

# THE IMPACT OF RUSSIA'S SPECIAL MILITARY OPERATION IN UKRAINE ON THE ARAB WORLD

Maria Makmutova<sup>1</sup>

Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow

**Abstract:** In this article, the author considers the Arab reaction to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and studies the economic consequences of these events. In the course of his work, the author separates politics and economics and also divides the Arab countries into several groups. In the political aspect, the Arab countries are divided into allies loyal to Russia, those states that want to sit on two chairs and countries that want to distance themselves as much as possible from the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The study revealed that Russia has few loyal allies in the Arab East and most countries try to maintain neutrality in order to maintain ties with all participants in the international system. In the economic sphere, the author also sees three groups, but he divides them in a different way. The article highlights rich countries, a state with a weak economy and prone to crisis, as well as Arab countries whose crisis has been aggravated by cattle since the beginning of this conflict. The scientific article reflects that the consequences of the embargo on the export of grain from Moscow and Kyiv created an extremely negative situation in North Africa and the Middle East, from which many countries are actually facing a threat to food security and an increase in the number of hungry people. In conclusion, the author comes to the conclusion that this conflict is extremely unfavorable for the Arab East. In fact, in the interests of the country of the Arab East, the peaceful coexistence of Russia and the European continent would not force individual countries to take sides and become someone's enemy.

**Key words:** *Russia, Ukraine, Arab world, food crisis, security problem, neutrality.*

## INTRODUCTION

Local conflicts on the European continent had a limited impact on the Arab countries, which did not always understand the essence of the problem and tried to distance themselves from them. However, the Arab East is sometimes forced to react when it comes to a conflict involving global powers. In recent years, the Arabs have been able to diversify their contacts and focus not only on an alliance with Russia or the United States. In the modern international system, it is beneficial for them to conclude political and economic agreements with each participant in the global world. In this regard, global conflicts are unprofitable for them, since they do not want to lose their existing contacts and become an enemy for one of the strongest powers.

Undoubtedly, the intensified military conflict in Ukraine with the introduction of Russian troops began to be perceived in European countries as a threat to na-

<sup>1</sup> makhmutova.maria@yandex.ru

tional security, as Moscow's behavior became very aggressive and unpredictable. Moreover, according to international standards, Russia violated the sovereignty of Ukraine, but the Kremlin claims that it is conducting a special military operation to protect the Russian-speaking population and rid Ukraine of the fascist regime. For internal discourse, Moscow argues that war would be inevitable and in this case "you have to strike first." In this context, the world began to split, following the example of the bipolar confrontation during the Cold War (Klalb 2015). In connection with the imposed sanctions against Russia and the actual destruction of the Ukrainian economy, the world will face a sharp drop in global GDP.

Taking into account the existing challenges, the Arab countries did not express open support for one of the parties to the conflict. They tried to maintain favorable relations with both Western countries and Russia as much as possible. Of course, this position cannot be called stable if the scale of the current conflict in Europe escalates into a larger war.

In the course of writing a scientific work, the author tried to use a number of scientific methods that made it possible to analyze the current situation in the international system. To study the economic component, statistical data on trade turnover were required, as well as data on inflation and GDP of several countries. To study the political situation, such methods as normative-value, dialectical and system-historical methods were used.

## **POLITICAL IMPACT**

Conflicts that have a global effect usually divide the world into two sides, or a number of states strive for neutrality. In the event that countries not participating in the global confrontation are themselves tied up in a regional conflict (Ashton 2007), they try to find an ally who will provide them with assistance (military, financial and diplomatic) and will have a negative attitude towards their enemy. In the post-Cold War period, many middle power states can influence conflicting countries by offering their mediation to resolve the conflict (Henrikson 1997). From the very beginning of many conflicts between Russia and Ukraine in 2014, many Arab countries tried to distance themselves from the conflict, wanting to preserve the established trade, economic and political relations with all participants in the global system.

However, the events of February 2022 presented them with a choice: to side with Moscow or against it. A vivid example of their positions could be considered the UN vote on Ukrainian resolutions. Russia was actually able to get support from Syria, which voted against, Algeria, Sudan and Iraq, which abstained from voting, and Morocco, whose representative left the room during the vote. None of the Arab countries began to support sanctions against Russia (Congressional Research Service 2022).

