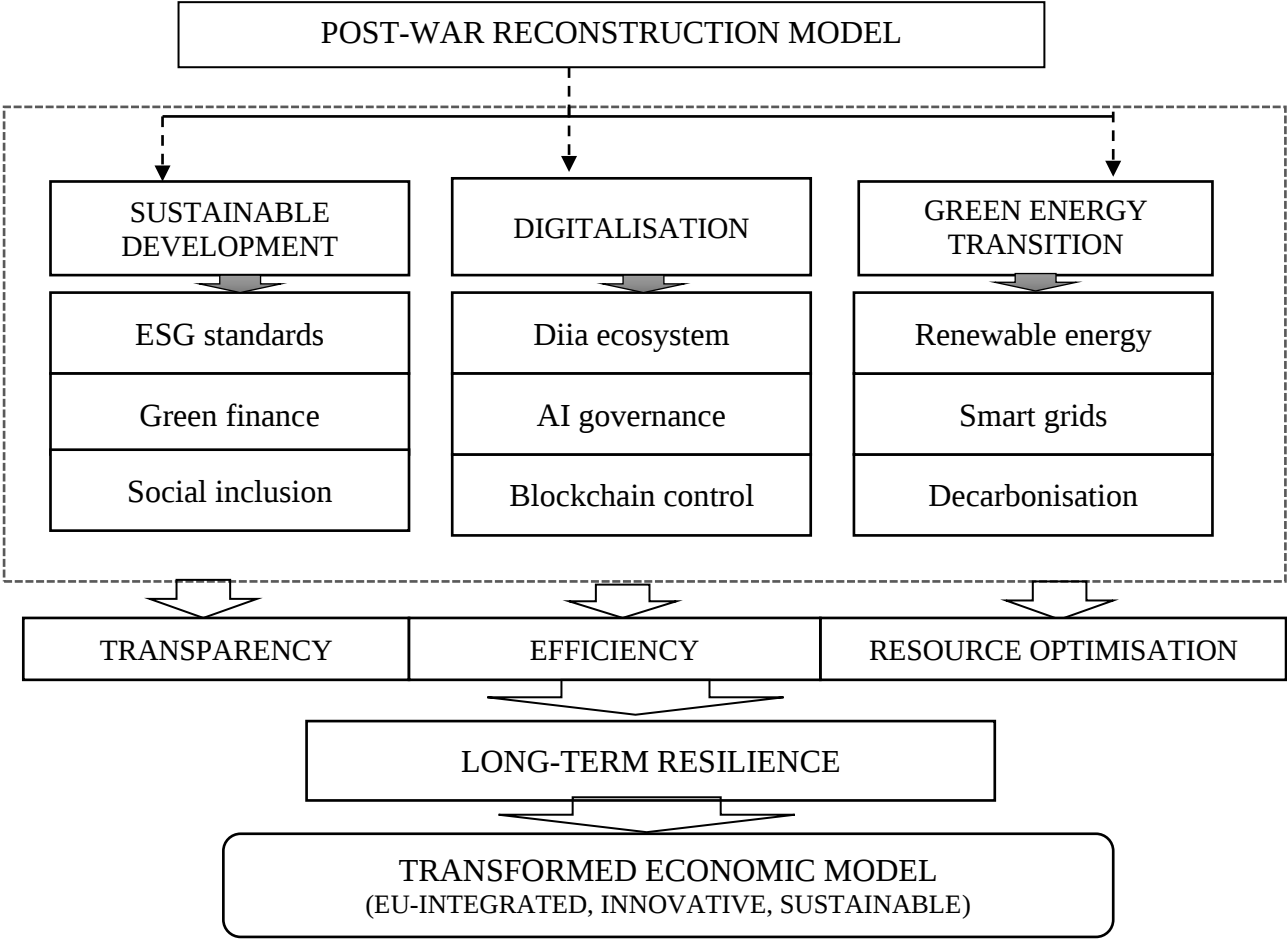


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Ukraine’s Post-War Transformation

Source: developed by the authors

Conclusions.

The findings confirm that post-war reconstruction of Ukraine should be approached as a process of systemic transformation rather than mere economic recovery. International experience demonstrates that financial assistance and infrastructure rebuilding are insufficient in the absence of effective institutional frameworks.

The combination of Keynesian demand-side instruments with neo-Keynesian structural approaches provides a relevant foundation for recovery policy. Short-term stabilisation through public investment must be complemented by institutional

modernisation, integration into the European economic space, and the development of competitive advantages.

Institutional quality emerges as a key determinant of long-term economic performance. Judicial independence, anti-corruption measures, decentralisation, financial system development, and European integration form the core conditions for attracting investment and ensuring sustainable growth. At the same time, the analysis highlights the importance of behavioural factors, particularly trust, risk perception, and decision-making under uncertainty. These factors significantly influence economic activity in post-conflict conditions and necessitate the application of behavioural policy instruments.

The proposed conceptual model integrates sustainable development, digitalisation, and green energy transition, forming a coherent framework for post-war transformation. Their interaction enhances transparency, efficiency, and resource allocation, thereby supporting long-term economic resilience and structural modernisation.

Overall, effective reconstruction requires the alignment of economic, institutional, behavioural, and technological dimensions within a unified strategic framework.

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