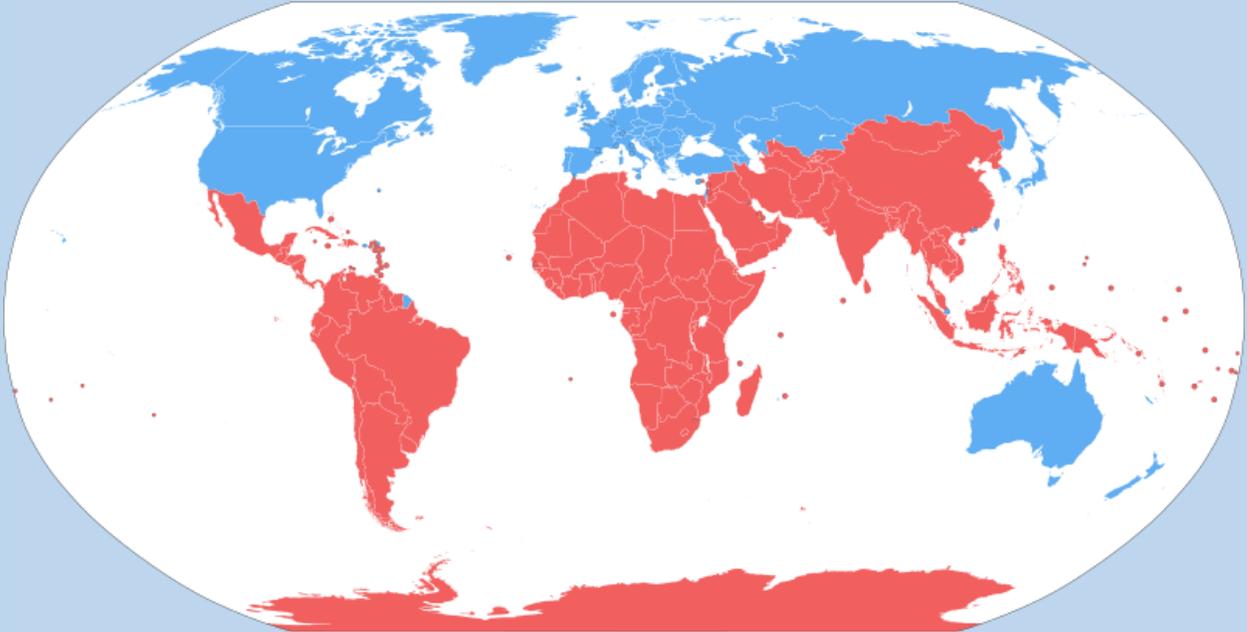


**Association of Global South Studies, Inc.**



**Special Report:**  
**The Global South & Ukraine**

Co-Editors — *Paul A. Rodell & Cathy Skidmore-Hess*

# *Table of Contents*

- 3-4 Introduction – *Paul A. Rodell* and *Cathy Skidmore-Hess*
- 5-11 *Philip Szmedra*, The Russian Invasion of Ukraine: Economic Impacts on  
The Developing World
- 12-22 *William Biebuyck*, The War on Ukraine and Global Food Supply:  
Humanitarian & Structural Considerations
- 23-31 *Aran MacKinnon* and *Elaine MacKinnon*, A View of African Interests  
in the War on Ukraine: The Past and Future of the African Struggle  
for Non-alignment
- 32-40 *Jacek Lubecki*, The War in Ukraine and the Middle East
- 41-47 *Dorothea A.L. Hoffman-Martin*, China's Balancing Act in Response  
to the War in Ukraine
- 48-51 *Kalyan Chatterjee*, Russian Invasion of Ukraine – Indian Foreign Policy  
Turns Full Circle
- 52-60 *Paul A. Rodell*, Southeast Asian Complexity and Ukraine
- 61-67 *Michael Bess*, Historicizing and Contextualizing Mexico's Reaction to the  
Ukraine Crisis
- 68-77 *Brian R. Parkinson*, Waves Originating from Distant Shores: The Ripple  
Effects of the War in Ukraine on South American States
- 78-80 Notes on Contributors
- 81 About the Association of Global South Studies, Inc.

# Introduction to the Special Report

Co-Editors Paul A. Rodell and Cathy Skidmore-Hess

By early 2022 some national militaries and intelligence agencies had become confident that Vladimir Putin was planning to invade the republic of Ukraine. Tragically, many doubted this horrific prediction even President Volodymyr Zelensky. We the co-editors of this Special Report, all of the contributors, and undoubtedly many of our readers were shocked by the unwarranted Russian Federation attack of February 24. As the scope and severity of this shocking breach of international law and decency set in, so too did our awareness that the consequences would spread beyond those involved in the immediate conflict. As scholars of the Global South, we became especially concerned about the war's impact beyond the immediate theater of combat, NATO, and the EU. In media coverage, references to the Global South were infrequent and centered on the European theater. We quickly came to the conclusion that a deeper analysis from the perspective of the Global South was needed. This was particularly true for those of us who sought knowledge to present a broader view of the conflict.

To achieve this goal we contacted scholars with expertise in a multiple fields and regions to offer easily accessible pieces. Not be a traditional peer reviewed publication, we have vetted each participant and reviewed each contribution for cogent in-depth analysis. We set word limits for submissions at no more than 5,000 words and emphasized that contributions should be written so a non-specialist could comprehend the main points of each article. Our goal here was to make each article accessible so readers might reach beyond their own country or region of specialization. To streamline this Special Report, reduce the cost and assist in distribution, we determined the final product would be electronically published.

The result is this special report made possible by the [Association of Global South Studies](#). There are two thematic contributions about the global economic impact of the war and on food security. The remaining chapters cover either major countries or distinct regions of the Global South. It is our hope that this report will be a resource that stimulates further discussion and investigation in the classroom and in the scholarly realm. However, given the time constraints, we have asked our authors to provide a list of further reading, but not footnotes. We also asked that our contributors eschew heavily theoretical language. We look forward to seeing the further work of our contributors and others stimulated by this report in peer-reviewed journals such as our Association's [Journal of Global South Studies](#).

In conclusion, we wish to express our strong and sincere gratitude to our contributors. In order to get this Special Report to our readers as quickly as possible, we set a very demanding schedule of a mere six weeks for submissions and revisions. This is

far more rapid than most publication schedules and was designed to quickly address changing events and be of use in classrooms by the fall of 2022. We also wish to thank the Association Global South Studies Executive Committee for their support of our effort. When our proposal was presented for their consideration, with the support of the *Journal of Global South Studies* editor Ryan Alexander, some questions and concerns were raised but there were no objections. We have a strong Executive Committee and now that the pandemic may for the most part be behind us, we hope that Association of Global South Studies will resume its usually activities perhaps including further efforts such as this.

Paul A. Rodell, Treasurer of [Association of Global South Studies](#)

Cathy Skidmore-Hess, current President of [Association of Global South Studies](#)

\*The [Association of Global South Studies](#) has an [annual conference](#) ( and a twice annual journal, [Journal of Global South Studies](#) the (JGSS), published in cooperation with the University of Florida Press.

\*\*[Membership Application Form for Association of Global South Studies](#)

## *Chapter One*

# The Russian Invasion of Ukraine: Economic Impacts on the Developing World

*Philip Szmedra (Gannon University)*

### **Abstract**

After two years of pandemic-related supply shortages and price hikes the conflict in Ukraine has added to the tenuous economic situation that many nations in the Global South confront. In addition, the precarious financial state that many developing countries have faced since the onset of the pandemic has been made even more uncertain by the current conflict. Access to global financial markets and low interest rates are critical elements in allowing developing nations to fund economy recovery. People in 107 countries will be severely affected by the conflict and will experience increased prices of food, energy, and tightening financial conditions. 1.2 billion people face the crippling economic consequences of all three impacts. This paper explores the economic impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on the Global South and is meant to be a contribution to a medley of papers that reflect on the social, economic, and political ramifications of the conflict.

### **The Issues**

The economic implications of the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine are vast with global significance but potentially most damaging to nations in the Global South. Food and energy prices have spiked worldwide adding additional woe to as many as two billion people with up to one third of that number already living in poverty. After two years of pandemic-related supply shortages and price hikes the conflict in Ukraine has simply added to the tenuous economic situation that many nations in the Global South confront. In addition, the precarious financial state that many developing countries have faced since the onset of the pandemic has been made even more uncertain by the current conflict. Access to global financial markets and low interest rates are critical elements in allowing developing nations to fund economy recovery. The Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has estimated that people in 107 countries will be severely affected by the conflict and will experience increased prices of food, energy, and tightening financial conditions.

Sixty-nine countries, including 25 countries in Africa, 25 in Asia and the Pacific, and 19 in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a combined population of 1.2 billion people face the crippling economic consequences of all three impacts. For instance, 36

countries rely on Russia and Ukraine for more than half of their wheat and other grain imports including some of the world's poorest countries. Ukraine is the number one exporter of sunflower seeds with more than a third of the global market. It is the fourth largest exporter of wheat with a 10 percent share, and it is the fifth largest exporter of corn with a seven percent share. Russia is number one in the world in the exportation of wheat. It is the world's largest natural gas exporter and second largest petroleum exporter as well as accounting for about 20 percent of the chemical fertilizers exported globally. Russia accounts for a quarter of the market for natural gas, nearly 20 percent of the market for coal, fourteen percent of the market for platinum, and more than 10 percent of the market for crude oil.

The economic sanctions placed on Russia will impact its ability to fulfill natural gas and oil deliveries as well as hamper Russia's clients in making payments due to the financial restrictions put in place. While for now, no one has imposed sanctions on imports of Russian grain, importers are finding it increasingly difficult to purchase grain from Russia due to difficulties in transferring funds to Russian companies and insuring ships. The Russian blockade of important Ukrainian grain exporting Black Sea ports such as Odessa and the Russian takeover of the city and port of Mariupol have effectively removed millions of tons of grain from global markets pushing global grain prices higher.

## **Global South Vulnerability**

Developing countries that are highly dependent on food and energy imports are the most vulnerable. Nicaragua, for example, buys 89 percent of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine; the figure for the Republic of Congo is 67 percent. Russia supplies 94 percent of Algeria's coal and the same share of Kyrgyzstan's natural gas.

Because food and fuel tend to be larger shares of the budgets of poorer people, and more poor people live in poorer countries, poorer countries will be much more affected than rich countries. The share of food in the consumption spending of the average citizen in a poor nation is more than 40 percent. In rich economies, it is half that. The poor will be affected disproportionately.

## **Global Inflation and Social Unrest**

The increasing cost of petroleum and natural gas because of supply chain disruptions will increase the cost of transport contributing to increased prices of commodities and stoking global inflation. Increasing prices of food and fuel could contribute to social unrest.

Egypt is a case in point. The country is the world's largest purchaser of wheat and depends on Russian and Ukrainian exports for 80 percent of its supply. The country is now involved in searching for alternative suppliers while dealing with significant price

increases for foodstuffs. Rising prices may lead to social tensions, especially in countries such as Egypt with weaker social safety nets, fewer job opportunities, and unpopular governments. A portion of the Egyptian populace was an important factor in the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 and could be a flash point for the expected social unrest that could occur in vulnerable countries such as those in North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa.

## **The Future of Globalization**

As food security is threatened by diminished global supply of foodstuffs many nations will attempt to secure domestic production by banning or controlling exports of critical crops. These types of restrictions endanger the entire global market for food commodities and by extension the globalized trading system that has dominated the global economy for the past forty years. The Covid-19 pandemic prompted the initial questioning of whether economic globalization and interdependence of nations in global commerce was sustainable. If an outbreak of an infectious disease in a wet market in China could essentially shut down social interaction, cause commercial supply chains to freeze in place, and sicken hundreds of millions of people, is it rational to continue to think that the Ricardian notion of comparative advantage should govern the flow of resources and final products? Would it not be more prudent to develop domestic capacity for basic needs such as food and energy and avoid the risks associated with global interdependence?

With the pandemic continuing to affect global commerce the world community now confronts the conflict in Eastern Europe. Will these compounding forces generate sufficient international will and wherewithal to move from economic interconnectedness to autarky? Can economic imperatives be shelved in favor of a risk-averse, higher cost and therefore higher priced system that would offer nations in both the developed and developing worlds paths toward strong long-term growth?

There are good economic reasons why the global economy has developed its current cross-border supply chain structure; why nurturing a reliance on trading partners for both raw materials, intermediate, and finished products has governed commercial interaction for more than four decades; and why economic growth in much of the developing world has been enhanced by these mutually beneficial relationships. These reasons have not materially changed because of the war in Ukraine.

## **The Russian Economy**

The dislocation to global supply chains by the Russia-Ukraine conflict is a temporary aberration. The Russian economy is ranked eleventh globally in nominal GDP essentially due to the importance of its extractive industries to its economic output. Because the Russian economy is extractive industries-dependent its ability to demonstrate

any sort of resilience should carbon-based energy prices decline is limited highlighting the inherent weakness of extractive-based economies. Many European nations rely on Russia for petroleum and natural gas. The severe economic sanctions placed by Western nations on the Russian economy will hinder Russian economic growth in both the short and long term assuming the war grinds on. While Russia is an important player in global petroleum and extractive resource markets as well as grain production and export, the isolation of the Russian economy will have a minimal effect on global economic growth. Many European nations have already put in place plans to wean themselves from dependence on Russian oil and gas. Much of the developing world is not reliant on Russia for its carbon-based energy exports. Africa, the Americas, and the Middle East all have significant petroleum production capacities. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, former members of the Soviet Union, are major oil producers in their own right, although dependent on Russia in getting their crude to world markets.

## **Severe Economic Impacts**

The most severe economic impacts resulting from the conflict have been and will continue to be felt in Europe and Central Asia among those countries with the strongest trading ties to Russia. Nations in other parts of the world that have previously sourced their cereals and oil seed imports from Russia and Ukraine will be able to find alternative exporters willing to sell albeit at higher prices due to diminished global supply. If Western sanctions on the Russian economy continue into the longer term as it seems they may to exact appropriate punishment on Russia, the network of newly organized supply chains and commodity supply sources will become permanent depriving the Russian economy of potential sources of longer-term growth.

The heavy economic sanctions imposed on Russia by the Western powers have caused disruptions in regional and global supply chains, trade dislocations, diminished remittances, and other financial flows of capital as the Russian economy contracts, and the increased negative perceptions by global investors about the risks of doing business in Russia. Many of the economies of Central Asian countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union rely on remittances from their nationals working in the Russian Federation. Economic contracture leading to decreased demand for foreign workers as well as the decline in the value of the ruble will negatively impact these nations' growth prospects. The World Bank projects that growth for Eastern Europe and Central Asian economies to slow to 2.2 percent for 2022 compared with 7.8 percent growth in 2021.