In my opinion, relying solely on the UN voting, it is difficult to separate the supporters of the Russian military campaign and the camp supporting it. In this case, it is important to study the behavior of the Arab countries in this difficult period for the international system.

Taking into account that there are no countries in the Arab East that would explicitly criticize Moscow, I propose to divide them into two groups: "loyal friends" who want to "sit on two chairs" and countries that distance themselves as much as possible from the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

### **“Loyal Friends”**

The first group includes Syria, Palestine and Algeria. An important fact is that the way of making important political decisions in Algeria, Syria, Palestine is similar to the Russian one. The concentration of power is not in the hands of a small group of people who, in the first place, came from the military elite and special services.

The behavior of Damascus is most understandable on the international platform. Undoubtedly, the regime of Bashar al-Assad is grateful to Moscow for significant diplomatic and military assistance in the fight against the opposition and ISIS, existing agreements in the oil and gas industry, and food supplies. Syrian streets controlled by the ruling regime paint a picture of true friendship between Damascus and Moscow. Images of Putin and Assad are hung on the streets; in recent years, learning Russian has become prestigious and even necessary. Syrians who received education in the USSR and Russia are proud of their higher education diplomas. Syria's behavior is more reminiscent of the position of paying the debt and willingness not to leave a friend in trouble. In the context of economic sanctions against Russia, Damascus even became interested in connecting the MIR payment system, which would facilitate financial flows between civilians.

It is important to note that Algeria has its own view of current events. The current leadership of this country is extremely suspicious of Western countries. The main reason is that during the civil war between the US and the EU, Algeria was called upon to include the Islamists in the political discourse and hold elections. In turn, Russia supported the military-political elite of this North African country. Moreover, there was no revolution in Algeria during the Arab Spring, just as it did not happen after the 2019 demonstrations when European countries emphasized the right of citizens to protest. A number of representatives of the political elite perceived this as a “Western conspiracy” against the sovereignty of Algeria. The Algerian authorities constantly imagine that the West is conspiring to carry out a coup in this country. Suspicious and extremely distrustful forms the immunity of Algerians to an open dialogue with Western countries. At the same time, this North African country is one of the leaders in the purchase of Russian weapons on the world market. Even in the face of sanctions and turbulence in the international arena, Algeria purchased military equipment from Moscow for \$7 billion.

One of Russia's longtime allies in the Middle East is the Palestinians, since the USSR helped the rebel movement for a long time and Russia was perceived as the heir to the socialist empire. In addition, Moscow tried to participate in the reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, and moreover, it never recognized Hamas as a terrorist organization. However, intra-Palestinian perceptions of the war in Ukraine were mixed. Some residents of the Gaza Strip tend to identify themselves with Ukrainians, and Russian actions with Israelis. As a result, they are in favor of Hamas, in fact, being in solidarity with the West, which, however, from the point of view of the Palestinians themselves, does not support their claims enough. Musa Abu Marzuk, a Hamas Politburo member, said the lesson from the current events is that “the era of US unipolar domination is over,” as “the US has failed to declare war on Russia, and those who cannot declare war will not set the international agenda”. The head of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas and his entourage, are primarily motivated by the fact that they do not want to undermine the dialogue with Moscow. they still hope that it will implement the initiative of a peace conference

with the involvement of mediators in the person of the UN and the EU, that is, it will actually revive the classic Middle East Quartet (Ben Menachem 2022).

### ***“Sit on two chairs”***

This group includes Arab countries that already have established diplomatic and economic contacts with Russia and also do not want to provoke its “vindictive behavior” in the context of ongoing conflicts. For such states, the main priority is to ensure their own interests.

Considering the behavior of Morocco, many Western politicians expected that Rabat would take the side of Western countries and support Ukraine, since it was to many obligations of US diplomacy, which contributed to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the kingdom and Israel, and Washington recognized the western part of the kingdom. Given the orientation of Morocco towards cooperation with Spain and France, and, moreover, the desire for democracy, it was worth counting on the condemnation of the Russian military campaign from Rabat. However, Moroccan diplomacy took into account the support of the Polisario Front and Algeria by Russian diplomacy. Rabat has carefully avoided making statements about the conflict in Ukraine and chose not to take part in the UN vote.

