

## ASPECTS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT DURING MARTIAL LAW

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**Abstract:** The article represents an attempt to outline the most important aspects, challenges, and prospects for public administration in Ukraine in regional context during the wartime. It is shown that poverty and regional imbalances in Ukraine aggravated during two years of war, and the situation in comparative plane is worse than it was in Syria during first two years of war in 2011-2013. Based on Pakistani and Syrian experience and practices, vectors for public administration necessary tasks and available options concerning regional development are suggested.

**Keywords:** public administration; regional development; war conflicts; economics; poverty; reconstruction.

### 1 Introduction

War is a problem for progress. Although there are direct casualties in war, there are much more catastrophic repercussions. Armed conflict frequently results in forced migration, refugee movements, capital flight, and the destruction of social infrastructure in addition to combat deaths. Institutions in the social, political, and economic spheres suffer irreversibly. There are significant effects of conflict, particularly civil war, on development. Between nations and areas within nations that have undergone armed conflict and those that have not, war causes a development divide.

The citizens bear the expense of conflict. Development in reverse is what conflict is. As correctly pointed out by Gates et al. [9], the indirect effects of conflict outweigh the negative direct effects by a wide margin. Even if important economic statistics may provide a positive image, war nonetheless has an immediate and long-lasting negative impact on growth. One significant barrier to achieving the Millennium Development Goals is armed conflict. In the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Ukraine is one of the shining instances. In January-February 2024, Ukraine's GDP grew by 3.6% compared to the same period last year. In the Ministry of Economy, positive processes are associated with increased investment demand, export of agricultural products, functioning of the Ukrainian maritime corridor, and stable work in the field of energy. However, experts emphasize the importance of budget subsidies that Ukraine continues to receive from abroad during the war. Last year, the state budget deficit of Ukraine reached UAH 1.33 trillion, which is UAH 418.9 billion more than in 2022, according to data from the State Treasury. Before the full-scale invasion, in particular in 2021, the deficit of the general fund of the state budget amounted to UAH 166.8 billion [4]. The state budget for 2024 projects a UAH 1.6 trillion (about USD 41 billion, or 19% more than 2023) deficit, which would be the biggest one to date in absolute terms. Ukraine is going to be reliant on outside funding in the upcoming years. According to IMF baseline projections, Ukraine's shortfall in external finance for the years 2024-2027 may total USD 85.2 billion. In the worst case, this sum may reach USD 103.9 billion [5]. In addition, the conflict has reversed fifteen years of progress, resulting in 7.1 million more people living in poverty and an increase in the overall poverty rate to 24.1% by 2022. A few of the main causes of poverty in the nation are vulnerability, loss of livelihoods,

rising expenses, economic downturn, and forced relocation. Last year, the poverty rate increased to 24 percent. World Bank analysts report that since the start of the full-scale conflict in Ukraine, the cost of food, gasoline, and services has increased significantly—in some cases by as much as 50%. Furthermore, they point out that the unofficial unemployment rate in Ukraine is 36%, and as of the end of 2022, the inflation rate was 26.6%. This means that an increasing number of Ukrainians will likely be living in poverty in the future. Forecasts by researchers indicate that the nation's poverty rate may increase to 55%. In other words, one in every two people might live in poverty [1]. Even if wages have not decreased since the war began in February, IntelliNews statistics for 2022 [30] show that the average income in Ukraine has decreased by 25% in US dollars due to the hryvnia's depreciation, and wages are currently \$150 less than in Moldova, the most impoverished nation in Europe (see Figure 1).

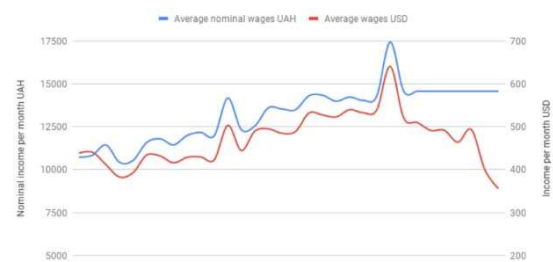


Figure 1. Ukraine nominal vs dollar income [30]

For comparison, it is interesting to look at data on Syria. As Gallup statistics shows, unlike the Ukrainian 'picture', in Syria, in two years of war (2011-2013), the number of "suffering" and "struggling" did not manifest sharp changes (see Figure 2).