## **Increased Food and Energy Insecurity**

Disruptions to commodity production could exacerbate worldwide food and energy insecurity. The reduced global availability of food grains has caused food prices to rise further across the Global South which threatens food security in much of the developing world. Most of the developing world imports food grains and oilseeds. The

economic consequences of the covid pandemic resulting in increased food and fuel prices have led to increased numbers of people at risk for food insecurity according to the World Food Program. The Russia-Ukraine conflict will add significantly to the numbers of the undernourished.

## **The Situation in Africa**

Demand for food and oil grains among African nations has increased by 68 percent between 2007 and 2019 to 47 million tons. The great bulk of that increase has been provided by imports from Russia and Ukraine rather than by intra-African trade. The North African nations of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia, as well as Nigeria in West Africa, Ethiopia, and Sudan in East Africa, and the Republic of South Africa account for 80 percent of wheat imports into Africa. Wheat consumption is projected to reach 76.5 million tons by 2025, of which 48.3 million tons or 63.4 percent is projected to be imported from outside of the continent. The closed ports of Ukraine and other Black Sea navigational disruptions will severely affect commercial flows between Russia and Ukraine and their African trading partners. In addition, there is increased concern that a worldwide shortage of fertilizer will compound inflationary pressures on food prices, with implications for agricultural production and food security on the African continent.

## **Pacific Island Nations**

Pacific Island nations (PINS) are generally isolated from the current conflict and the resulting economic impacts. The PINS include Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, Cook Islands, Tuvalu, Tokelau, Niue, Nauru, and other smaller independent states. Although basic food staples include domestically grown taro and cassava, cereals for baking and food manufacture are sourced from Australia and New Zealand rather than Eurasia. Refined petroleum is transported by tanker from refineries in Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand. Geographic isolation has hindered the ability of the people of the PINS to benefit effectively from the globalization movement. That same isolation has provided a buffer from the global exigencies that periodically place regions of the world in jeopardy. The Russia-Ukraine conflict from a 10,000-mile remove is a distinctly different entity to a Fijian in Suva the capital than to a Bulgarian sitting in a café in the Black Sea city of Burgas and contemplating the ultimate Russian objectives of its current escapade. Different perspectives, different threat levels.

## **Latin America and the Caribbean**

The conflict will affect the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean through higher energy and food prices. Nations that are oil exporters such as Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, and Mexico stand to benefit from the spiraling price of petroleum resulting from sanctions on Russian oil. However, for countries such as Peru and Chile

which import oil and other petroleum products, escalating oil prices will hurt their fiscal integrity. Rising oil and food prices will contribute to a quickening general inflation that has plagued many nations in the region for years. Food represents about 25 percent of average consumption spending in the region with higher food prices threatening greater levels of poverty and hunger.

Regional central bankers had been tightening monetary policy to combat pre-pandemic inflationary pressures. Even tighter monetary controls to reign in the recent conflict-related food and energy price increases will result in higher interest rates. Higher rates will further constrain the ability of these nations to achieve the levels of economic growth necessary to bring greater numbers of the region's people out of poverty and into the middle class.

## **Conclusions**

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has had devastating consequences for the Ukrainian people, has destroyed critical infrastructure, and has shaken the foundations of the Ukrainian state. Estimates of the contraction of the Ukrainian economy run to 45 percent in 2022. Western sanctions to punish the unwarranted Russian aggression have sought to damage the Russian economy and have to this point been sufficiently effective to cause projected decreases in Russian GDP of 10 percent in 2022. While the conflict has exacted a humanitarian and economic toll in both nations the impact on the developing world is mixed. Energy producers in the Global South will benefit in the short term from increased prices of oil and gas though some of this windfall will be eroded by increased prices for grains and oil seeds. While supplies of cereal grains and oil seeds will experience short term disruptions, grain and oil seed buyers can source needed supplies from other nations who are net exporters of food and feed crops. Regional trade agreements will play a more important role in sourcing commodity supplies going forward. The basic reasons why the global economy has evolved in the way that it has with interdependence being the norm and comparative advantage the signal coda governing economic relations among nation states have not changed because of the brutal conflict in Ukraine. This is not the end of Globalization. On the contrary. The current supply disruptions will cause the nations of the Global South as well as every other nation that has a stake in the global market to expand its networks and cultivate alternative supply sources. While short term dislocations may be painful due to price increases for food and fuel and their attendant social disruptions and unrest, in the longer term a more robust system of global linkages will emerge; those linkages now developing.

## **Sources**

Business Standard, April 14, 2022. [https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/un-says-russia-ukraine-war-threatens-to-devastate-many-poor-nations-122041400178\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/un-says-russia-ukraine-war-threatens-to-devastate-many-poor-nations-122041400178_1.html)

Chepeliev, Maksym, Maryla Maliszewska, and Maria Filipa Seara e Ppereira, May 6, 2022. VoxMultimedia. Agricultural and Energy importers in the developing world are hit hardest by the Ukraine war's economic fallout. <https://voxeu.org/article/developing-world-agricultural-and-energy-importers-hit-hardest-ukraine-war-economic-fallout>.

*Crisis Group*. The Impact of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine in the Middle east and North Africa. April 14, 2022. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/impact-russias-invasion-ukraine-middle-east-and-north-africa>.

Dollar, David and Indermit Gill. Dollar & Sense: The *Brookings* Trade Podcast. The Ukraine war's impact on developing countries. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Dollar-and-Sense-Gill-20220321.pdf>.

*The Hindu*, April 13, 2022. The effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on the global economy. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/explained-the-effects-of-the-russia-ukraine-conflict-on-the-global-economy/article65312083.ece>.

Tooze, Adam. April 5, 2022. Ukraine's war has already changed the world economy <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/05/ukraine-russia-war-world-economy/>.

*We Forum*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/03/ukraine-russia-war-impact-latin-america-caribbean/>

*World Bank*. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/5d903e848db1d1b83e0ec8f744e55570-0350012021/related/Implications-of-the-War-in-Ukraine-for-the-Global-Economy.pdf>

*WFP* (World Food Programme). 2022. "Food Security Implications of the Ukraine Conflict," World Food Programme, Rome. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/may-2022/how-russia-ukraine-conflict%20%20impacts-africa>

## *Chapter Two*

# The War on Ukraine and Global Food Supply/Security

*William Biebuyck (Georgia Southern University)*

### **Introduction: Mapping the Problem**

It is certainly important that we foreground the geopolitical, military, and territorial implications of this conflict. At the same time, these are not the only dimensions of Russia's invasion of Ukraine deserving of critical analysis and scrutiny. As we have learned from multiple protracted conflicts over the past decade, there are also profound and widespread challenges at the level of human security and economic stability that likewise necessitate heightened attention from academics, media and public intellectuals. Some of the more profound of these challenges include the creation and management of large refugee flows; the increased dependence on informal and black markets in conflict zones; and the manifold consequences generated by the destruction of vital public infrastructure. Consistent with this commitment to better understanding the social and 'everyday' costs of war, the following paper will describe and analyze one of the central humanitarian and economic challenges that has been generated by the conflict in Ukraine – its impact on food supply and food security around the world. The remainder of this introduction will serve to 'map out' these impacts and point to their importance. Subsequent sections will provide more specific analysis on Russia's deliberate strategy around the weaponization of food and farming, and how this is widening and intensifying an ongoing food crisis across the Global South.

In order to understand the agrarian/food related consequences of the Ukraine conflict, one must first situate the broader importance of Ukrainian (and Russian) agriculture in the global food system. In short, both countries are agro-exporting powerhouses in a highly integrated global food system that encourages specialization and has few 'buffers' in terms of surplus grain reserves, agricultural inputs, or potential alternative producers. This means that when commodity exports are blocked, shipping flows are disrupted, and/or highly productive farming operations are destroyed or cannot get their crops to market, the global food markets and supply chains that depend on this supply will suffer in terms of volume and . This state of affairs, in turn, will ultimately manifest as shortages for certain populations and markets, as well as universally higher prices for consumers globally. For food aid recipients that depend on said grain or cooking oil for basic survival, they may lose their entitlement to food altogether. This is how mega-weather events, conflicts, or supply chain disruptions in the world's major agro-exporting regions can cause hunger and food shortages well beyond their borders.

Relative to how this scenario has played out in the specific context of the Ukraine conflict, the first thing to consider is that Ukraine exports more wheat than the entire EU combined, while also being a leading producer of sunflower oil and corn for global markets. Consider these figures a decisive statistical backdrop for understanding the new wave of food vulnerabilities unleashed by the invasion and subsequent military campaign. Around 15 percent of all global grain exports in the five years preceding the conflict came from Ukraine. This made the country the fifth largest exporter of grain worldwide, with about six tons leaving its Black Sea ports each month. Ukraine's global market share of sunflower oil is beyond impressive, and accounts for 50 percent of the global total. Ukraine is also the fourth largest exporter of corn, much of it going into animal feed, a vital input for animal protein supply chains. Considered together, Ukraine and Russia constitute a 'regional bread-basket' that, before the invasion, accounted for 33% of all globally traded wheat; 70 percent of all sunflower oil and seed; and 25% of all barley. By some estimates, Ukraine and Russia generate 12 percent of all global caloric intake (upon factoring in grains, cooking oils, and feed).

In addition to their decisive role as exporters of grains and cooking oil, both countries also play a vital role in supplying the global food system with agrarian 'inputs' that are necessary for continued productivity. The aforementioned corn and barley exports are one good example, as these grains are mostly processed for animal feed. This demonstrates an important role that Russia and Ukraine play for global meat supply chains, as well as for smaller animal husbandry operations across the Global South. According to the FAO price food index, meat prices have increased around 12 percent over the past year, with much of this due to the supply chain disruptions caused by the conflict. In addition to meat prices rising globally, there are numerous reports of small farmers in the Global South forced to sell their animals or butcher them prematurely. Furthermore, Russia is a crucial exporter of nitrogen based fertilizers that are essential for the continued output of large soy, corn, and wheat farms from South America to Eastern Europe. Many smaller farmers in West African countries such as Ghana and Nigeria are also dependent on Russian and Belorussian supply. As these trends continue to consolidate, and fertilizer usage is rationed or discontinued by producers, we can expect both higher costs of production and lower harvest yields to result. It is already clear that such a trend will impact both capitalist farming and smaller subsistence-based systems as well.

Due to the highly integrated nature of agricultural commodity and input markets, all consumers will essentially feel the impact of the Ukraine conflict in terms of higher food prices. That said, the market and humanitarian impacts for some populations will be far more acute. And in this context specifically, they involve some of the world's most already vulnerable populations, many of whom are already experiencing alarming rates of hunger and food insecurity. This reality is most centered in some of the 26 countries that import more than 50 percent of their wheat from Ukraine and Russia, with the dependence heavily concentrated in regions such as North Africa, Middle East, and

the Horn of Africa. For example, countries such as Yemen, South Sudan, and Somalia were already in the midst of a significant food crisis and widespread hunger before the loss of Ukrainian exports. The FAO and WHO estimates that across East Africa the number of food insecure has now reached 80 million, with one out of every two people having been forced to sell possession in order to eat. Another recent report from the WFP placed the number of now facing potential starvation at a staggering 50 million; with the majority of these persons residing in countries that are dependent on Ukrainian supply

## **Russia's Weaponization of Food & Farming**

Historically, there are many reasons why prolonged conflict generates food shortages and therefore hunger. These causes commonly include the military occupation of farmland, the diversion of agricultural labor into the wartime economy, the destruction of transportation and storage infrastructure, forced requisitions by militaries, the growth of black markets, underinvestment in the farming sector, and the public rationing of foodstuffs. Some of the above factors are present in the Ukraine conflict. For starters, there is now abundant evidence that Russian forces have been deliberately and often systematically targeting farm machinery, agrarian infrastructure, and even farmers in the field (see below). In addition to constituting a flagrant war crime, such attacks can also be viewed as a form of economic warfare aimed at Ukraine's most valuable export sector. While Russia has not imposed a system of 'forced requisitions' of Ukrainian foodstuffs, it has engaged in the select pilfering of Ukrainian grain stocks. In May, satellite imagery confirmed a Ukrainian accusation that Russia had stolen 400,000 tons of Ukrainian wheat in one campaign. In a truly cynical move, the sale of these agricultural commodities is then organized through bilateral deals wherein Russia targets the same Global South countries made vulnerable by the maritime blockade. The Middle East Institute has also accused Russia of using merchant vessels to obscure the grain trafficking. In effect, the Russian state is here functioning as an organized crime syndicate that conjoins wide scale banditry with humanitarian blackmail. The ultimate intent is to squeeze revenue from falling states and starving people while also 'locking in' economic dependence on Russia. As the head of the EU Commissions noted: 'holding back supplies to increase global prices, or trading wheat in exchange for political support. This is using hunger...to wield political power'

While acknowledging the impact of Russian violence, thievery, and diversion on the global supply of Ukrainian wheat, it remains the case that the maritime blockade and related 'siege' tactics applied to Black Sea ports and export terminals is the primary reason Ukrainian wheat exports have basically collapsed, going from five million tons before the invasion, to 1.4 after. Ukraine's export flows are uniquely dependent on maritime shipping that originates out of Black Sea Ports. While estimates vary, up to 98 percent of Ukrainian grain and wheat exports, and 90% for all agrarian exports, move this way. The maritime blockade and other aggressive naval maneuvers began almost immediately after the invasion in late February. The first targets were key ports/export

terminals in Odessa & Mykolajiv. From a humanitarian perspective, the effects were immediate and borderline catastrophic, as 25 million tons of grain could not reach food insecure populations or urban consumers across markets in Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. While some important export terminals do remain under Ukrainian control, their port infrastructure is routinely attacked, and much of the coastline has been mined. At a UN Security Council meeting in June, Western leaders pulled no punches in declaring that Russia was engaging in a systematic weaponization of food and deliberately manufacturing a humanitarian crisis across the Global South. The EU Council president pointedly accused Russia of ‘using food supplies as a stealth missile against developing countries’ in an effort to generate price spikes, hunger, and widespread sociopolitical instability to benefit its geopolitical position.

Alternative routes and shipping modalities do exist but, unfortunately, cannot come close to making up for the maritime tonnage lost as a result of the blockade. There is also the problem of significantly higher shipping costs when using alternative routes/modalities, such as the overland movement of commodities westward by truck or train, or via barge on the Danube to Romanian ports. With these and other alternative shipping options costing upwards of \$340 million per ton, many farmers are finding the cost prohibitive, and therefore choosing instead to have their grain sit in a silo, or not be harvested at all. With no ability to transport and market their grain, revenue will be lacking for investment in the next year’s harvest, further decreasing production levels and exacerbating the crisis. Indeed, the only efficacious solution is to reopen the Ukrainian Black Sea ports as quickly as possible, and provide guarantee security guarantees for maritime shipping. As Martin Fick, the head of the WFP global office stated: ‘It’s virtually impossible to balance out the closing of the sea ports’.