Egypt found itself in a rather difficult position before the UN vote. In early March 2022, Kyiv demanded from Egypt support and solidarity in the provision of medical and humanitarian assistance, as well as recognition of Russia’s violations of international law. The ambassadors of the G7 and the ambassador of the EU Delegation in Cairo called on the Egyptian government “to take the side of Ukraine in the fight against Russian armed aggression.” A number of sources close to the Egyptian government reported that the United States exerted direct pressure on Egypt, demanding that it support Ukraine, even if this support was purely political. It is possible that this is why Cairo voted for Ukraine, while Moscow expected its neutral position (Eruygun, 2022). For Egypt itself, the conflict in Ukraine would be extremely unprofitable since it had established contacts with Moscow and Kyiv in the economic sector. Moreover, after A.F. Al-Sisi in 2014, the United States refused to provide military assistance to Cairo and sell weapons. Then Egypt began to buy military equipment from Moscow and then agreed on the construction of the El Daab nuclear power plant by the Russian Rosatom and its subsidiaries. At the same time, while Egypt announces the continuation of cooperation with Russia, and since September 2022, it has been negotiating the connection of MIR payment cards. At the same time, Cairo has not yet issued a full permit to Rosatom for the construction of a nuclear power plant, fearing a negative reaction from the European countries and the United States, as well as the introduction of secondary sanctions. So far, the Egyptian authorities are trying to develop a neutral line in order to maintain established ties with all participants in the world system and not be subjected to “punishment and condemnation” (Salah 2022).

### ***Maximum distance***

Most of the Arab countries are trying to distance from the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which is also sometimes seen as a confrontation between Russia and NATO. Each country has its own view of the ongoing events that are related to their internal problems.

The confused domestic political environment in Iraq has become one of the key reasons for the lack of a clear position of Baghdad on the Ukrainian problem. Iraq voted in favor of the Arab League statement on Ukraine, which did not hold Russia accountable. Iraq abstained in the UN General Assembly vote on March 2 condemning Russian aggression against Ukraine and simply expressed “regret” at the “deterioration and escalation of tension between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.” Despite these official statements, political opinion in Iraq about Russia’s actions is divided along partisan and factional lines. The imposition of sanctions against Russia has complicated its energy investments in Iraq and alleged arms purchases from Moscow, and could have long-term negative consequences for the Iraqi economy. In line with existing political divisions, Iraq’s response to the war in Ukraine has been polarized (Kebret and Ryder 2022). Hashd al-Shaabi or Popular Mobilization Forces, an umbrella organization of 40 predominantly Shiite militias, is the bloc most sympathetic to Russian policy in Ukraine, as it regularly engages with Moscow on Syria and the fight against terrorism. in Ukraine. Other figures in the Iranian-linked militias have been more reserved in their take on pro-Kremlin narratives. Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi, secretary general of Kataib Hezbollah, acknowledged that the US forced Russia into war, but also stated that Russia was “no less bloody” than Europe and the US and stated that it would take miracle. Muqtada al-Sadr, the leader of the al-Sadr movement that won the most seats in Iraq’s October 2021 parliamentary elections, was initially more critical of the war. Al-Sadr declared that the war between Russia and Ukraine was “absolutely useless” and added that “I am still waiting for the principle of dialogue between the two Christian countries.” However, by March 4, al-Sadr’s position coincided with that of al-Hamidawi, who said that the war in Ukraine broke out “because of the American policy pursued there.” Iraqi Kurdistan President Nechirvan Barzani strongly supports Turkey’s efforts to mediate between Russia and Ukraine. The Iraqi public also disagrees with the merits of the war in Ukraine. A poster reading “We support Russia” surrounded by large portraits of President Vladimir Putin has appeared outside the Asaib Ahl al-Haq pro-Iranian militia base in Baghdad. The removal of the poster by Iraqi security forces has exacerbated divisions over Ukraine, especially on social media. Supporters of Tehran-linked former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki have generally sympathized with Russia due to their continued antagonism towards the US over the 2003 Iraq War, while al-Sadr’s supporters have tended to maintained strict neutrality.