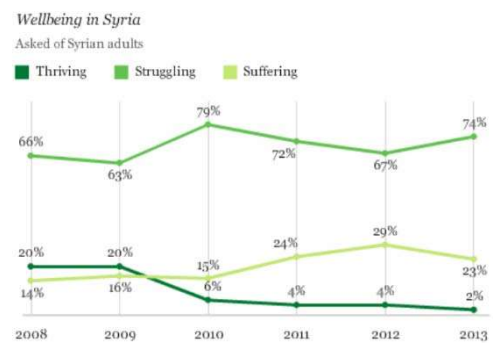


Figure 2. Wellbeing in Syria, 2008-2013 (according to Gallup surveys) [7]

The distance between cities and villages is likewise very great. In rural places, the impacts of poverty are most apparent. Furthermore, Ukraine's post-war recovery is under jeopardy due to its population decline. After moving abroad, millions of Ukrainian women and children have no intention of returning to a nation that has seen a population decline of more than 30% since gaining independence in 1991. In the conditions of current war, development of Ukraine's regions is ongoing extremely uneven. Central (national) public administration does not have enough agility, flexibility to address dynamically changing 'state of the art' in regions and unlikely can effectively take into account all subtle and sometimes latent peculiarities which, however, as the result influence regions' and territories'/communities' development during martial law. But local self-government is the force capable of changing situation to the better. In these conditions, the role of public administration in regional development is of crucial importance.

## 2 Materials and Methods

The theoretical basis of the research included the scholars' works in the field of public administration, scientific achievements in the field of institutional and evolutionary economics, the theory of military-political and social conflicts. At different stages of the study, the following research methods were used: abstract-logical, constructive, system-logical, methods of comparative analysis, grouping, generalization, etc. The main research tools were the methods of analysis and synthesis. Due to the fact that this study lies at the junction of subject fields of various disciplines (for example, economic theory, economic history, international political economy, political science, etc.), the methodological basis of the study is based on interdisciplinary, political economic approach to the mutual influence of economic factors and armed conflicts.

## 3 Results and Discussion

Not only interstate conflicts, but also civil wars and internal interethnic conflicts are obstacles to regional development. In particular, ethnic separatism is evident in South Asia, particularly in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, leading to terrorist attacks and the death of many people.

Pakistan was created from five provinces populated by different peoples, but professing the same religion - Islam. As one of the authoritative foreign experts on Pakistan, a senior fellow in foreign policy studies at one of the oldest think tanks in Washington, the Brookings Institution, Stephen Philip Cohen, notes, each of the five provinces that became part of Pakistan was associated with a specific ethnolinguistic group. These groups took an unequal part in the creation of Pakistan, were in very complex relationships with each other, and had different visions of the future of the Muslim state, which predetermined the rapid growth of interethnic contradictions after the formation of Pakistan [22]. Moreover, the Muslim population in the newly created state was also disunited, since it professed the most diverse directions of Islam, as a result of which the state remains politically vulnerable to this day.

Pakistan has been repeatedly predicted to collapse, but despite numerous internal socio-political upheavals, the state exists, is developing nuclear programs, has one of the strongest armies in the region, its economy is developing, and its population is steadily growing. Experts note: "The mystery of Pakistan remains one of the constant themes in scientific and journalistic literature throughout, essentially, the entire period of its 60-year existence" [22]. The credit for this goes to local self-government. Optimization of territorial development, highly 'customized', taking into account all the subtle features, interweaving of social processes, etc., ultimately leads to synergy in the entire national socio-economic system.

Pashtun regions in Afghanistan and Pakistan have greater incomes, better access to public amenities, and political backing for the current government. Over the past three centuries, Pashtun kings have consistently ruled Afghanistan, and their influence is clearly seen.

The length of a civil war is highly correlated with high levels of ethnic polarization [23]. Language is a major component in starting civil wars, but Zhukov's study on Ukraine [32] demonstrated that the cost of revolt in terms of money impacts the degree of resistance. More linguistically and ethnically diverse and oil-rich nations are more likely to experience civil instability. Moreover, violent crime is less common in prosperous and democratic nations [1]. However, Elbadawi and Sambanis contend that ethnic differences do not adequately account for the frequency of civil violence in Africa. Rather, poverty, a reliance on natural resources for economic growth, and inadequate political institutions all contribute to civil war [6].

The nature of public goods determines the link between variety and their availability. Culturally-oriented public goods are highly provisioned due to demand. Pashtuns have long dominated

politics in modern-day Afghanistan, as demonstrated by Qaiser and Grigoriadis [24]. This has also led to an increase in their wealth; Pashtuns are not only wealthier than other Afghan ethnic or linguistic groups, but they also have better access to basic public goods like electricity and clean drinking water. According to Qaiser and Grigoriadis [24], variety at the provincial level improves income and trust while decreasing individuality and violence or crime in Afghan society. This is because the diversity of ancient civilizations serves as a potent tool for the diversity of present ethnolinguistic groups. Provinces with the greatest degrees of socioeconomic development are those where several historical civilizations or empires have left their mark.