On display with Russian actions is specific variation on the longstanding military strategy of the economic blockade. Regarding food, this strategy is usually mobilized with the hopes of imposing a ‘siege’ on the civil population. In the traditional iteration, the blockade is about reducing or eliminating imports of vital food stuffs and other supplies to the civilian population, eventually creating widespread social discontent and opposition to continuing the war. Russia’s strategy is different in this regard. It is not about using the economic blockade to realize an effective ‘siege’ over the Ukrainian people or economy. In fact, it’s about restricting the outward movement of commodities from Ukraine for the purposes of undermining global humanitarian governance and economic order, as well as stoking conflicts between the West and potential Russian allies in the Global South.

In a revealing podcast from The New York Times (Telegraph series), the discussants outline how the weaponization of grain and food has become tactically more important as Russia’s ability to gain a quick and overwhelming victory on the battlefield has waned. The new strategy is not based on the mobilization of overwhelming military power, but rather seeks to operationalize a logic of ‘attrition’ whereby a steady stream of

armed assaults, collective punishments, and forced deprivations is exacted across the Ukrainian population. There is also another set of actors associated with the liberal global order being targeted through Russia's wartime practices. Included here is the US, NATO, the EU, and the NGO complex that has been at the forefront of documenting Russian atrocities and providing assistance to refugees and victims of Russian aggression. Putin's hope seems to be that by manufacturing humanitarian crises, destabilizing the global economy, circulating disinformation, and pulverizing Ukrainian society, the West will eventually lose its appetite for conflict and seek compromise with Russia. This is the second front of Putin's wartime 'attrition' strategy. It is a strategy based on a belief in the inherent softness and disunity of the Western alliance

An example of this strategy in practice with relevance to the 'weaponization of food' is the recent Russian about-face immediately upon committing itself to 'freeing' Ukrainian grain exports held up at Black Sea ports (the product of a maritime blockade). This act of shocking duplicity followed a late July agreement that was the product of painstaking Turkish and UN diplomacy. It was centered on a commitment by Russia to 'free' millions of tons of grain exports held up at three Black Sea ports. The grain was destined for populations in East Africa and the Middle East that had been particularly dependent on Ukrainian exports before the war, and were therefore suffering the effects of the blockade accordingly. Some of this grain was also earmarked for the WFP's emergency feeding programs in Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen – three of the hungriest countries in the world. Not a full day after promising security guarantees for merchant vessels and port infrastructure (22 July), two Russian cruise missiles slammed into the port of Odessa (23 July), immediately sowing further distrust and antagonism towards Russia, a sentiment that was only further amplified upon hearing Russia's farcical denial of having orchestrated the attack.

Outside of aggregate commodity shortages and disruptions to shipping flows, the continued assaults and disruptions places on Ukrainian farming must also be considered as constitutive factors in the exacerbation of the global food crisis. And here again, we confront a deliberate strategy by the Russians to 'weaponize food' in the form of directly targeting agrarian structures for the exclusive purposes of disrupting food production. There have been copious reports of Russian strikes on grain facilities. A CSIS report has documented numerous attacks on food markets and storage in warehouses, as well as direct targeting of farmers who were busily preparing their fields at night. Some farmers have quit working at night stating that the lights from the combines are a 'beacon for artillery'. With the conflict not even two months old, extensive N interviews with farmers revealed the deliberate targeting and destruction of tractors, granaries, warehouses, barns, and even milking houses.

It is important to note that the impacts on Ukraine farming are not limited to the (2021) grain crop which has already been harvested but cannot be exported. Additionally, there is inadequate storage capacity for the current crop, as well as difficulty bringing it

to market, or financing the movement of this grain when transportation conditions do allow for it. Moreover, the ability to sow next year's harvest has been significantly impacted by the conflict in a variety of ways. Machinery has been destroyed, fertilizer is in short supply, and there is a lack of agricultural labor available. Additionally, the conflict itself has made working out in the fields somewhat precarious. A large dairy farmer near the city of Sievierodonetsk described the confluence of problems to The New York Times this way: 'If I do not prepare feed for my cows they will die this winter...[but]...I cannot cut they hay because of the cluster bombs in the fields and I need 12,000 bales of hay and I do not have the workers'. It is hard to imagine a more totalizing set of interlinking challenges facing farmers anywhere in the world today.

## **The Intensification of Hunger & Food Insecurity in the Global South**

The WFP estimates that between Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya, up to 20 million people could go hungry this year. The Tigray conflict in northernmost Ethiopia, which has occurred in the midst of a multiyear drought, has led to 9 million people in the region becoming primarily dependent on food aid for survival. The bulk of this food aid here is being provided by the WFP, with over 50 percent of their supply originating from Ukraine. A similar problem is evident upon considering the situation in Somalia, as discussed in a previous section. Somalia's wheat import dependence is quite concentrated, as 90 percent of it originates from Ukraine and Russia. From the combined effect of higher prices and less food aid now being available in the region, the existing problems of acute food insecurity and localized starvation have become greatly magnified. In Ethiopia, aid groups and UN officials have been reporting dramatic price increases in bread and oil, with this being accompanied by (expected) widespread shortages. Based on UN estimates, nearly two million children in the region need immediate intervention for acute malnutrition. At the same time, the UNICEF deputy regional director for East Africa has noted that assistance has become even more difficult at the same time, due to the fact the 'therapeutic food' used to treat childhood malnutrition has increased by over 15 percent. Nigeria has the largest population in Africa, and wheat makes up a large portion of the caloric intake, yet only 1 percent of that wheat is domestically produced. It's expected that 1.2 million Nigerians will this year end up in the 'emergency' category of the IPC food insecurity classification system. The only category worse than this is defined by 'catastrophe' and 'famine'. Child stunting is greater than 33 percent in the country, with the numbers continuing to grow in the south of the country.

Countries in the Middle East and North Africa are particularly large grain importers. And because of their proximity to Black Sea ports, much of this naturally comes from Ukraine/Russia. Egypt is the world's largest importer of grain, with Ukraine/Russia accounting for 80 percent. The flatbread consumed by most Egyptians – called 'baladi' – is made from the hearty winter wheat that is exported from Ukraine.

Given this extreme level of dependency, the conflict caused immediate price hikes in Egypt. The COVID disruptions generated a 25 percent increase in the price of wheat which has remained, while the impacts of the Ukraine conflict could generate another 10-12 percent increase. This magnitude of increase is what leads many to become recipients of food aid in the first place, and forces other urban consumers reduce eliminate an entire meal as a strategy for managing an inflationary household food budget. As one expert flatly put it, in the North Africa at least, this could easily be ‘the straw that breaks the camel’s back for many, many, in the region’

In the Egyptian case, it is not so much the fear of famine or even widespread malnutrition that is the cause of political anxiety. Rather, it’s the fact that 70 of the 102 million people in Egypt rely on subsidies, notably urban consumers, in order to guarantee their household food supply. As one commenter notes, removing a food entitlement raises the specter of popular violence, and even potentially subversive or revolutionary activity. The goal of the Egyptian government is thus to ‘maintain their social safety net programs and to avoid some kind of political instability...conflict drives hunger, and hunger feeds conflict’. As part of their preemptive (domestic) efforts, the Egyptian government has resorted to tightening eligibility requirements for bread subsidies, encouraging farmers to harvest their wheat early, and imposing price ceiling on bakers and bread vendors. This is hardly a set of actions based in rational economic policy. To borrow a phrase the social historian E.P. Thompson, the ‘moral economy’ of bread requires a efficacious response to problems like urban dearth and high price, lest political authorities lose their legitimacy and invite resistance.

Before the Ukraine conflict began, the WFP was already responsible for feeding 13 million people in Yemen. This conflict generated significant supply deficiencies and food price inflation in one of the world’s poorest and hungriest countries. Because of shortfalls in funding, the WFP was already in the process of cutting rations for 8 million people in Yemen before the Ukraine conflict. Now that problem has been made significantly worse, as half of its emergency food assistance came from Ukrainian exports. As a result – and this is just one example – the WFP had had to suspend its emergency feeding in South Sudan, as supply price problems simply exhausted the organizations regional budget, which is no longer enough to provide essential (and lifesaving) rations of grains, legumes, and cooking oil. Going through the individual country reports of the WFP, it quickly becomes apparent how many of the world’s most vulnerable countries were consumers of Ukrainian wheat through its own emergency feeding programs, or the relief programs organized through a variety of NGOs. But again, perhaps nowhere are the implications of this greater than in South Sudan. Consider the observations of the WFP country director there, which also highlights the lack of global response to the worsening human security crisis: ‘We are extremely concerned about the impacts of the funding cuts on children, women and men who will not have enough to eat during the lean season...Humanitarian needs are far exceeding the funding we have

received this year. If this continues, we will face bigger and more problems in the future, including increased mortality, malnutrition, stunting and disease’

Since the beginning of the war, over two dozen countries, including India, have enacted export bans as a way to bolster their own domestic supplies. As any reasonable history of the global economy would attest, this strategy of ‘economic nationalism’ is fraught with danger, as it normally always generates commodity tremendous price spikes and generalized market instability across global markets with a high degree of integration. It was, in part, the use of such protectionist maneuvers that created a sociopolitical environment conducive for widespread ‘bread riots’ in 2008 and 2011. This is the kind of counterproductive economic governance – abetted by the rapid movements of financial capital in the global food system – the only generates unsustainable bread prices, but also works to stoke social polarization and bring down governments.

## **Considerations Looking Forward**

What an event like the Ukraine conflict does is intensify problems of human/economic insecurity and multiply their spaces of harm. From an analytical perspective, therefore, we must learn to differentiate the proximate or ‘crisis-phase’ impacts from those elements of the broader problem that predate the event and are structural in nature. Consider the following Al Jazeera headline from 15 June that stated - ‘How did the Russia-Ukraine war trigger a global food crisis?’. This headline is partially correct at best, and dangerously misleading at worst. The conflict in Ukraine did not ‘trigger’ or ‘initiate’ a global food crisis. This crisis was already ongoing. It is the product of inequitable global food system and failed state policies going back decades. Moreover, this crisis has been worsening in quite significant way over the past 20 years, with the Ukraine conflict pushing these trajectories even further.

Acute food insecurity, according to FAO monitoring data, was already at record levels before the Ukraine invasion. Food inflation and price shocks became a regular feature of grain and other agrarian commodity markets beginning around 2008; the same year that popular mobilization in the form of protests, riots, and proto-revolutionary political activity put the ‘moral economy’ of sustenance and provision back on the political landscape. We must also recall that the WFP was feeding a record number of people before the Ukraine conflict. Moreover, the trajectory of corporate control over land, seed, purchasing, and retaliating has been decades in the making. The willful destruction of peasant farming and the deliberate cultivation of food dependence in the Global South go back even further. Desertification, the loss of arable soils, climate induced droughts, and the inefficiencies of industrial animal agriculture have also conspired to reduce surpluses of staple grains and other agrarian commodities to precarious levels. Importantly, all such elements of the food crisis were firmly in place before the February invasion of Ukraine.

To conclude this point, the Ukraine conflict did not precipitate a global food crisis any more than it ‘caused’ a global refugee or energy crisis. This crisis had been consolidated by the time Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. To remind ourselves of this fact is important for reasons of generating an accurate diagnosis of the problem, as well as considering both short-term and structural solutions to global food crisis.

Since the beginning of the conflict, the military assistance flowing to Ukraine has measured in the billions. In contrast, the aid amounts for the food distressed areas of North Africa and East Africa has totaled in the hundreds of millions. The humanitarian infrastructure is in place and working, but the required funding from the global community has simply not been forthcoming. In late June, the WFP requested a record \$22.2 billion from G7 nations in order to manage the growing food emergencies around the world. The richest countries in the world responded by pledging \$14 billion, leaving a multibillion dollar shortfall that stoked anger among UN officials and activists alike. Moreover, this relatively paltry funding commitment presents a stark contrast to the over \$20 billion in weapons and military assistance that has flowed from the West to the conflict theater. Commenting on the paucity of emergency food aid arriving in the Horn of Africa, the head of FAO operations in Somalia commented: ‘We have all the mechanisms in place, but no resources. We have a vehicle without fuel. It’s quite difficult to do anything’. Somalia has been one of the countries most effected by the Ukrainian conflict. About 7.1 million Somalis, or half the national population, is facing acute food insecurity. Among this staggeringly large contingent, a quarter million people facing imminent starvation, with another half million having already fled their homes in search of food. UNICEF estimates that 1.4 million children are facing a degree of malnutrition that causes stunting, wasting, and potentially death.

By way of conclusion, perhaps it is best to remind ourselves of the global commitments that have been already made towards eradicating hunger and liberating populations from dangerous levels of food dependence. Perhaps this might energize our efforts to address both the short-term catalysts – such as the Ukraine conflict – and the broader structural realities that define the complexities of the global food crisis. A logical place to begin are with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As UN expert Linda Fasulo notes, ‘the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the UN’s attempt to bring focus and cohesion to a global development effort that arose piecemeal and lacked clear organization and coordination’. The second goal – following only the eradication of poverty in all its forms – involves ending hunger, achieving food security, and improving nutrition globally. If the world cannot collectively come together to deal with an unfolding humanitarian crisis that takes the form of severe food shortages and starvation among the world’s most vulnerable – including widespread malnourishment and stunting among children - it makes the more ambitious food-related SDGs seem like a tragic mockery. Moreover, by continuing to impose the dictates of a global food system that denies Global South producers equitable access to land, seed, and markets, we are

simply reproducing the conditions that will make possible the continuation of a global food crisis as a structural reality, rather than a manageable episodic occurrence.

## Suggested Readings

### Books

Clapp, Jennifer (2020) *Food*, 3rd edition. Polity

Collingham, Lizzie (2013) *Taste of War: World War II and the Battle for Food*. Penguin.

Applebaum, Anne (2017) *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine*. Anchor Books.

Hossain, Naomi & Scott-Villiers, Petta (eds) (2017) *Food Riots, Food Rights and the Politics of Provisions*. Routledge.