The Russian Embassy in Lebanon was surprised by the statement of the Lebanese Foreign Ministry, which condemned the Russian military operation in Ukraine. And Hezbollah expressed its disagreement with this position. If you look at the essence of the issue, then such a reaction of the Lebanese authorities is caused, first of all, by a clean economy. Or rather, an economic disaster. Lebanon has been mired in a devastating economic crisis since 2019, when the financial system collapsed under the weight of decades of state corruption, waste and mismanagement, paralyzing the banking system. Despite growing poverty, Beirut has yet to develop a financial recovery plan to cover losses or other steps that are considered vital to finding a way out of the crisis and making progress towards reaching an agreement with the International Monetary Fund. The IMF deal is seen as the only way for Lebanon to recover from the financial crisis that plunged the country into its most destabiliz-

ing crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war. Hence the position of Beirut regarding the events in Ukraine.

Official authorities in Tunisia tried to refrain from commenting on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. In the context of one of the deepest economic crises in the modern history of this country, President Kais Said, having monopolized power, is waiting for the approval of a loan from the IMF. In this situation, for him, the development of a position comes precisely from this problem. Even after the UN vote, Tunisia assured Moscow of its readiness to continue cooperation. However, the opposition represented by the Islamist movement Ennahda yesterday condemned the Russian military invasion of Ukraine. The party called it “a flagrant violation of international law and the people’s right to self-determination within the framework of freedom, democracy and security”.

For Jordan, neutrality has long been the basis of its foreign policy. The Kingdom joined most Arab countries in condemning Russia’s actions through the UN resolution, but, like Amman’s regional partners, stuck to neutral language, excluding even the mention of Russia in its statement. Jordan’s condemnation of Russia “was not strong”. Like other countries in the region, Jordan is forced to try to balance its relations. Among some other Arab countries, Amman feels trapped in this conflict. The Kingdom cannot go far from the United States, its strongest and most strategic ally. In addition, the Kingdom is one of the largest recipients of foreign aid from the United States. But Jordan cannot risk our relationship with Russia. In an October 2021 public opinion poll, 80% of Jordanian respondents said they would prefer to remain neutral if there was a conflict between the US and Russia. About 65% of respondents said they want Russia to play a “much larger role” or “somewhat larger role” in the region. When asked to name the country “most responsible for the instability and violence in the region,” the US came in second after Israel and ahead of Iran. Only 1% of respondents called Russia a source of instability in the Middle East. In Jordan, they are particularly negative about the way the US is handling what the poll called the “Arab-Israeli conflict.” An overwhelming majority of respondents, 83%, said they were “very dissatisfied” with Washington’s role. As the world order is being reshuffled, the countries of the Middle East may no longer be willing to put all their eggs in the American basket.

The military-political situation in Libya is still far from being resolved, and Moscow, represented by PMC Wagner, previously relied on the Field Marshal of the Libyan National Army, Khalifa Haftar, and also fawned over his new political allies, Fathi Bashaga, who tried to carry out a coup in Tripoli. Bashaga urged the US to confront Russia by setting up a base in Libya and, as interior minister, accused the Wagner group of using chemical weapons in the country. In turn, the Russian media accused Bashaga of “kidnapping” political workers Maxim Shugalei and Samer Seifan, who were released in December 2020, and Prigozhin’s Federal News Agency called Bashaga “the leader of the Libyan terrorists.” On the UN mission were representatives of Libya from the Government of National Unity, which is headed by Abdel Hamid Dbeiba. In the current situation, it is more important for him to stay in power and maintain the loyalty of Western countries and the UN. In this situation, the political position was developed on the basis of this consideration.

Yemen, which has been in a state of civil war since 2014, is actually far from a conflict in Europe. It is important to note that many Yemenis believed that Russia,

being an ally of Iran, supported the Houthis. In fact, a number of Russian academicians had meetings with them, and representatives of the Russian Foreign Ministry met with them. It is important to note that the ambassador representing Yemen at the UN worked for the government of Hadi. For a long time, he also sought to find tools to resolve the Yemeni conflict in his favor. In this context, the Russian-Ukrainian war was one of the playing cards up his sleeve for him.