Reconstruction efforts in Syria are also supposed to revolve around community dialogue [27]. Reconstruction objectives are all too frequently set by implementers and funders rather than the local people who will be using the infrastructure on a daily basis. Plans for reconstruction must be developed in conjunction with significant community engagement. Beyond talks with local governments, this should involve the general public, which includes a diverse range of ethnic groups, religious traditions, and other communities, each of which may have particular requirements that rebuilding might help with.

Not all of Syria is under the hands of the government, and even many of the places it has recently recaptured are still reestablishing official authority after being governed by opposition organizations. It would be very challenging to fairly and equally oversee a nationwide reconstruction effort in such a precarious state of government power. This is quite similar to the current state of affairs in Ukraine, where several communities in the country's east and south have been returned from the invaders to Ukrainian sovereignty and vice versa. Frontline is also 'in motion'. Naturally, this presents serious difficulties for local public management. Communities are now facing unprecedented challenges as a result of a full-scale war, from problems of destroyed infrastructure, shortages of human resources, to challenges related to the relocation of businesses or the creation of necessary conditions for military personnel and their families [26].

To better understand these challenges and identify the needs to address them, the Alliance of Ukrainian Universities, with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation, conducted an in-depth study in twelve selected communities, each with a unique experience. The cities were chosen for study due to their diversity - from rear regions (Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne regions) to frontline zones and communities that were de-occupied (Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk regions). This provides an opportunity to see a broader picture of the challenges faced by different regions of Ukraine. Particular attention was paid to identifying the specific needs of communities in three key areas: resilience (sustainability), development, and recovery. The study was conducted in February-April 2024 by teams of universities that are part of the Alliance. During the deep dive into the lives of communities, a wide range of data was collected, including statistical indicators and individual reports from each community. In particular, the study showed that resilience remains the most critical issue in the third year of a full-scale war. The majority of surveyed communities (eight out of twelve) consider resilience to be the highest priority [26]. Community resilience is measured by its ability to respond to emergencies and crises [2; 3; 8; 10; 12-21]. The above-mentioned study showed that residents assess the level of resilience of their communities based on several key indicators: government response, effectiveness of information, and quality of shelters. Interestingly, residents' satisfaction with government response to emergencies varied: communities in Lviv Oblast received lower ratings, while frontline communities in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast received higher ratings.

The assessments of the development needs of residents obtained in the communities are generally typical and are not tied to a region: communities in the west of the country do not differ in their assessments of development from those located near the front or those that have experienced occupation. At the same

time, some of them have their own specific problems. Thus, in two communities of the Dnipropetrovsk region, the areas of sports and preschool education were assessed as having quite low level. In the community of the Lviv region, problems with heat supply were recorded. In half of the communities, residents assessed the area of inclusiveness and barrier-free public spaces quite negatively.

Business is the basis of the economy, and therefore, comprehensive support for local entrepreneurs will help to increase the solvency of the community. In particular, business representatives noted the need to reduce rent for municipal property and provide benefits for the payment of local taxes. This will help create favorable conditions for the development of entrepreneurship and economic growth of communities. Many respondents noted that local authorities should more actively support business initiatives and focus on the development of small and medium businesses [26].

In general, despite significant difficulties, many communities demonstrate a high capacity for adaptation and development. An important condition for successfully overcoming challenges is increasing the level of interaction between the central government and the local government, business and public organizations, as well as attracting external resources and expertise. Involving the public in the decision-making process is also an important element for ensuring transparency and accountability of the government.

Each region has its own problems and features that need to be taken into account. Ukrainian experts note that the need for individual approaches to different regions became obvious during the COVID epidemic, when the government introduced lockdowns throughout the country, despite local circumstances and the epidemiological situation [31]. The war has posed much more complex challenges to the Ukrainian economy. And, of course, today it is impossible to approach different regions with the same requirements.

In particular, an important area of work in the rear regions is helping businesses create new logistics chains to replace those that were destroyed due to military action and the blocking of seaports. The government should do its utmost to facilitate the import of raw materials to Ukraine that are necessary for the operation of enterprises, as well as help in finding markets and developing export routes for domestic goods. In frontline regions, the authorities can make life easier for businesses by creating a legal mechanism for temporarily suspending the operation of an enterprise. In order for sole proprietors who were forced to interrupt their work due to military actions not to have to close their enterprise and then register it again after the liberation of the territories, it is necessary to provide for the possibility, upon the owner's application, to completely cease all activity, including the payment of any tax obligations, and then, when the entrepreneur deems it necessary, to resume work again without unnecessary formalities. All these points should be considered and addressed by the appropriate regional public administration bodies.