### Organization Reports

FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022*, (Rome: FAO, 2022), <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc0639en>

WFP and FAO, *Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP Early Warnings on Acute Food Insecurity*, June to September 2022 Outlook, (Rome: WFP & FAO, 2022), [https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP0000139904/download/?\\_ga=2.251209030.1101116344.1660831342-410403169.1656556960](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP0000139904/download/?_ga=2.251209030.1101116344.1660831342-410403169.1656556960)

FAO, *Note on the Impact of the War on Food Security in Ukraine*, 20 July 2022, (Rome: FAO, 2022), <https://www.fao.org/3/cc1025en/cc1025en.pdf>

International Crisis Group, *The Impact of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine in the Middle East and North Africa*, April 2022, (Washington DC: ICG, 2022), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/impact-russias-invasion-ukraine-middle-east-and-north-africa>

### Podcasts & Articles

Barbaro, Michael, host. "How the War in Ukraine is Creating a Global Food Crisis." *The Daily* (NYT podcast). April 5, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/podcasts/the-daily/ukraine-russia-food-supply.html>

The Telegraph, host. "How Putin is Weaponising the Global Food Crisis." *The Daily Telegraph* (podcast). June 7, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-Z2CLbng9k>

Tammik, Ott and Dursin, Megan. "Why Russia's War in Ukraine Means a Hungrier World." *The Washington Post*, July 22, 2022. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/why-russias-war-in-ukraine-means-a-hungrier-world/2022/07/22/ce8786be-09df-11ed-80b6-43f2bfcc6662\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/why-russias-war-in-ukraine-means-a-hungrier-world/2022/07/22/ce8786be-09df-11ed-80b6-43f2bfcc6662_story.html)

Raghaven, Sudersan. "Africa's Desperate Hunger: Ukraine War Pushes Somalia Towards Famine." *The Washington Post*, June 30, 2022.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2022/somalia-famine-ukraine-war>

Kramer, Andrew. "Mines, Fires, Rockets: The Ravages of War Bedevil Ukraine's Farmers." *The New York Times*, August 4, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/04/world/europe/ukraine-russia-farms-farming-wheat-barley.html?searchResultPosition=4>

## *Chapter Three*

### A View of African Interests in the War on Ukraine: The Past and Future of The African Struggle for Non-alignment

*Aran MacKinnon (Georgia College & State University) and Elaine MacKinnon (University Of West Georgia)*

In February of this year, the speaker of the Western Cape Legislature in South Africa, Masizole Mngasela, drew powerful condemnation from some opposition parties when he led the call to light up the Cape Town provincial government building in the yellow and blue colors of the Ukrainian flag. Seeking to show solidarity with the sovereign nation that was coming under heavy fire from a hostile Russian invasion, he quoted former archbishop and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Desmond Tutu who said, ‘if you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.’ Mngasela ostensibly represented the views of the centrist Democratic Alliance (DA, which has its roots in the former liberal Democratic Party from the apartheid-era) party in power, and not coincidentally also projected support for the dominant view of the West, including the European Union and a large majority of the United Nations members. Leaders from the provincial African National Congress (ANC) -the liberation party of Nelson Mandela that still dominates the national political landscape- attacked Mngasela’s appeal as hypocritical, citing the DA’s past support for Israel over Palestine and chiding that ‘The criticisms used against Russia's President Vladimir Putin for its attack on Ukraine are equally valid for Israel's illegal occupation and brutal aggression of Palestinians.’

Cyril Ramaphosa, president of South Africa and the leader of the ANC had already made it clear his party would not openly condemn Russia. Indeed, he, other party stalwarts, and allies in the formerly Soviet-aligned South African Communist Party, publicly affirmed the past and present friendly relations with Russia and have echoed Russia’s justification for the invasion by blaming NATO expansion for the conflict. There are, after all, still many elder statesmen and women in the ANC and allied parties as well as leaders across the African continent who trained and studied in the former Soviet Union. They remember and value the support -material and ideological – that the Soviets provided to emerging independent states around the globe, though perhaps they have forgotten the costs that attached to that support when the Cold War became hot in their lands. Such contentious stances and debates point to a much larger question about how the nations of the global south are grappling with the shifting sands of geopolitics as past Cold War political postures take on new guises. It may be timely to recall the oft

quoted proverb attributed to various leaders of the global south, from the Kenyan nationalist leader Jomo Kenyatta to Cambodian Norodom Sihanouk, ‘when elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.’

African states are clearly divided on the issue. In April 2022, only twenty-eight of the fifty-four African member countries of the United Nations (UN), just over fifty-one percent, voted in favor of a resolution to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Eritrea, which reportedly has close ties to Vladimir Putin, voted against the resolution, joining only four other nations--Russia, North Korea, Syria and Belarus. A further seventeen African states joined the thirty-five countries that abstained. This compares with the overwhelming number of UN members states, eighty-one percent, who voted in favor of the resolution. In a later vote to suspend Russia from the UN Human Rights Council, twenty-five African countries abstained. Both votes demonstrate that many African states have interests that clearly differ from the majority of UN members, and also reveal significant ties old and new with Russia. There is as well perhaps a hint that at least some abstainers were somehow unwilling to point the finger at Putin’s autocratic regime lest it draw attention to their own shortcomings when it comes to liberal democracy.

In the past, the Soviet Union had provided both ideological and material support for liberation movements across the continent. Among those that abstained from the UN votes were a host of countries that endured long, bitter liberation wars bound up in Cold War ideological conflicts including Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Other key abstainers are also leading members of the non-aligned movement, including India, Pakistan and Iran as well as other Cold War battleground states such as Nicaragua and Viet Nam. Initially, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia showed little interest or capacity in maintaining the Soviet legacy of engagement in Africa. This changed with Putin’s rise to power, and in particular since 2014, when Russia’s annexation of Crimea and encouragement for separatist movements in eastern Ukraine drew Western sanctions and condemnation. Russia turned to Africa in search of new allies, new trade partners, and a convenient stage for the projection of its global power. Yet, while current and future African interests in relations with Russia include the sale of arms and the provision of security forces, global food and energy supplies critical to African economies, as well as possible investment opportunities, Russia’s engagement in meaningful development for African economies still falls far short of the United States, Europe and China. It appears to favor limited strategic and military involvement largely with a view to weakening Western interests.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the fact that many African nations are seeking a ‘balanced’ or neutral approach to the Russian invasion of Ukraine is an affirmation of a continued desire to remain non-aligned or to honor a legacy of past Soviet political and economic support. But it is also a reflection of African leaders’ frustrations and

disillusionment with the West. Past Western nations' colonial domination still casts a long shadow over the continent. Indeed, from the late 1950s, many newly emergent independent African states felt compelled to toe the line of one or other Cold War blocs, however Western nations were more apt to rebuff any African leaders who did not openly embrace the Western neo-liberal paradigm. Witness, for example, the notorious cases of Patrice Lumumba and Kwame Nkrumah. Their continued entreaties to the West for aid and support were largely ignored. As they then pivoted to the Soviet bloc and China, they drew the enmity of the West with dire, and even fatal consequences. In contrast, many African leaders and political parties forged long-lasting relations and brought back positive impressions of the Soviets who had so welcomed many of them. Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow, for example, boasts many African leaders among its alumnae such as Youssouf Saleh Abbas of Chad and the former president of Central African Republic, Michel Djotodia. Prominent South African leaders Jacob Zuma and Thabo Mbeki also received military training in Russia.

More recently, Africans perceive the West to still ignore the continent's interests and to exclude African leaders from any meaningful role in many important international organizations such as having a permanent seat on the UN Security Council or expanding the G20 to include more African states. In contrast, Russia openly supported South Africa's bid to join BRIC and has hosted African leaders at major summits. In 2019, Putin made much of his hosting the Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi. Over forty African leaders attended where they signed the Russia-Africa declaration of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, though this is somewhat ironic given Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Putin plans to host another Africa summit in November 2022. The last time the United States hosted African leaders for a summit was in 2014 under the leadership of President Barack Obama. This was followed by President Trump's infamous reference to African states and Haiti as 'shithole countries.' President Joseph Biden has promised but not yet scheduled another summit for 2022.

Vladimir Putin quickly took advantage of the vacuum created by America's neglect and Trump's denigration of Africa countries and peoples. While China is known for its massive investments in infrastructure under the aegis of the globally ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Russia has taken a more strategic approach in keeping with Putin's penchant for political intrigue and strong-man tactics. Since 2014, although Russia has increased its trade in agricultural products with Africa, it has above all and more ominously expanded its military and security interests and presence in the continent. The Soviet Union had long been a major arms exporter to Africa, and especially to the left-leaning liberation armies that won independence from Western colonial powers. Russia today continues to be the largest arms supplier to the continent. Additionally, Putin has signed military cooperation agreements with nineteen African states. However, it is mainly through non-state agents that Russia is exerting growing influence. In keeping with Putin's apparent revival of clandestine Cold War tactics and his reliance on Russian oligarchs to drive global engagement, new shadowy organizations

(private military companies, or PMCs) have emerged in the scramble for Africa. Among the most notorious is the Wagner Group, named for the German composer Richard Wagner, much beloved by the Nazis. The Wagner Group is a broad network of shell companies led by Putin's close confidant, Yevgeny Prigozhin.

Prigozhin, known for his expertise in media relations, has deployed his resources to support a massive soft power propaganda campaign to champion Russian interests in Africa. The Wagner group, through the Association for Free Research and International Cooperation (AFRIC), supports well-known African media figures such as Kemi Seba, Kremlin-aligned radio stations and African political leaders who message support of the invasion of Ukraine and Kremlin interests. In addition to enlisting major African influencers and social media platforms in waging a public relations assault on Western and especially former European colonial powers, the Wagner Group has, more ominously, been condemned for creating a shadow army in service of Putin's ambitions in Africa. In 2019, Wagner Group-funded private military forces and supplies were on the ground in Mozambique, seeking to 'reestablish security' there. In 2021, Wagner Group soldiers supported the Central African Republic's government in suppressing Islamist rebels and the country's national security advisor was a close associate of Prigozhin. In Mali, Wagner affiliated mining industries provided funds for a state security contract and its forces helped install an un-democratic military junta in power. More recently, Wagner forces have secured oil fields in Libya and are also believed to be engaged in civil conflict in Sudan. Other countries where Russia PMCs are active include Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Conakry, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, DR Congo, Zimbabwe and Botswana. Notably, for some African leaders who have a more autocratic bent or have weak states and poor human rights records, part of the appeal of the Wagner Group and Russian support has been their no-strings-attached and non-judgmental approach. Additionally, Russia has no anti-corruption laws that would extend to their nationals' business practices overseas, and many are scrambling to gain access to African natural resources. A recent count shows there are now more than twenty-five Russian private military companies operating on the continent.

It is not just the old guard of African socialist ideologues and communist party loyalists that are lining up on Russia's side. Younger Africans also have an interest in Russia, and their youth culture reflects this. Over the years, the Soviets hosted a reported 400,000 African students at Russian and Ukrainian universities, and many new African students still there have a different take on 'Mother Russia.' As part of their interest in global connections, moreover, and with the advantages of social media and technology, African youth are more engaged with worldwide politics and social influences than ever before, and they do not necessarily see Russia as the aggressor in the current conflict. Jean Claude Sangwa, a student from the Democratic Republic of Congo studying at Luhansk University in eastern Ukraine, for example, readily responded to the region's Russian nationalist separatists' call to take up arms in support of the war against Ukraine. Although Sangwa is one of perhaps just a handful of Africans who are actually fighting

in the conflict, he shares a view with many across the continent that perceives NATO and its allies as the aggressors on Russia's doorstep. Indeed, there have been reports that Ethiopian men of all ages have presented themselves as volunteer soldiers at the gates of the Russian embassy in Addis Ababa, and while Russia has denied accepting any of them, it has acknowledged the gesture of solidarity.

But this is a complicated and deeply ambiguous situation. Ukraine was, for all intents and purposes, formerly part of the Soviet Union. As such, it provided the same ideological and material support that Russia did to Africans who sought educational and job opportunities there. While Africans often saw these opportunities through rose-colored glasses, there remained a discomforting and often noxious undercurrent of racism, which apparently may have persisted. As with many simmering problems in society, war and conflict lay bare and often inflame these issues and this was true for many Africans caught in the panic of evacuations from Ukraine. Indeed, news reports and social media have made much of the apparently differential treatment for Africans seeking to flee Western Ukraine. Some Africans working and studying in Ukraine have leveled charges of overt racism, complaining that they were refused access to transport for evacuees, while others claimed they were physically prevented from getting on trains and buses earmarked for white Ukrainian refugees. African leaders, moreover, have decried the West's open embrace of the Ukrainian cause and Ukrainian refugees in ways that have never been offered to Africans fleeing civil conflict.

So what is at stake for African nations and the global south with the war on Ukraine? First, there is an unease over what some see as a break with the past and from the ideological motherland. Many leaders in developing states had, after all, embraced or inherited an embrace of the vision of the communist international. Second, there is the desire to try to remain neutral in an increasingly polarized world. This is not simply to avoid getting caught up in the conflicts of a re-configured bipolar world, but also to preserve some degree of autonomy, to remain 'sovereign'. Perhaps the plight of Ukraine makes it all the clearer what the global south has to fear by getting drawn in too deeply by one camp or another. Third, there is the very real and increasingly pressing need for aid and investment -food, health care, infrastructure- to sustain growing economies and people on the continent. Although there are many cautionary tales about the impact and outcomes of growing trade and investment with China, African states clearly see the need to broaden their global economic relationships and China and Russia have ramped up their dealings with Africa. Although Russia lags far behind China, India, United States and the Netherlands in the amount of direct trade with Africa, Russian trade doubled since 2015 to over \$20 billion according to the African Export-Import Bank. There are, moreover, indications that Russia has begun selling small nuclear reactors for power generation to at least seven African nations. African leaders and the African Union are also getting increasingly anxious about critical food supplies, especially grain. Some African leaders fear the war could compromise grain and fertilizer imports to the twenty-one African nations that rely on them. Between 2018 and 2020, for example, Africa

imported US\$3.7 billion in wheat from Russia and another US\$1.4 billion from Ukraine, supplies that are critical for a continent that experiences such profound food insecurity.

Significantly, as Nigel Gibson has shown, the war on Ukraine has laid bare key fault lines of interpretations that may claim solid foundations in communist theories on imperialism and sovereignty. He notes that Lenin himself condemned the expansionist tendencies driven by the nationalism of 'big nations' over and against oppressed nations. In this way, Gibson argues that the Russian invasion is both wrong and can also foster a greater sense of democracy and self-determination in Ukraine. It is, therefore, ironic that African states and others in the global south who won their own wars of liberation against the nationalism extended by the imperialism of 'big nations' have taken what some may see as a curious, even counter-intuitive stance on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. There should be concerns over the Russian defiance of Ukrainian national sovereignty and the blatant disregard for territorial integrity. Some have raised the specter of an affirmation of authoritarianism by those who do not condemn the Russian invasion. The five countries that voted against a UN resolution condemning the war, Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea, of course Russia and Syria, are all considered autocratic regimes with appalling records of human rights abuses. It also may not be beneficial in the long run to placate Russia at the risk of disengagement with the West. Some have cautioned that Russia no longer offers much in the way of any ideological or political framework that would work for Africans, beyond a generic anti-Western stance or whether Russia can or will make good on offers of debt relief and direct investment in return for political support in the theatre of global geopolitics. African leaders need to tread strategically the tenuous fault lines of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict; they may now be better poised to leverage the West for more equitable support and aid, with fewer strings attached. Europe and the United States will be looking for new opportunities for energy investments and supplies, particularly natural gas; already Algeria, Nigeria, and Niger have revived a proposed Trans-Saharan pipeline to Europe.