The Arab countries of the Persian Gulf - Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman - tried to avoid clear positions in relation to the Ukrainian problem. The UAE abstained in a February 25 vote on a draft UN Security Council resolution condemning Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Saudi Arabia did not respond to the invasion, as did the UAE, Bahrain and Oman. Kuwait and Qatar only condemned the violence, without ceasing to criticize Moscow. For more than seven decades, the United States has played a key role in the Middle East, acting in particular as the protector of the oil-rich Persian Gulf monarchies, but in recent years Washington has begun to limit its military activities in the region. The Gulf states understand that they need to diversify their alliances to compensate for the perceived withdrawal of the United States from the region. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, two US allies, are aware that their ties with Washington have changed over arms deals and human rights issues. The murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the KSA consulate in Istanbul in 2018 strained relations between Riyadh and Washington. "Russia is seen as an ideological ally, while American human rights issues related to their support are becoming an increasingly serious problem. Not the last argument for such a position of the KSA and the UAE was the fact that the United States appointed their main regional opponent Qatar as the main non-NATO ally, which neither the KSA nor the UAE still have, allegedly "due to the unique role of Doha in promoting the interests Washington in the Middle East and beyond." Arab members of OPEC are in a difficult diplomatic position as maintaining the OPEC+ deal, which controls production, is clearly at the forefront of their considerations. The Gulf states fear damaging this relationship and seek to keep Russia's participation in OPEC+. If Russia leaves the group, then the entire agreement is likely to collapse. Silence about Russia's actions in Ukraine is probably the best course for this at the moment. But this pragmatic position may become untenable if Western leaders insist on their position.

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

A lot of scientific literature is devoted to the consequences of wars, both local and world. Many focus on the economic impact, noting the growth in GDP during the war years for individual countries, considering military spending as social (Edelstein 2000). Other economists try to calculate military costs separately (Bilmes and Stiglitz 2008), including the wounded, the dead, the possibility of terrorism, the destruction of infrastructure, the provision of medical care, and others. It is noted that in such a situation, the redirection of funds to the social sector would reduce the tax burden on citizens and make the country more prosperous.

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, many economists point to a significant deterioration in the global economy. Namely, an increase in global inflation by 6%, failure of supply chains, rising prices for energy, industrial and agricultural goods. In examining the current situation, it is important to note that academic research

on the economics of war will change. The modern picture of the world has changed dramatically compared to the world wars, the conflict in Vietnam and Afghanistan, as well as the Cold War between the USSR and the USA. The sharp difference lies in the fact that the launched full-scale war between Moscow and Kyiv turned into not only the polarization of the world, but also the introduction of economic sanctions against one of the important participants in the global economic system (Russia is a member of G20). With imperialist ambitions, Russia is still an important supplier of hydrocarbons, industrial and agricultural goods.

The Arab world, which is a participant in global trade, has experienced a significant effect since it had a number of contracts with Russia and Ukraine. At the end of 2021, the trade turnover between Russia and the Arab countries reached \$18 billion. Undoubtedly, this figure is much less compared to the trade of China and the United States with the Arab countries. However, the consequences of the war were significant (Rogoff 2022).

The war between Russia and Ukraine had a strong impact on the food security of the Arab countries. Russia is the world's main grain producer and, together with Ukraine, has become a key supplier of this product to the Arab countries. For a detailed study of the situation, I propose to divide the Arabic into three categories. The first category will include rich Arab countries with a stable political situation. The second category will include states with a relatively stable economy and political environment but with average or below average incomes of citizens. The third category will include states that are in a protracted political and economic crisis or in a state of civil war.

### ***No impact***

The Arab countries of the Persian Gulf are distinguished by their high incomes due to the export of hydrocarbons to the world market. As a result, they have economic access to food security during times of crisis and can diversify supplies.

The United Arab Emirates found themselves in a risky position in the light of the active phase of the Russian-Ukrainian war. This country imported about 50% of grain from the Black Sea region. In order to prevent shortages, the country's authorities decided to suspend the export and re-export of durum wheat. With sufficient financial resources, Abu Dhabi decided to diversify its grain suppliers and agreed with Indian suppliers to fill in the gaps.