Referring back to the experiences of the Middle Eastern nations during and after conflict, it is important to remember that reconstruction need to be open and incorporate anti-corruption measures, as per the assessment of Syrian specialists. In order to fund physical reconstruction, large construction contracts are typically awarded, which creates the foundation for enormous financial gain. Reconstruction may be a gateway to fortune for government friends if it is not properly guarded. Equal and open access to newly constructed homes as well as rehabilitated housing are also requirements. Abuses are already evident in Syria, as Assad's allies, in particular infamous businessman Rami Makhlouf take profit from reconstruction agreements and laws governing property expropriation to ensure that the government has effective control over who will benefit from new construction. Reconstruction projects need strict control to prevent corruption of this kind. Strong control is necessary for rehabilitation projects to prevent this kind of corruption [28].

Similarly, disagreements over property must be properly resolved within the parameters of a wider initiative for property return and restitution.

In the end, post-conflict reconstruction is not an independent process. Instead, it is a part of a bigger shift that involves reconstructing institutions, societal ties, government trust, and physical infrastructure. Syria will need to combine infrastructure and building projects with a wide range of transitional justice initiatives, including as property restitution, security sector reforms, and truth and reconciliation procedures, in order to accomplish this more extensive kind of rebuilding.

The paradigm of transparency is of crucial importance for Ukrainian regions now – both for those near the frontline and in rear, since 'loud' corruption scandals undermined citizens' trust in public administration. At the same time, best practices of Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other countries with the 'experience of war' can be already now adapted and used for rear regions in Western Ukraine. Taking into account significant influx of internally displaced persons there, it seems expedient to study the above-mentioned Pakistani experience on strengthening synergetic diversity, as well as some elements of EU countries experience of addressing refugees problem, since war aggravated 'language issue' in Ukraine to great extent, and even crimes based on language differences take place.

It is premature to refer to Syria as a "post-conflict state," as experts correctly point out. It will take more than a year and maybe even more than ten years to reconsolidate Syrian society. However, the country that has recently been through a bloody, protracted civil war has to be rebuilt, and the humanitarian aspect of this process needs to take precedence. The restoration of the nation cannot in any circumstances be associated with the accomplishment of impractical political goals, such as reorganizing the government and seeking Western-style democracy, as was the situation in Iraq during 2003. The prevailing narrative in Syria at the moment is: "We must start with implementable, targeted measures designed to improve the living conditions of ordinary people". Yes, that also holds true for Ukraine. The nation is eager for the conflict to stop and for every step toward EU membership to be completed. Today, regional development need to be a continuous process that is both flexible and scalable.

According to Alex Thier [29], the current peace process in Afghanistan is likely to bring up a long-standing argument about the proper distribution of political power between the national government and local governance institutions. This is stated in his paper, "*The Nature of the Afghan State: Centralization vs. Decentralization*". Talks on decentralization may cut across traditional political lines. For example, while the Taliban and the ruling class agree that centralization is necessary, they argue about who should rule the center, and a number of local powerholders and minorities want more autonomy. Although decentralization has been a contentious subject for many years, it may present chances in the current peace process since it gives the many factions vying for power greater political pie to split. On paper, Afghanistan is one of the world's most centralized nations, but in practice, it is one of the most atomized. For the past century, this tension has molded a large portion of Afghan history. The majority of Afghans have historically lived in rural areas far from the capital, and the country lacks the structures and infrastructure needed to implement strict controls. Strong local social structures and a long-standing legacy of independence also mean that choices that are perceived as being imposed from the outside are frequently met with resistance on the ground. Furthermore, though the two do not always have to be identical, experiences with harsh authoritarianism and corruption have contributed to the public's mistrust of the central government [29]. In reality, the distribution of power and credit among national and local elites is likely to be a major topic of discussion during the deconcentration of authority debate. As a result, efforts must be made to match the elites' need for status and power with the distribution of commodities to the society. Various power centers may provide stability. The reasons why

certain groups believe that too much power in the center is the cause of the issue must be directly addressed in order to concentrate on workable solutions for power devolution that will allow varied political interests to be served without jeopardizing the state's integrity as a country. Because the challenges at hand are so comparable, it appears that such research is very "obligatory" for Ukrainian policy makers and the professional community to examine.

Focusing on areas such as infrastructure, energy, water, transportation, agriculture, education, and health care will be critical for Ukrainians in the long run as well as in the near term. For both individuals who were forced to flee - either overseas or to safer areas of the country - and for those who remained in their homes, investing in these industries will be crucial.

Naturally, this will make it impossible to quickly resolve the issues surrounding the repatriation of all refugees and internally displaced people. Still, hundreds of thousands have either made the decision to return, or they intend to do so soon. Their return and reintegration will also need a political decision, which, in the long run, may be a viable, long-term aid in the stabilization of the political order and the restoration of normal living circumstances, with the backing of the global community.

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