Although for all the wrong reasons, given nature of the war on Ukraine, Russia has not been wrong to court Africa. Africans constitute close to eighteen percent of the world's population, and the continent possesses among the most critical resources the world needs; everything from human intellectual and creative capital to robust rainforests and strategic minerals to carbon fuels. More importantly, the recognition of the importance of the African presence in the world is growing, despite some continued abhorrent racist attitudes. In 2003, the African Union recognized the Diaspora as the sixth region of the continent, thus further extending Africa's global influence. As the West, and especially America, fumbles its way toward a better set of policies and relations with Africa, and Russia and China provide albeit ambiguous and problematic alternatives that play on largely defunct old Cold War paradigms, African leaders may now, for the first time ever, be able to better negotiate with a range of global powers. They can do so, in part, by reminding the world that Africans have their own interests that can no longer be completely ignored.

## Further Reading

### Books

Samuel Ramani, *Russia in Africa: Resurgent Great Power Or Bellicose Pretender?* (New York, NY, C. Hurst & Company, 2022)

George Roberts. *Revolutionary state-making in Dar es Salaam: African liberation and the global Cold War, 1961–1974.* (Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2021)

Morris Rothenberg, *The USSR and Africa: New Dimensions of Soviet Global Power* (Miami: Advanced International Studies Institute, 1980)

Susan Williams, *White Malice. The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, New York, NY, Public Affairs, 2021.

Radoslav Yordanov, *The Soviet Union and the Horn of Africa During the Cold War* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016)

### Internet Sources

African Development Bank Group, “African Economic Outlook 2022: Africa’s 2021 economic rebound impacted by lingering Covid-19 pandemic and Russia-Ukraine war,” May 25, 2022, [https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/african-economic-outlook-2022-africas-2021-economic-rebound-impacted-lingering-covid-19-pandemic-and-russia-ukraine-war-51865?utm\\_term=OZY&utm\\_campaign=daily-dose&utm\\_content=Friday\\_06.03.22&utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/african-economic-outlook-2022-africas-2021-economic-rebound-impacted-lingering-covid-19-pandemic-and-russia-ukraine-war-51865?utm_term=OZY&utm_campaign=daily-dose&utm_content=Friday_06.03.22&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email)

AFP News Agency, ‘Russian Mercenaries in Africa’  
<https://twitter.com/AFP/status/1494271658265391110>

Jeune Afrique, ‘Russia-Africa: From Kemi Seba to Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla, the continent’s pro-Putin ‘influencers’’, *Africa Report*, 7 June 2022.  
<https://www.theafricareport.com/191778/russia-africa-from-kemi-seba-to-duduzile-zuma-sambudla-the-continent-pro-putin-influencers/>

Heather Ashby and Jude Mutah, “What Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine Means for African Governments,” *United States Institute of Peace*, April 14, 2022,  
<https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/04/what-russias-invasion-ukraine-means-african-governments>

Heather Ashby and Joseph Sany, “On Ukraine, Africa Needs a Clearer U.S. Message,” *United States Institute of Peace*, May 17, 2022, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/05/ukraine-africa-needs-clearer-us-message>

Department of State, National Intelligence Estimate, "Soviet Military Policy in the Third World," E.O. 12958, May 4, 2006,  
<https://20012009.state.gov/documents/organization/70562.pdf>

Dawit Endershaw, 'Ethiopians queue up to volunteer for Russia's fight in Ukraine, Reuters News Service, <https://www.reuters.com/world/ethiopians-queue-up-volunteer-russias-fight-ukraine-2022-04-21/>

Jenni Evans, 'Opposition parties see red over Western Cape legislature's yellow and blue lights for Ukraine' South African News24,  
<https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/opposition-parties-see-red-over-western-cape-legislatures-yellow-and-blue-lights-for-ukraine-20220228>

Michelle D. Gavin, "Major Power Rivalry in Africa," Discussion Paper Series on Managing Global Disorder, No. 5, May 2021,  
[https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/dpgavinmay21.pdf](https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/dpgavinmay21.pdf)

Nigel Gibson, 'Ukraine and the Left's Imperialist Economism', Africa is a Country,  
<https://africasacountry.com/2022/03/ukraine-and-the-lefts-imperialist-economism>

Sean Jacobs, 'The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming!' Africa is a Country,  
<https://africasacountry.com/2022/02/the-russians-are-coming-the-russians-are-coming>

Ebenezer Obadare March 3, 2022, "Analyzing the Russia-Ukraine Conflict from an African Standpoint," Council on Foreign Relations: <https://www.cfr.org/blog/analyzing-russia-ukraine-conflict-african-standpoint>

Ebenezer Obadare March 22 2022, "Russia's Invasion of Ukraine May Drive a Wedge Between the West and Africa," Ebenezer Obadare, Africa Must be Wary Of Cutting its Nose to spite its Face," April 28, 2022, Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/africa-must-be-wary-cutting-its-nose-spite-its-face>

Hilary Lynd, 'ANC is enthralled with idea of repaying a historical debt', Business Live, SA  
<https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2022-03-07-hilary-lynd-anc-is-enthralled-with-idea-of-repaying-a-historical-debt/>

Hilary Lynd, 'The Politics Of Imperial Gratitude', Africa is a Country  
<https://africasacountry.com/2022/03/the-politics-of-imperial-gratitude>

Kimberly Marten, "Russia's use of semi-state security forces: the case of the Wagner Group," Post-Soviet Affairs 35.3, March 26, 2019,  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1060586X.2019.1591142;>

Todd Prince, "Expansion Or Contraction? How Will Putin's War in Ukraine Impact His Outreach To Africa?" May 24, 2022, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty  
<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-africa-ukraine-war-impact/31865709.html?ltflags=mailer>

Nathaniel Reynolds, "Putin's Not-So-Secret Mercenaries: Patronage, Geopolitics, and the Wagner Group," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 8, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/07/08/putin-s-not-so-secret-mercenaries-patronage-geopolitics-and-wagner-group-pub-79442>.

Pjotr Sauer, 'The Congolese student fighting with pro-Russia separatists in Ukraine' The Guardian, 8 June 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/08/the-congolese-student-fighting-with-pro-russia-separatists-in-ukraine>

Joseph Siegle, 'The Future of Russia-Africa Relations' Brookings Institute Africa Blog, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2022/02/02/the-future-of-russia-africa-relations/>

Joseph Siegle, 'Russia's Strategic Goals in Africa', Africa Center for Strategic Studies <https://africacenter.org/experts/joseph-siegle/russia-strategic-goals-africa/>

William Shoki, 'Are the Russians Really Coming?' Africa is a Country <https://africasacountry.com/2022/02/are-the-russians-really-coming>

Paul Stronski, "Late to the Party: Russia's Return to Africa, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 16, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/10/16/late-to-party-russia-s-return-to-africa-pub-80056>

Jared Thompson, Catrina Doxsee and Joseph Bermudez Jr., 'Tracking the Wagner Group in Mali' Center for Strategic and International Studies Spotlight, 2 Feb. 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/tracking-arrival-russias-wagner-group-mali>

Declan Walsh, 'Putin Shadow Soldiers: How the Wagner Group Is Expanding in Africa. New York Times, 31 May 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/world/africa/wagner-group-africa.html?referringSource=articleShare>

Pieter D. Wezeman, Alexandra Kuimova, and Siemon T. Wezeman, "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2021," SIPRI Fact Sheet, March 2022. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, <https://www.sipri.org/databases>

## *Chapter Four*

# **The War in Ukraine and the Middle East**

*Jacek Lubecki (Georgia Southern University)*

The 2022 new, dramatic stage of the armed conflict in Ukraine (which first started in 2014) caught the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region in the midst of its own multiple realities, crises, and challenges, which, in turn, were influenced and modified, but not decisively changed, by the Ukrainian war.

### **MENA in a Multipolar World: The Rise of Global South**

Politically, an overreaching process in the MENA region has its transition from the brief age of US hegemony (1990 to mid-2000s) to a multipolar world, characterized by the growing power of regional actors: Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, or even smaller countries such as United Arab Emirates and Qatar, which have been playing multiple global power centers, such as the US, Russia and China against each other. In this context, far from creating a reality akin to a “new Cold War,” in which countries of MENA/“the Global South” ally with one or the other side of the conflict, the war in Ukraine showcased MENA’s relative strategic independence from the West. At the same time, it is clear that if decline of Russian power is the result of the conflict – as it already seems to be the case – the US and China will remain the key external forces in the Middle Eastern international politics, the former with waning and the latter with waxing influence.

Economically and socially, though, the war had a dual impact on MENA. For poorer, crisis-prone and Russian and Ukrainian food-import dependent countries such as Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen, the crisis exacerbated pre-existing challenges of maintaining life for their citizens. To a lesser extent it was a case in the largest country of the region, Egypt, even though 50 percent of the wheat supply comes from Russia and 30 percent from Ukraine. For the energy-rich and exporting countries, the crisis had the opposite effect, as skyrocketing global energy prices in March-June 2022 dramatically improved the countries revenues, growth prospects and economic/political power. In Saudi Arabia, for instance, economic growth rate in the first two quarters of 2022 was around 10 percent, the highest rate in the recent history. Full coffers allowed the country’s leader Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS) not only to ostentatiously ignore US requests to increase oil production, but also to finance the bulk of Egypt’s \$22 billion economic stabilization fund. MBS also continued independent Saudi diplomatic and military ventures in its areas

of concern such as the conflict with Iran or influence in the Horn of Africa, often in defiance of US wishes.

## **Historical Background: MENA during Obama and Trump Administrations**

Already in 2008 it was obvious that US and, generally, Western influence was waning in the MENA region. Hobbled by the Great Recession, diplomatic and political fallout from the Iraqi venture (which reinforced Iranian influence in the region) and the Arab Spring (which reinforced Saudi role in the region, and brought in Russian troops into Syria), the US under President Obama showed itself to be a weak actor in the region. Obama's strategy of "leading from behind," indeed, exacerbated MENA's instability as regional or non-US actors moved in to replace US hegemony. Obama's policies thus failed create peace through policies of military non-intervention.

Obama's most important peace initiative was settling conflict with Iran over nuclear issues through the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCOPA), a diplomatic agreement that essentially froze Iranian nuclear program in exchange for lifting of sanctions on Iran. However, As JCOPA did not involve MENA powers opposed to Iran; Israel, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, and did not address their security concerns about Iran's and its proxies activities in the region, the JCOPA was vociferously opposed by these countries, as well as a large part of US political spectrum; Republicans and pro-Israeli Democrats. As result, armed proxy conflicts involving Iran vs. anti-Iranian coalition escalated, most importantly, in Yemen and Syria.

Upon coming to power in 2016 President Trump seized on this reality to theatrically withdraw the US from JCOPA in 2018. He also supported every Saudi/MBS policy in the region, including a "maximum pressure" policy against Iran. In exchange, Trump received Saudi economic policies favoring the US such as cheap oil and US weapons contracts, In President Trump's transactional world these material gains amounted to pursuing the only essential national interests that the US had in the region. President Trump's administration also facilitated and blessed pre-existing Israeli's policy of alliance with Gulf Arab countries most opposed to Iran. As a result UAE and Bahrain signed formal diplomatic treaties with Israel (the so-called Abraham Accords). Saudi Arabia, which did not sign such an agreement, but clearly aligned with Israel on the Iranian issue. Tensions and proxy conflicts between Saudi- and Israeli-led anti-Iranian alliance, and Iran and its proxies escalated. Feeling empowered by Trump's unconditional support, Saudi Arabia under MBS embarked on an escalation of the war in Yemen, against Iranian-supported Houthi rebels. MBS also blockaded and threatened Iran-friendly Qatar, otherwise, one of the closest allies of the US in the Gulf, the country hosting the largest US air base in the region in al-Ubaydat.

In the context of the evolving MENA region, Russia solidified its military and political engagement in Syria, and its commercial outreach to both Iran and the anti-Iranian coalition. In the context of OPEC+ (Russia joined in 2016) Russia negotiated caps on oil production with Gulf countries. Russians weapons contracts and sales went not only to its tradition client, Algeria, but also to Egypt, Iraq and United Arab Emirates. This relatively successful reassertion of Russian influence in the region, not seen since the Soviet times, was partially the result of perceived or real US weakness, and partially due to Russian assertiveness and demonstrated ability to project power into Syria. Pragmatic and authoritarian, Russia's policies "fitted" the ruthlessly realist world of MENA much better than the US with its confused and inconsistent domestic process of policy formulation, and liberal and humanitarian considerations.

Other factors and powers complicated the picture. Turkey (recently renamed Turkiye) asserted its strategic priorities and influence in the region, centered on containing the Kurds and involving military interventions in Syria, Iraq, the Gulf (Qatar, where Turkish troops were deployed as deterrent to Saudi Arabia) and Libya. At the Syrian border Turkey clashed with Russia. Additionally, the rise and fall of ISIS as a territorial state, and presence of Islamist radicals in zones of state breakdown (Yemen, Libya, the Sinai, Iraq) was another factor complicating MENA realities. Another issue was the collapse of Lebanon due to long-standing internal corruption and decay but catalyzed by the Beirut port explosion in August 2020. Multiple issues associated with the global economic and social crisis brought about by COVID-19 in 2020 compounded the above picture. Most important, economic recovery of the region from a slump created by the Arab Spring and the era of relatively cheap oil was stopped short by the pandemic.

## **MENA in the Biden Era: Impact of Ukrainian Conflict**

When President Biden came to power in 2021 he vowed to reverse Trump-era policies, to renew the JCOPA and to make Saudi Arabia a diplomatic pariah over the murder of Saudi-American journalist Jamal Khashoggi. This resulted in an immediate deterioration in US-Saudi and US-Israeli relationships and a mutual diplomatic shunning between the US and the Saudis with its proxies (which included Egypt, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates), as well as Israel. Essentially, feeling abandoned by the US, the regional powers felt that they need to negotiate their political and strategic concerns independent of US influence, which meant diplomatic flirting with Russia. However, in the early 2021, with the world economy barely recovering from COVID-19, and energy prices still hobbled by the slowdown, Western energy- and commodity-importing countries seemed to be still in the best position to assert their influence.

Global economic realities started changing in the second half of 2021, when rapidly recovering economies, fueled by massive government stimulus spending during the pandemic, were confronted by supply shortages, especially in the energy sector. Then, February 2022 Russian aggression in Ukraine further cut down already tight global

energy supplies, which sent global prices of energy sky-high, to levels not seen since the 1970s global energy crisis. Economic power again passed into hands of oil- and natural-gas producing and exporting countries in MENA, especially, Saudi Arabia, the country with the largest in the world reserves of oil, and Qatar, the country with the third largest (after Russia and Iran) natural gas reserves.

Feeling empowered, and already alienated from the West, Saudi Arabia and countries like United Arab Emirates engaged in independent diplomacy ignoring US pleas for increasing energy production and exports to economically isolate Russia. To the contrary the Arab countries ostentatiously maintained good diplomatic ties with Russia and asserted their neutrality in the conflict. However, when the vote to condemn Russian aggression in Ukraine came at the United Nation General Assembly, the only MENA country to vote “no” was the Russian client Syria. On the other hand, Russia’s ally, Iran and its proxy, Iraq, abstained on the vote, and so did traditional Russia’s (and, earlier, Soviet) partners, Algeria and Sudan, while Morocco was conveniently absent from the vote.