The Sultanate of Oman faced the potential risk of a shortage of grain, buying up to 70% of grain from Russia and Ukraine. The country found itself in a vulnerable position after the start of the military conflict and began to look for new suppliers. Muscat wanted to conclude an agreement with India on the supply of grain, but New Delhi announced an embargo on the export of goods. Australia, Canada and the USA were considered as promising partners, but they had high purchase prices. In September 2022, Oman was able to receive a contract for the purchase of wheat for half a year from Ukraine through the mediation of the UN and Turkey.

Qatar felt the turbulence in the world market because it found itself in a dual position. On the one hand, it is 50% dependent on grain imports from the Black Sea region. On the other hand, since the 2017 blockade, Doha has diligently diversified food supplies for the civilian population. Qatar began to consider India, Canada and the United States as alternative suppliers. After the conclusion of an agreement

between Moscow and Kyiv on the export of grain, Doha announced the prospects for purchasing from each of the parties to the conflict.

Saudi Arabia predominantly imported and grain from Poland and the Black Sea region provided 10%. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict did not affect the food security of Bahrain, which buys grain mainly from Australia. A similar situation is typical for Kuwait, as its key wheat import partners are Australia and Canada.

### ***Threat of economic turbulence***

Moscow and Kiev imposed an embargo on grain exports (Russia until June 30). A strong blow was felt by Egypt, which is the largest net importer of grain in the world and bought 80% of the goods from Moscow and Kyiv. During the first weeks after the start of the war, the Egyptian pound fell by 11% and the price of wheat rose by 44%. Shortage of dollars led to blockades of Egyptian ports after importers were unable to obtain the foreign currency they needed to process letters of credit. In March 2022, grain reserves in Egypt could only be enough for 4 months, in addition, large obligations fell on the state because the authorities subsidize bread baladi. Cairo, in an attempt to cope with the shortage of grain, decided to conclude deals for the supply of this product from Germany, France, Brazil, Lithuania and Bulgaria. At the same time, private entrepreneurs sharply increased purchases and overtook General Authority for Supply Commodities by 60%.

The rising cost of food has become the main challenge for the internal political situation in Algeria. Basic food prices have risen by at least a quarter since the start of the Russian campaign. The authorities have decided to impose a complete ban on the export from Algeria of all basic consumer goods, including sugar, pasta, olive oil, as well as wheat and all products made from it. At the same time, according to the order of the President, manufacturers and operators do not have the right to export processed products made on the basis of imported materials. The entire range of socio-economic consequences after COVID-19 and the Russian-Ukrainian war also affects the food situation in Algeria. Mainly, it is gaining momentum in the global increase in prices for cereals, the annual increase of which amounted to 27% and which is one of the main items of Algerian imports. Algeria imported over 30% of grain crops from the Black Sea region and was forced to purchase expensive French wheat to reduce food security risks.

Ukraine was a key exporter of grain crops to Tunisia (47%) before the war. The escalation of tension between Kyiv and Moscow found Tunisia in a difficult period, in an era of long-term unresolved economic challenges and transition to an authoritarian regime. The situation is complicated by the post-COVID period, climate cataclysms - the prolonged drought that has gripped the region and the lack of rains undermine the ability of the local economy to increase domestic agricultural production in order to somehow compensate for the threat of an external deficit. At the end of March 2022, a new law was issued in Tunisia, which provides for a criminal penalty of 10 to 30 years in prison for any "speculation regarding food", including cartel collusion and arbitrary speculative price increases by producers and major players in the food market for food products. A real "hunt" for small and medium-sized farms began in the country with police raids to locate and seize food stocks, especially wheat flour, vegetable oil and sugar.

Against the backdrop of the alarming situation in Algeria and Tunisia, the Kingdom of Morocco was in a better position, since grain imports from the Black Sea region amounted to 36%. For a long time, Paris was the main partner in this area for Rabat. Immediately with the onset of the crisis, the Moroccan government issued a statement that it managed to purchase “significant lots” of wheat in January and February 2022 and therefore nothing threatens the national grain market. Citizens felt relief, including in connection with the growth of domestic production of grain crops that can be consumed on the domestic market. In the light of rising world prices for cereals, the country’s authorities decided to subsidize bread in order to try to eliminate the possibility of an increase in the deficit. At the same time, the cost of flour and flour products will only increase in the near future, including due to the increase in the cost of hydrocarbons and fuel on the world market.

In Lebanon, economists sounded the alarm in connection with the threat of stopping the supply of wheat from the zone of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and an unprecedented increase in purchase prices. Until February 2022, Lebanon purchased 96% of wheat from the Russian and Ukrainian grain markets. The problem also lies in the weak potential of the Lebanese economy and its limited ability to pay for these supplies due to the shortage of cash in the banking system. In practice, this means that in the context of the unfolding global food crisis, international suppliers are not very interested in supplying scarce and expensive wheat to Lebanon, whose solvency in competing markets leaves much to be desired. In the context of the crisis around Ukraine, now Western manufacturers require an advance payment of 25-30% of the total cost and within 1-2 days. Such conditions for Lebanese importers are not feasible. In addition, the purchase prices from this group of suppliers, including taking into account the growing demand and increased transportation costs, are much higher and reach \$550-600 per ton, while in February Lebanese suppliers purchased wheat from Russia and Ukraine at the price only 350 dollars per ton.

Among all the major net food importers in the Middle East, Jordan was one of the most prepared for the threat of a global food crisis due to the threat of cutting off the supply of wheat and other strategic food raw materials from the Black Sea region. By the time the Russian-Ukrainian war began in the active phase, Amman had grain reserves for a year, while imports from the Black Sea region amounted to 20%. This circumstance is reinforced by another important factor. Jordan has managed to insulate its economy from the current spike in fuel prices by arranging long-term contracts in advance to purchase fuel at already fixed prices. Thus, the first direct consequences of the Ukrainian crisis on the local economy turned out to be neutralized thanks to the preventive, proactive measures of the Jordanian government.

### ***Aggravation of the crisis***

Active hostilities in Ukraine have greatly affected Northern Sudan, which imports 50% of food from the Black Sea region. Failures in logical supply chains began to lead to food shortages, higher fuel prices and logistics. As a result, food inflation has doubled since 2021. The main center of poverty and hunger has become two regions - Darfur and the Blue Nile.

In the conditions of being in a prolonged political crisis, Iraq felt the rise in world food prices after the start of the Russian military campaign. Baghdad imports 50% of food, while Ukraine and the Russian Federation are the main suppliers of corn,

sunflower oil, barley and grain. This is the basis of Iraq's food security. The rise in prices and the blockade of supplies from Ukraine and the Russian Federation forced the Iraqi authorities to look for alternative suppliers. In the course went such measures as the removal of all restrictions on food imports for 3 months, the issuance of loans to local farmers, the purchase of their products at a 30% markup. The Iraqi parliament has allowed the government to redirect about \$17 billion allocated to other sectors to pay for food imports.

Libya, which previously imported about 75% of grain from the Black Sea region, found itself in an extremely difficult situation. Despite the high income from the sale of oil to the world market, Tripoli cannot count on food security due to the ongoing civil war and the intensified struggle for the capital. At the same time, even though Libya had stocks of flour for half a year, citizens still face an acute problem of food security due to problems with logistics by land. Food inflation, combined with the lack of a single governing body, has endangered the lives of even residents of coastal cities (EIU, 2022).

A more difficult situation has developed in Yemen, where the population was in danger of large-scale starvation. This country imported 45% of grain from Russia and Ukraine. The problem was spurred on by the ongoing military conflict and the resulting massive flow of internally displaced persons and refugees, as well as the degrading financial and economic situation in the country against the backdrop of rising prices for energy resources and fuel. Given the lack of its own hydrocarbon resources and Yemen's heavy dependence on external food supplies, the country has no real leverage to counteract the unfavorable situation that is unfolding. Rising prices for fuel and fertilizers are progressively reflected in the local market and, given the steadily declining purchasing power of the population, increases the risks of large-scale famine in Yemen. The proportion of the population in Yemen that is food insecure has risen substantially to 50%, the highest since February 2018. Since the beginning of 2022 alone, this figure has grown by 10%. The situation is difficult in all regions of the country, but in some provinces it is close to a humanitarian catastrophe. In particular, the main regions of mass famine in Yemen today are located in the provinces of Jawf, Amran and Hajja. The United Nations estimates that in the second half of 2022, the risks of famine will increase significantly in the province of Hajja, as well as in the provinces of Abs and Hairan. The areas around the port of Hodeida are in a more prosperous situation, however, even there the threat of famine cannot be ruled out in the event of a general deterioration in the economic and military-political situation in Yemen.