In their diplomatic pronouncements Iran’s government, predictably, blamed the Ukrainian conflict on “Western imperialism” and “US aggression” against Russia. That, however, hardly meant that Iran was in any substantial position to help Russia. Iranian priority clearly remained its regional interests, including the conflict with Saudi Arabia and nuclear negotiations with the US. The Ukrainian conflict, indeed, created an increased urgency and imperative for both the US and Iran to return to JCOPA. Faced with Saudi refusal to increase oil production, the US and the West realized that the quickest way to increase global oil (and natural gas, Iran having the second largest reserves in the world, after Russia) supply is to return to JCPOA and lift sanctions on Iran – an interest reciprocated by Iran, for whom the US, not Russia, remained the key diplomatic interlocutor. Thus, March to May 2022 was full of high hopes for the renewed US-Iranian agreement to be re-negotiated in Vienna, with press reports implying that the breakthrough on the renewed agreement has been achieved (on March 31) and just details needed to be worked out before the signing.

While Russia tried to play diplomatic games with the agreement, inserting clauses that would amount to the circumvention of Western sanctions, eventually, the gamble failed and Russia backed off its demands. What apparently, torpedoed the US-Iranian agreement in early April 2022 was not Russia, but failures of US-Iranian diplomacy, the opposition of hardliners on both sides (Republicans and pro-Israeli Democrats in the US and hardliners in Iran) to the compromise agreements, and vociferous opposition of the Saudi-Israeli-UAE axis to the renewed JCOPA. The Biden administration thus backed off the agreement with Iran regardless of the fact that, Saudis apparently offered no firm commitment to address the key US demand to increase the oil production. This was a major diplomatic defeat of the Biden administration.

With the West and Russia distracted by the war in Ukraine and Western influence already weakening in MENA, countries of the region seemed to realize that they are left on their own, and need to negotiate their own security and interest as if the Global North did not exist. Examples of the countries' independent vision of order in the region abound.

Given the apparently failure of JCPOA, Iran and Saudi Arabia started their own détente, beginning negotiation in March 2022, with Iraq serving as the host and intermediary. However, in April Iran walked away from the talks perceiving Saudi intentions and messages as "mixed". Likewise, peace talks between warring parties in Yemen, began in Saudi Arabia, facilitated by off- and on- Ramadan truce. These talks involving the entire Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), were hampered by the facts that the exclusion of the Houthis. One wonders if these are simply elements of Saudi diplomatic game. The Saudis have been simultaneously pressuring the US to take a tougher stance against Iran and the Houthis, essentially blackmailing the West with the prospects of even higher oil prices or even shortages.

Another diplomatic process that opened in the Middle East partially as a result of Ukrainian war is a thaw between a Saudi-led coalition and Turkey. Hobbled by a worsening economy at home and put in a difficult position vis-à-vis Ukraine and Russia, Recep Tayyip Erdogan dramatically improved his relationship with Saudi Arabia. In May he visited the country and transferred the Khashoggi case to Saudi jurisdiction. Turkey, then, normalized the relationship with United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain. In other words, Turkey, far from being an enemy of Saudi-led coalition, now appears as its ally, possibly seeking a "strategic depth" in a potential confrontation with Russia and seeking financial help for its battered and mismanaged economy.

Israel also asserted its strategic independence by refusing to isolate Russia diplomatically, while formally condemning the Russian aggression in Ukraine. Most importantly, Israel asserted its alliance with Gulf countries on the Iranian issue. On April 2, 2022, Israel hosted an unprecedented summit with Morocco, Bahrain and the UAE, a coterie of Arab countries representing the anti-Iranian but also "anti-Biden" coalition. This revolutionary development marked another stage in Israel's emancipation from US influence. For Gulf countries, it is Israel, not the US that seems to be emerging as a guarantor of these countries security, with offers to purchase the Iron Dome missile from Israel to be deployed in the three Arab partner countries. In the meantime, perhaps unhappy with Israel's growing influence in the MENA region, including as a weapons supplier, Russia decided to use its missile batteries against Israeli airplanes operating over Syria for the first time in April.

With pretty much entire region asserting its independence from the West, Qatar emerged as one reliable energy ally of the US and Europe. In exchange the US designated Qatar as a major non-NATO ally, together with Kuwait and Bahrain. Qatar also offered

to keep natural gas going to Europe, even at below market prices. Clearly, the country wants to be perceived as crucial and stable ally of the West, thus enjoying Western security guarantees against neighbors, especially Saudi Arabia. Paradoxically, in the meantime, Qatar maintained good ties with Iran and Russia.

The lone Russian client state in the region, Syria, made news as a potential source of mercenaries for the Ukrainian war. Supposedly, as many 40 thousands tough, battle hardened Syrian soldiers to be paid as much as \$3 thousand a month, which is a small fortune in Syria, were supposed to join the Russian and separatist militaries on the battlefields of Ukraine. By early April there were reports of a small unit of 300 Syrians in Ukraine. However, besides a clear deterioration of humanitarian situation due to food and fuel shortages, the most important effect of the Ukrainian conflict on Syria has been a steady but withdrawal of Russians, replaced by Iranians, making Israel and Turkey nervous and ISIS stronger.

Of course, not only the US, but the entire world has been affected by OPEC+ refusal to step up oil production, but European and Japanese appeals as of mid-June 2022 to countries like Saudi Arabia and UAE seems to have fallen flat. Conversely, besides flirting with Russia and at least pretending to have a détente with Iran, Saudi Arabia also courted China. The Saudi invitation to Xi Jinping to visit came at the peak of the crisis in April 2022, accompanied by Saudi-Chinese talks about pricing oil in Yuan. Flush with cash, Saudi Arabia also stepped up its economic and military operations in the Horn of Africa.

## **The Humanitarian Crisis. Prospects for the Future**

The other leg of the effects of Ukrainian conflict on MENA is negative, and involves a dramatic deterioration of supply of food and other commodities to the region known for its scarcity of water, and, therefore, the highest level of dependence on imported food in the world. Most importantly, wheat makes Middle Eastern white flat-bread, the region's essential food staple. For instance, Egypt in normal times gets 50 percent of its wheat imports from Russia and 30 percent from Ukraine. Lebanon imports of wheat are 52 percent dependent on Russia. For Yemen, 31 percent of wheat comes from Russia. Overall, Russia and Ukraine account for 25 percent of production and 29 percent of global exports of wheat. As a result MENA region is dependent on the wheat coming from the two countries' Black Sea ports.

Some Russian wheat continues to reach Egypt, while Ukrainian wheat is being rerouted through land from Black Sea ports. However, the supply was clearly reduced by some 50 percent, leading to skyrocketing prices, riots and rationing in some Middle Eastern countries. The most affected country so far – through the combination of Western/US sanctions and fallout from the war – is Iran, where food and price riots broke out in several provinces in early May, leading to calls to overthrow the regime, the

shooting of rioters and internet cuts by the government, which has tried to prevent the news of food revolt from spreading. In Syria, food and cooking oil has been rationed. Lebanon, where the economic situation is critical and most of the population is barely surviving, is facing the prospects of starvation, and so does Yemen, where the pre-existing starvation crisis has deteriorated. As countries of MENA are looking for alternative suppliers (after all, many of them have money to pay) India banned wheat exports and the entire global food markets seems to be seizing.

However – and here is a sobering reminder of how much Arab/MENA economies still depend on energy prices and exports and how much the world depends on fossil fuels - MENA economies as a whole are still projected to grow 5 percent in 2022. Growth in energy exporting countries to be 5.6 percent and in non-exporting countries, 3.7 percent (as compared to 2.5 percent in 2021). As a result Gulf Cooperation Council countries will reach budgetary surpluses for the first time since 2014, thus illustrating the net financial benefit that the war in Ukraine and the end of COVID created for energy-exporting countries. Of course, these positive predictions will only materialize if the global economy does not collapse under the strain of compounded crises and energy producing countries can continue pumping oil and gas.

This last considerations leads to the final point: as of late June 2022 there are increasing signs that OPEC countries are increasing oil production and there is a thaw in the diplomatic relationship between Saudi Arabia and the US symbolically crowned by Pres. Biden's planned visit. After all, no actor will benefit from an actual global recession. This is a fact that sets Russia completely apart in the global power game, as a country willing to provoke a global economic collapse, a desire certainly not shared by countries like China, which is actually on the US side of this issue. Whether Biden's visit and Saudi concession represent Saudi or US capitulation to the other side, is an open question. Nevertheless, the US and the West, not Russia, are the critical player in MENA realities. In the long term, China's influence in the region is certain to grow while Russia will be a side player, catalyzing but not deciding regional realities. In retrospect, 2010s were the peak of Russian influence in the Middle East, which has now been destroyed by Putin's recklessness.

## **Conclusion**

The Ukrainian war further showcased that MENA is a transactional realist world, in which events are defined by national interests as perceived by the national (or, sub-national) elites, and where tactical alliances of unlikely partners abound. MENA also acutely reflects that ours is an increasingly multi-polar world in which power flows downwards, to the Global South, and where China, Russia and the United States both play and are “played” by regional actors for internal power games.

But the effects of the war on MENA are a reminder of how much our world is interdependent and the extent to which the Global South is dependent on the Global North, especially with respect to food supply, and vice-versa, the Global North is dependent of natural resources of MENA. This latter reality returns us to early twenty-first century conditions of relative scarcity of energy and commodities which contributed to the Great Recession of 2007-10.

## **Selected Bibliography**

### **General work:**

Cammet Melani, Ishac Diwan, John Waterbury, Alan Richards, Political Economy of the Middle East, Fourth Edition, Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 2015

### **General news source:**

The best news aggregator for the MENA region is REEDNEWSARABWORLD to be found here: <https://reednewsarabworld.substack.com/>

### **Specific sources:**

Fillion,Stéphanie, “After Abstaining on a Vote Condemning Russia’s Invasion, the UAE Leads the Security Council,” Pass Blue. Independent Coverage of the UN, <https://www.passblue.com/2022/03/03/after-abstaining-on-a-vote-condemning-russias-invasion-the-uae-leads-the-security-council/>, March 3, 2022, accessed June 7, 2022

Guardian staff writer, “White House faces oil standoff with Saudi Arabia and UAE as prices soar,” [https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/13/white-house-us-joe-biden-oil-output-prices-saudi-arabia-uae?fr=operanews&utm\\_source=pocket\\_mylist](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/13/white-house-us-joe-biden-oil-output-prices-saudi-arabia-uae?fr=operanews&utm_source=pocket_mylist), The Guardian, March 14, 2022, accessed June 15, 2022.

Heyller, H.A, “How the Arab World Is Responding to the War in Ukraine, ” Time Magazine, June 2022.

Islamic investor Staff writer, “Mohammed bin Salman Has Leverage on Biden Over Oil After Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine—and Is Using It,” Islamic Investor, March 24, [https://islaminvestor.com/mohammed-bin-salman-has-leverage-on-biden-over-oil-after-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-and-is-using-it/?utm\\_source=pocket\\_mylist](https://islaminvestor.com/mohammed-bin-salman-has-leverage-on-biden-over-oil-after-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-and-is-using-it/?utm_source=pocket_mylist), accessed June 7, 2022

Labbot, Elise, “How Biden Came Around to MBS’ Plan for a New U.S.-Saudi Partnership. The inside story of how the administration came to slowly realize that Saudi Arabia was too valuable to keep at arm's length.” Politico, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/06/15/joe-biden-saudi-arabia-trip-bin-salman-00039679>. June 15, 2022, accessed June 25, 2022.

Middle East Eye staff writer, “Russia-Ukraine war: Middle East at 'breaking point' over food prices, says UN” [https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/russia-ukraine-war-middle-east-breaking-point-over-food-prices-says-un?utm\\_source=pocket\\_mylist](https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/russia-ukraine-war-middle-east-breaking-point-over-food-prices-says-un?utm_source=pocket_mylist), accessed June 7, 2022.

Greg Priddy, "Are Saudi Arabia and the UAE No Longer U.S. Partners?" National Interest, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/are-saudi-arabia-and-uae-no-longer-us-partners-201866>, accessed June 27, 2022.

Reuters staff writer, "Egypt imports wheat from Russia despite war" <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/egypts-wheat-imports-russia-rose-march-despite-war-2022-04-05/>, April 5, 2022, accessed June 7, 2022.

Salih, Mohammed Ali, "Why doesn't the Arab world break with Putin? Consider Sudan's example," [https://www.salon.com/2022/03/13/why-doesnt-the-arab-world-break-with-putin-consider-sudans-example/?utm\\_source=pocket\\_mylist](https://www.salon.com/2022/03/13/why-doesnt-the-arab-world-break-with-putin-consider-sudans-example/?utm_source=pocket_mylist), Salon, March 13, 2022, accessed June 7, 2022.

## *Chapter Five*

# **China's Balancing Act in Response to the War in Ukraine**

*Dorothea A. L. Hoffman-Martin (Appalachian State University)*

China's reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine has not been the lock step support for Russia that some, who view both these countries as totalitarian governments, might expect. China, much to the chagrin of many developing countries, abstained from both the UN Security Council vote to call a special session and the General Assembly's vote in the early March on a Resolution to condemn Russian aggression. Thirty-eight other countries also abstained, including India. On other UN votes to chastise Russia, China has continued to abstain, most notably in the April vote to remove Russia from the Human Rights Council. However, China's leaders say they will uphold the UN Charter's position on aggression and will not seek to overtly circumvent international sanctions while conducting regular and previously committed economic agreements with Russia. These abstentions and the commitments to regular trade betray the real tightrope that China is walking as it tries to retain working relations with its largest, militarily strongest neighbor while at the same time trying to advance its new vision of becoming the major power in the Indo-Pacific region. Thus, the war in Ukraine and China's response to it has several overlapping considerations to explore. Economics, diplomatic, and military ramifications top the list, and all of these have interlocking aspects that could change and shift based on whether the war is resolved quickly or drags out as Russia's engagements in Georgia and Chechnya.

Some background clarifies the current relationship between Russia and China. In the cold war years, especially as the United States was getting more engaged in Southeast Asia, China and the USSR were in the middle of the so-called Sino-Soviet split. China condemned its erstwhile communist mentor for being a "socialist-imperialist" power. China's foreign policy then was based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as expressed in the mid-1950s as part of the non-aligned movement. Similar language is still tacitly used in China's foreign relations. The collapse of the Soviet Union helped renew state to state relations, but China's economic success has made the relationship one of greater parity in the early twenty-first century.

### **Economic Three-way Ties that Bind**

After Deng Xiaoping's reforms and then the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, cooperation on economic levels have been important for both countries as noted by the return of such Chinese slogans that styled the relationship as being as close as "teeth and gums." Even as Russia was encircling Ukraine under the guise of military exercises, Xi

Jinping spoke in such terms. But with the actual invasion of Ukraine, China has been more circumspect in how it speaks of the Russian/Chinese relationship.

Chinese sales of machinery and consumer goods and imports of aerospace engines and technology has made it Ukraine's largest trading partner with estimated two-way trade to be \$19 billion in 2021. Compared to other Central Asian countries, China's direct foreign investments (DFI) in Ukrainian is smaller. Internet rumors of major losses for China of DFI funds due to the war are dismissed by Chinese economist. They point to years of regional instability and completed projects as being responsible for decreases in DFI that mostly had been made to Ukrainian state-run ventures mostly by Chinese state-owned enterprises that declined from \$50 million in 2016 to \$20 million in 2021. These investments are in energy (especially wind) and agriculture. The invest pattern and improved trade has been a hopeful sign for future economic cooperation. The open question now is what impact the war will have on future growth. Concern that secondary economic sanctions might be applied if China tried to do an end run around certain kinds of aid has made China's stance rather ambiguous. As of May 2022, Ukrainian leaders stated that they are satisfied that China is staying away from the war, seeing that position as being better than supporting the Russian Federation. As the war in Ukraine passed the 100-day mark, Russia upped its request for Chinese assistance, especially in the technology area. While Beijing has vowed to honor its pre-existing contracts to provide non-military items, other Chinese technology companies feel squeezed since they are reliant on foreign, mainly American chip technology and are very reluctant to risk violating international sanctions by providing products to Russia that could be re-engineered for military application. Indeed, there have been some reports coming out of Ukraine that chips intended for other applications have been found in Russian armaments captured or destroyed in battle. These Chinese companies had already become the major source for cellphones and laptops in Russia, but compared to other global markets, Russia accounts for a much smaller portion of sales.

In the short run, the war's economic impact on daily life in China is negligible. But if the war is prolonged and secondary sanctions are invoked and begin to cripple China's industry, that picture could change. Commodity imports such as nickel and coal from Russia could become problematic, which in turn could disrupt China's domestic production already under stress from the continued Covid crisis. China and Russia are in the middle of constructing a gas pipeline from Siberia to China's Northeast industrial sector scheduled for completion in 2024. Delays could restrict China's economic growth and use of more coal to make up the energy production loss would undermine China's greenhouse gas emissions goals.

Beijing also wants to avoid economic sanctions for violating international restrictions on methods of international payments settlements of import/export trade. Russia has pressed to settle some accounts in Chinese currency Renminbi (RMB) rather than US Dollars. China has been using its own financial settlements apparatus, CIPS, or Cross-border

Interbank Payment System. But this has serious restraints because exchanges are done only in RMB and thus are not likely to help Russia evade financial restraints. Down the road, however, CIPS can demonstrate China's growing financial powers, particularly to countries that it is trying to impress (or manipulate) in the Belt-Road Initiative. Ukraine for example, has been especially receptive to China's promotion of infrastructure development. Other states in Central Asia also find China's Belt-Road projects appealing as a shield against larger, global hegemony, i.e., the United States, the European Union and, in light of its invasion of Ukraine, the Putin's Russia. This calculation blends economic and diplomatic issues, as China tries to walk a narrow line between responding to Russia's war in Ukraine and doing what is in China's own best interest.

## **China's Diplomatic Challenges *vis-à-vis* the Ukraine War**

These economic issues are intertwined with diplomatic and military questions that arise from China's balancing act over the war in Ukraine. It should be recalled that China never accepted Russia's claims to its annexation of Crimea. However, it does support Russia's claim that the extension of NATO into Eastern Europe was a provocation, justifying Russia's claim that the invasion was a "defensive" action. While straining to abide by the sanctions, China still considers them to be illegal. As the war in Ukraine continues, Xi Jinping invoked the concept of "indivisible security" for the first time outside of the Ukrainian War in late April at the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA). This forum, named for the city of Bo'ao strategically located on Hainan Island in the South China Sea, currently has 28 Asian members and Australia and hosts high-level meetings on topics of concern to member states. Xi's notion of "indivisible security" asserts that no country can strengthen its own security at the expense of others. Russia has repeatedly used this phrase in talks about Ukraine, claiming that the appeal to NATO to help with Ukraine's security in turn threatens the security of Russia. Applying such diplomatic language beyond the situation in Ukraine, Xi proposed a more sustainable, secure world order centered on China's own geopolitical interest. He's six points include some old language in new contexts, calling for "upholding sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs as well as respecting the policy choices of every nation based on their own unique socio-economic system." Xi also invoked the UN Charter and called on those present to reject bloc confrontation in a clear reference to NATO expansion.

At the same time Xi was appealing to China's Asian neighbors to grasp his Global Security Initiative, China's Foreign Affairs Ministry is mindful that a protracted conflict in Ukraine could help drive a wedge between the United States and other NATO states who are on the frontline of the crisis and thus vulnerable to serious energy deficiencies and the burden of millions of refugees. With these factors in mind, the prospects of a weakened Russia from a protracted war and a divided Western alliance could make room for China to advance its role as a global leader. This outcome could be especially true within the Asian and Central Asian context. China is clearly sensitive to larger

geopolitical conditions, especially China's own feelings of being encircled by the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue [the Quad- India, Japan the United States and Australia] and the Trilateral Security Pact between Australia the United Kingdom and the United States.

These conditions make it unlikely that China would actively help undermine Russia in its war with Ukraine, fearing that it might be next in line for similar international treatment as it becomes more competitive economically and more ambitious in expanding its interest in the Indo-Pacific region. This possibility may help explain why China's state media first tried to promote the Russian claim that the United States was developing bioweapons in Ukraine but backed away after drawing the ire of Western nations for spreading disinformation about reason for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Some of this could also have been for domestic consumption to promote the Chinese Communists Party's (CCP) positions and secure support from the Chinese public.

Indeed, there are approximately 100,000 Ukrainians in China (with 6,00 Chinese in Ukraine). China, of course, has more investments, people, and Chinese companies in Russia. But among those Ukrainians with close ties to China, a group of around 300 volunteer translators, with some based overseas, are relaying key events from Russia's war on their homeland into Chinese. A website called "Ukraine News," carries a Chinese edition of state news agency Ukrinform, and channels on messaging app WeChat and YouTube. This content is for consumption by a Chinese audience otherwise fed a limited news diet with a mostly pro-Russian take on the invasion of Ukraine. So far, this seems to be tolerated in a country whose leaders are among Moscow's few remaining friends.

Overall, ordinary Chinese seem to be supportive of Russia's side in the Ukraine War. The People's Daily runs a continuous update on events in Ukraine in its online feed and pushes out official positions on WeChat, the most popular messenger service in China. But there are some voices among the Chinese "netizens" who point out unresolved border issues and the history of the Sino-Soviet split that threatened nuclear harm to China from both sides of the bi-polar world. These voices urged avoidance of getting sandwiched between Moscow and Washington in the current situation over Ukraine, while Beijing looks to benefit on the geopolitical front with the weakening of both the former superpowers. China is trying to seize the opportunity provided by a weakened even retreating, United States global presence in the wake of the withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Furthermore, America's failure to successfully make the "pivot to Asia" continues to play out most notably in the 2016 Trump Administration's withdrawal from and the resulting flop of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement. The war in Ukraine again serves as a distraction for the Biden Administration's efforts to create the 13-country Indo-Pacific Economic Framework that excludes China. For its part, China has forged the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership launched in January of 2022. This is

basically a free trade zone that includes the ASEAN countries plus Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and China. Missing from this list, obviously, is Taiwan.

## **Military Implications for China of the War in Ukraine**

President Biden's attempt to show that he can keep an eye on matters related to Ukraine and juggle relations within the NATO alliance while also reassuring Taiwan of support in the face of the recent increased presence of the People's Liberation Army's jets over Taiwan's airspace came in his May 2022 visit to Japan. Biden stopped just short of pledging military intervention on the side of Taiwan if attacked. But Beijing's diplomatic and military officials are aware of the level of arms support the United States is providing to Ukraine and the thought that similar support would be provided to Taiwan in the event of mainland moves to "reunite the motherland" were not lost on these "wolf warriors." Taiwan's leadership for its part is quite certain that US military aid to Ukraine is a deterrent to Beijing taking rash actions across the straits.

China's military and diplomatic officials attending the June 10-12, 2022, Shangri-la Asian Security Dialog in Singapore pushed back against the United States' position made by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin that tried to draw parallels between Taiwan and Ukraine. Such talk was seen as an obvious slight to China's longstanding position of what it considers its internal affairs and making it clear that there is a red line that is not to be crossed without consequences. More tensions have emerged as that red line became brighter with US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi's August visit to Taiwan.

Beyond Taiwan, China's military leaders are following developments of the war in Ukraine very closely. By their calculation, the US has shifted from ending the fighting to extending it with the goal of weakening Russia. From Beijing's perspective, by increasing military aid to Ukraine, the US hopes to scuttle any diplomatic resolution. The Chinese view holds that even if China would seek common ground with international condemnation of Russia, the United States would not soften its stance of containment against China. Support for this view comes from comments made in March by Deputy Secretary of Defense, Kathleen Hicks to the effect that:

Even as we confront Russia's malignant activities, the defense strategy describes how the department will act urgently to sustain and strengthen deterrence with the PRC [Peoples' Republic of China] as our most consequential strategic competitor and pacing challenge. The PRC has the military, economic and technological potential to challenge the international system and our interests within it.

It should also be kept in mind that about 80 percent of China's total arms imports between 2017 and 2021 came from Russia and the modernization of China's military has relied heavily on Russian military hardware. China is watching closely how this equipment performs in combat situations. More recently, Russia has been asking China for more aid, but China is reluctant to answer the call.

## **Conclusions**

Walking a middle path on Ukraine means that China must limit military aid to Russia while trying to maintain as semblance of business as usual with both combatant countries. But it remains to be seen how long economic ties between Russia and China can be kept separate from Russia's military ambitions in Ukraine. Contradictions within China's dual strategy could easily spill over into other points of conflict and tension. This is especially true in Central Asia where former Soviet states are apprehensive about their own border security if Russia can take back chunks of Ukraine. Additionally, there could be conflicts between the Russian backed Eurasian Economic Union and China's Belt-Road Initiative in the region. Even among various interest groups in China conflicts are emerging. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), made up of Central Asian states plus the Russian Federation, China, India, and Pakistan has been called on by China's Foreign Ministry to take an active role in the Ukrainian conflict. But this request seemed to be more like asking the SCO to support China's position than to help resolve the war. Indeed, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have assisted Ukraine and voiced their support for its territorial sovereignty.

As the world's second largest economy, some might ponder if China should be counted as part of the Global South. This is not an idle question. How China manages itself in response to the conflict in Ukraine may well provide a signal of where it will emerge on the world stage in the not-too-distant future and what role it will play in dealing with Global South nations that might want to hitch their destinies to the rising position of China in the twenty-first century.

## **Sources and Further Reading**

[In an effort to glean the most recent information on the topic under review, reliance has been placed on internet resources that should be available to most readers with access to the Web. The links below provide readers with access to more detailed content.]

<https://play.anghami.com/podcast/1016812387> China Power pod cast at the Center for Strategic and International Studies

<https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/chinas-position-ukraine-war-mirrors-its-global-pursuits>

<https://www.lawfareblog.com/amid-ukraine-war-china-announces-global-security-initiative>

<https://www.lawfareblog.com/us-sanctions-curb-chinese-technology-exports-russia>

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-05-02/chinas-ukraine-conundrum>

<https://business.cornell.edu/hub/2022/04/19/war-ukraine-impact-chinese-economy/>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/60571253>

<https://english.boaforum.org/newsDetail.html?navId=3&itemId=0&permissionId=114&detailId=16834> [English text of Xi's keynote at the BFA 4/23/22]

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-economy-and-ukraine-all-downside-risks>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/06/02/china-support-russia-ukraine/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/17/china-russia-tech-exports/>

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2980638/deputy-secretary-of-defense-dr-kathleen-hicks-remarks-on-president-bidens-fisca/>

<https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/3491830-zelensky-ukraine-is-fine-with-chinas-position-on-war-with-russia.html>

<https://www.voanews.com/a/war-puts-billions-of-dollars-in-ukraine-china-trade-at-risk-/6459878.html>

<http://app.people.cn/h5/topic/771?clientVersionCode=181>

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220330-i-won-t-stop-talking-ukrainians-in-china-fight-disinformation>

## *Chapter 6*

# **Russian Invasion of Ukraine – Indian Foreign Policy Turns Full Circle**

*Kalyan Chatterjee (Delhi, India)*

While the Russian invasion of Ukraine has signaled another reset of international politics after the breakup of the Soviet Union thirty-one years back, the uncertain Indian response is resembling more and more the faltering steps that it took to resolve conflicts that inevitably cropped up between real world situations and the rather idealistic non-aligned foreign policy that it chose to follow after independence. Coincidentally, it was the invasion by the erstwhile Soviet Union of another eastern European country – Hungary – back then that posed a serious challenge, as now to principles it followed in foreign policy.

When India gained its independence in 1947 it was the first major country to emerge from the clutches of European colonialism in Asia and Africa. The man responsible for designing this somewhat unique the foreign policy for the fledgling nation virtually from scratch was Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of the country. Though his foreign policy has received the acclaim of his admirers and it has attracted severe criticism in equal measure and blamed by many as the main cause of India's problems today. But it cannot be doubted that alone among the nationalist leaders Nehru, as a keen student of international affairs was best qualified, warts and all to formulate foreign policy in largely uncharted and choppy waters.

The world had just emerged from a most destructive war (the Second World War) and was entering the age of deadly nuclear weapons that were to define its contours for the subsequent half century. It was not surprising, therefore that Nehru energetically favored an external policy that would ensure a peaceful environment in which India could not just raise its economic standards but at the same time develop socially and culturally. To redeem "its tryst with destiny" as he put it on the day of independence. The policy that was adopted was one to avoid getting drawn into the rivalries between the great powers, a course that later came to be known as non-alignment and was finally given formal shape in 1961 at Belgrade.

This policy was first articulated in March 1947 at the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi, months before India's independence that was attended by delegates from twenty-five Asian countries many of which were still colonies. For too long, Nehru declared, Asia had been petitioners in Western courts and chancelleries. "We propose to

stand on our own feet and to co-operate with all others who are prepared to co-operate with us. We do not intend to be the playthings of others.” Faith in the United Nations (despite some of its partisan actions), independence, interdependence, and peaceful coexistence not power politics were to be its guiding principles.

As India seems to be once again faces a foreign policy dilemma over its response to the Ukraine crisis, it would be useful to recount the how it overcame the stumbling blocks of reconciling principle with realism during the first decade of its existence. Though both India’s position and the international situation today are vastly different from what they were three-quarters of a century ago, but complexity and a fast-changing international environment seem to be common factors.

For the relentless critics of Nehru’s policy, it would be worthwhile to recall a few background facts that are usually ignored by hindsight experts. The first is that at time that India’s policy was in the making, the Cold War had not yet begun. The second is that the People’s Republic of China had not come into existence (it came into existence in 1949). And third and most important, the Soviet Union (the predecessor of Russia) was definitely hostile to India and contrary to popular impressions today was not giving its unstinted support. No doubt, this mistaken impression has gained ground due to Nehru’s well-known socialist leanings and his admiration for the achievements of the Soviet Union. All the three developments took place in the decades that followed.