The Syrian problem has become one of the protracted ones in the Middle East. Undoubtedly, its difference was that the head of state was never removed as a result of revolutionary movements and the offensive of ISIS. Damascus has become an ally of Moscow and continues to support it in many areas. Food was diverted to Syria after seizing Ukraine's grain regions, but Russia denies that the grains were stolen. At the same time, the leadership of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions declared their readiness to send grain to Syria. In this case, the formula "my friend's friend is my friend" worked.

## CONCLUSION

Taking into account the complexity of the Arab countries' perception of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, it is important to note that none of them became a fan of Kyiv or Moscow. From a political point of view, it is clear that there are countries that gravitate more towards Russia because they have established channels of communication with it on security issues and the supply of weapons. Part of the Arab countries formally condemned the actions of Moscow, but this was done mainly because of the desire to maintain strong contact with Western countries, especially in the context of civil wars and the expectation of loans.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has caused quite a lot of damage to the weak economies of the Arab countries, which are struggling to cope with the food crisis. The blocking of grain exports from the Black Sea region dealt a heavy blow to those who could not compensate for the high prices for bread. In this situation, only rich oil-producing countries have been able to meet this challenge by buying more expensive wheat from other countries.

In the foreseeable future, the Arab East will continue to try to distance itself from European and Russian problems, wanting to maintain contacts with everyone and ensure the stability of its economies. It is important to point out that they are focused on their own interests and will continue to make decisions on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict based on their national interests.

## LITERATURE

1. Ashton J., N. (2007). *The Cold War in the Middle East Regional Conflict and the Superpowers 1967-73*. Taylor & Francis.
2. Alan K., Henrikson, K., A. (1997). Middle Powers as Managers: International Mediation within, across and outside Institutions. *In the Niche Diplomacy Middle Powers after the Cold War*. Macmillan Press LTD.
3. Michael, E. (2000). War and the American Economy in the Twentieth Century. *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States*, edited by Stanley L. Engerman, and Robert E. Gallman, vol. III. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Stiglitz, J. and Linda J. Bilmes, J. L. (2008). *The Three Trillion Dollar War. The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict*. London: Penguins Books.
5. Ben Menachem, Y. (2022). *The Palestinian stance on the invasion of Ukraine*. JCPA. URL: [jcpa.org/the-palestinian-stance-on-the-invasion-of-ukraine](http://jcpa.org/the-palestinian-stance-on-the-invasion-of-ukraine).
6. Kebret, E., Ryder, H. (2022). *Why African Countries Had Different Views on the UNGA Ukraine Resolution, and Why This Matters*. CSIS. 2022. URL: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/why-african-countries-had-different-views-unga-ukraine-resolution-and-why-matters>.
7. Rogoff, K. (2022). *The Long-Lasting Economic Shock of War*. IMF. URL: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2022/03/the-long-lasting-economic-shock-of-war>
8. Amr Salah, A. (2022). *Why Does Some of the Arab Public Support Putin's War in Ukraine?* Carnegie. URL: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/87353>
9. *Global economic impacts of the Russia-Ukraine war*. EIU. 2022. URL: <https://www.eiu.com/n/global-economic-implications-of-the-russia-ukraine-war/>
10. *Burç Eruygur. Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Egypt's Stance and Policy Dilemma*. ORSAM. <https://orsam.org.tr/en/russias-invasion-of-ukraine-egypts-stance-and-policy-dilemma/>
11. Kalb, M. (2015). *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War*. Brookings.
12. Middle East and North Africa: Implications of 2022 Russia-Ukraine War. *Congressional Research Service*. URL: <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/R47160.pdf>.