Nevertheless, Nehru’s ‘idealistic’ independent policy of non-alignment did pay off in the realistic sphere as India’s intervention helped stave off the risk of another general war as the superpowers flexed their muscles on the strength of the nuclear weapons that they possessed. It gave India a prominent voice in world affairs though initially it mostly invited scorn. At the same time, it enabled India to obtain the best of both worlds, as it could speak to the two dominant military-ideological blocs – the Soviet Union and the United States. His success is evident when contrasted with the policy followed by India’s neighbor Pakistan which, early in its existence, decided to attach itself to the Western alliance from which it is still finding it difficult to extricate itself. Pakistan provided the strategic bridge that brought the US and China together in the early 1970's initiating rapprochement that eventually enabled the former to win the Cold War and the latter to emerge as a powerful economy. But Pakistan, which allowed itself to be used as a pawn, has been left high and dry with its economy close to collapse.

India, on the other hand was able to obtain large amounts of economic and food aid from the US, on the one hand and help from the Soviet Union to set up heavy industries on the other since the former expressed reluctance to promote the public sector in India. And did all this without joining the network of Cold War military alliances that the US was setting up in its massive worldwide efforts to contain communism. Even a man like Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State consummate practitioner of realpolitik and no admirer of non-alignment, has resentfully acknowledged that despite

their professed idealism non-aligned nations learned how to play the superpowers against each other.

But this does not mean that it was all smooth sailing for non-alignment. On a number of occasions when the limits of India's foreign policy were put to severe test notably in the Korean War (1950), as well as the Suez Crisis and Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary (both in 1956). On all three occasions, India had to do some tight-rope walking which is reminiscent of the dilemma that it is currently facing with respect to the war in Ukraine.

The first challenge for Nehru to suit action to non-aligned words came not too long after independence with the Korean war of 1950-53. This was the first occasion when the world was polarized into the two main Cold War camps of capitalism on the one side and communism on the other. The leading players were the two superpowers – the US and the Soviet Union and China. The war started when North Korea, with the backing of the Soviet Union and China attacked South Korea backed by the US which but operating under the auspices of the United Nations.

At that time, India joined the West in condemning the attack in a resolution passed by the UN Security Council. This action had annoyed the Soviet Union that had even styled Nehru as a US stooge. Not wanting to further annoy the Soviets, India then abstained from voting on a second resolution calling for sending troops under UN auspices to join American soldiers already stationed in South Korea to repulse the North Koreans. Soon India made amends by endorsing the UN decision by sending its own troops, but only a medical corps contingent.

To mollify the Soviets and China, Nehru then sent letters to American Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin calling for admitting China into the Security Council and making for the return of the Soviets to the UN. This raised India's stock with the communist world too and opened the way for it to play the role of a peace maker though it was treated with suspicion and roundly criticized by both sides. Eventually, of course the US did recognize Nehru's efforts to bring about a negotiated peace but in the process India's relations with the US were soured as it became clear that it would not blindly follow the US in its anti-communist mission. But by his honest efforts Nehru earned international respect and his advice and help was by the big powers.

The second time Nehru's policy faced a challenge was in 1956 when two major conflicts, one over the attack by Israel, Britain, and France on Egypt over the Suez Canal and the other over the Soviet invasion of Hungary, events that took place in quick succession. It should be mentioned that with Stalin's death in 1953 there was a change in Soviet policy and its attitude towards India had become positive. India even considering purchasing Ilyushin aircraft from Russia. On the other hand, India was buying fighters from Britain and France.

So, when Israel, in conjunction with Britain and France attacked Egypt in October 1956 to retain control over the Suez Canal that had been nationalized by Egypt, India came out in unhesitating support of the Arab country that had been one of the prominent participants at the Bandung Conference a year earlier. Seeing the Anglo-French invasion as an effort to re-impose colonialism, Nehru came out unequivocally in support of the Egyptian leader Gamal Abdul Nasser. He even persuaded the US to prevail upon its Western allies Britain and France to desist and British and French forces had to back off. Despite this success, Nehru's earlier efforts at bringing about a peaceful settlement of the issue had not yielded results.

In the case of Hungary, however, Nehru's policy seemed to be following a double standard as initially he hesitated to condemn outright the Soviet invasion, also in October 1956. He only sent out informal messages to the Soviet Union about the public disapproval of its actions in India. It took him a good two weeks to condemn the Soviet Union outright for its invasion and demand that Stalin respect the wishes of the Hungarian people. Perhaps the reason for these somewhat contradictory stands was that in the case of Egypt Nehru was clear that it was anti-imperialism that he was fighting while in the case of Hungary was clearly a Cold War issue into which he had to tread with great care.

Fast forwarding to the situation in the world today which has revealed deep shifts with international power equations to which India finds itself at a loss. It has not yet been able to develop a coherent response which has only been underlined by its reluctance to condemn outright the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The main difference between its policies in its formative years and now is that unlike in the first few years after independence, the current regime in India is very sensitive about its international image since that is one of the planks of its domestic politics. At the same time, the current regime also wants to be realistic and practical. So, it wants to scrupulously avoid statements and actions that could result in ending up with egg on its international face. India also has to reconcile its claim to upholding the tenets of democracy with the need not to annoy the authoritarian Russians from whom it has obtained cheap petroleum. India has already earned the displeasure of the European Union in this matter. It also has to account for its own intolerance of dissent.

Above all what India cannot ignore is the China factor. It needs Western support to counter the growing economic and military power of its big neighbor to its east. At the same time, it is loath to be dismissed as a lackey of the West. All in all, the current regime is discovering the hard way that jingoistic criticism of foreign policy is easy from the opposition benches but requires skills of a different order to walk the tightrope that it involves in practice.

## *Chapter Seven*

### **Southeast Asian Complexity and Ukraine**

*(Paul A. Rodell, Georgia Southern University)*

The regional case of Southeast Asia offers an insight into the complexity of contemporary international relations. As a region, Southeast Asia is quite diverse as its eleven states have markedly different languages, a wide variety religious traditions, distinctly different races, and a range of ecosystems. Its countries also had wide variety of colonial experiences, excluding Thailand, which was never colonized, and all of their historical legacies in modern history have led to significant post-WW II variations shaping each state. Nevertheless, the region has created a voluntary regional body, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), that works by consensus and had a near unanimous response to the invasion of Ukraine.

Most immediately, the region was stunned by the Russian Federation's February 24 invasion of Ukraine. Days later, on March 2, all but two of the region's states voted for the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution condemning the Russian attack. Only Vietnam and Laos chose to cast abstentions to protect their long-standing ties to Moscow. A special note must be made for the case of Myanmar whose UN delegate voted in support the resolution because his act did not reflective the wishes of country's military rulers. A military junta had overthrown the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi but the UNGA has not recognized its legitimacy. So, even though the junta claimed the invasion of Ukraine was "justified" for the sake of Russian sovereignty, the country's UN delegate voted in accordance with the policies of the country's imprisoned democratic popularly elected leader. Another special note must be made that Singapore and Timor-Leste were early co-sponsors of the resolution condemning Russia and Cambodia added itself to that long list of concerned nations shortly before the vote. Cambodia's last-minute addition of co-sponsorship surprised many, but Prime Minister Hun Sen explained that his decision directing the nation's delegate to do so was based on Cambodia's historical experience of being invaded and occupied by foreign powers.

After the vote condemning Russia, however, the region was largely muted in their individual statements and frequently avoided direct condemnations of Moscow. So, for example, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Brunei would condemn the attack, but did not name Russia as the aggressor. Meanwhile, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia only expressed their "concern" and wished that a peaceful solution could be found. There was one notable exception to this trend. Singapore strongly allied itself with the West and issued financial sanctions and export controls measures against Moscow similar to those imposed by European Union (EU) states and the United States. The wealthy island republic's Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loon, argued forcefully that if

international relations degenerated into "might is right," the new world would become "a dangerous place for small countries like Singapore."

## **Southeast Asia Beyond the UN Resolution**

A look at the region's relationship to the European conflict shows an even more nuanced picture than the UNGA vote would otherwise suggest. This paper will explore a number of resulting issues and the policies of individual states plus reactions by their citizens. It will also explore the region's role in the complex of contemporary international relations. Among those issues are the plight of overseas workers, food security, economics, diplomatic and military relations with Russia, domestic public opinion, and broader regional security issues especially with regard to China. To facilitate this analysis, the issues will be addressed within a discussion of blocks of states with similar concerns rather than by making a country by country – issue-by-issue review. The only exception to this approach to presenting the analysis will be the early issue concerning the fate of overseas workers which was time limited and did not impact all states of the region.

### **Overseas Workers**

In the opening days of the conflict states that had substantial numbers of their nationals who were potentially in harm's way in Ukraine and Russia were very concern and sought the early and safe repatriation of their citizens. Some states in the Global South have hundreds and even thousands of their people working overseas and the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand were all affected and anxious to secure the rapid and safe return of their nationals.

Even before the unprovoked attack on Ukraine, the Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Teodoro Locsin, Jr. vowed to be on top of the brewing crisis and look after Filipinos who might be in harm's way. In fact, the repatriation of Filipinos from Kyiv was started a week before the invasion. Thankfully, all of the countries were able to repatriate their overseas workers rapidly. However, in the first days of the conflict none of the states were careful not to criticize Putin, however they did lavish praise on Ukrainian's efforts to secure the return of the vulnerable workers.

### **Economic Impact and Food Security**

Direct economic links between Russia and Southeast Asia are not critical to either party as Russia was only ASEAN's eleventh largest trading partner in 2020 with a total value of US\$13.6 billion in trade and in that year, Russia had only invested US\$63.2 million in the region. The real problem has been the indirect economic impact of the conflict for Southeast Asian states which is true of the rest of so much of the rest of the globe. As the conflict led to spikes in oil and gas prices and disrupted the world's supply

of wheat and corn the direct and indirect economic impact spread globally. While the rice eating peoples of Southeast Asia were not directly affected by shortages of wheat and corn, food shortages have also had an impact on global inflation in ways similar to the scarcity of oil. Adding to these costs are the prices of other now scarce commodities crucial for sectors of the world's economy such as the electronics industry.

While no country welcomes higher prices, poorer countries are far less able to absorb the shock of increased costs as they are passed down to their poorest citizens. Some Southeast Asian countries are relatively well off, but the people of Laos, Myanmar, and Timor-Leste are especially vulnerable. This point was underscored by an early April prediction by the Philippine based Asian Development Bank (ADB) which trimmed its 2022 growth forecast for all of Asia to 5.2 percent for the year compared with the previous year's 6.9 percent growth rate. The ADB's chief economist, Albert Park, also said that overall inflation in Asia was expected to rise from 2021's 2.5 to 3.7 percent. Hopefully, April's upward recalibration of the ADB's earlier economic forecast will not have to be revised again.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen added an additional economic concern for his country noting that the conflict was expected to have a negative impact on tourism that in 2019 accounted for twelve percent of his country's GDP. While Thailand's vigorous tourist industry in 2019 benefited from money spent by 1.4 million Russian tourists, in January of this year only 23,000 Russians visited and now with flight suspensions from Moscow and credit card sanctions, that number is certain to decline much further or cease altogether.

Despite the clear concern for the region's lesser economies and tourism, by early May even Prime Minister Loong of Singapore noted the strong impact on cost-of-living figures for his import dependent island nation. The previous month saw Singapore's factory growth slow for a third consecutive month due to price increases and supply disruptions. He clearly feared that an even slower growth was on the horizon.

While food security is a major cause for concern in many regions, and in some areas such as Africa and the Middle East the cost of wheat is even a cause for alarm, food security is not as critical in Southeast Asia where the dominant food grain is rice. Nevertheless, modern rice cultivation is based on high yielding hybrid varieties that require the input of oil-based fertilizers to achieve maximum yields. This means that even in Southeast Asia there will be an indirect impact of the conflict. In contrast to more vulnerable direct importers of food grains, Asia may not be faced with specters of widespread famine, but there still may be dietary consequences resulting from increased costs that could impact the poorest population sectors of even better off societies.

Ironically, the European conflict on global food supply crisis could have a positive impact in Southeast Asia as was evident in the remarks of an important Thailand's

government leader. Deputy Prime Minister and Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanawisit noted that his country is the thirteenth largest exporter of food to the world and the fourth largest in Asia. During the present world food crisis his country might benefit from increased international sales. The Commerce Minister also met with Russia's Minister for Economic Development, Maxim Reshetnikov, during a May meeting of APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) where they discussed increasing mutual trade and the possibility that Thailand will accept the new Russian payment system (MIR Card) introduced after the imposition of Western sanctions against Russia.

In sharp contrast with Thailand's prospects, However, UK-based Oxford Economics predicted that the economic impact of Russia's war will make the Philippine peso and the Indian rupee the most vulnerable currencies in Asia. For these two countries higher inflation rates and increased deficits could be problematic. Already, the Philippine central bank is projecting a 3.7 percent inflation rate which is close to the upper range usually considered manageable even as the true impact of the European conflict cannot yet be calculated.

In June, Indonesian President Joko Widodo attended this year's G-7 meeting in Berlin in part to ensure that the war in Ukraine will not derail the G20 summit he will host in November. After the Berlin meeting he visited Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on June 29 and Russian leader Vladimir Putin the following day. While these discussions were private, Widodo has frequently expressed his wish to help negotiate a resolution of the conflict. His immediate objective was to urge the two leaders to resume exports of grain and fertilizer since both are important for the world's economy with fertilizer costs being especially important for Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Additionally, since Widodo will host the G20's November meeting, he urged both Zelenskyy and Putin to attend even if by Zoom. Widodo wants this gathering to be productive for the sake of Indonesia's and the region's economies.

## **Southeast Asia's Relationship with Russia**

Russia has little influence in Southeast Asia with the exception of a few countries with whom they have long-standing relations and mutual interest that gives them leverage. In the past, Russia has tried to use the region as a counter-weight in its rivalry with Mao Zedong's China. Then, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia viewed the region as a market for their weapons industry. Between 2000 and 2021 Russia became the region's largest exporter of arms with sales of US\$10.87 billion while the United States was in second place with US\$8.4 billion. Most of Russia's sales were to Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Russia offered cheaper weaponry and a wide range of military hardware that even included submarines and fighter jets as well as being willing to extend generous payment terms. Sales to Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos were developed, in part, thanks to sanctions on these countries making Russia their only source of military goods. However since 2014 sales have decline due to sanctions against

Moscow because of its annexation of the Crimea. Going forward, Russian sales can be expected decline almost to zero because of its invasion of the Ukraine. Moscow will need all of its armaments for itself and the increased sanctions will make it nearly impossible to satisfy orders. And finally, Russia's poor military performance in Ukrainian should give potential buyers many second thoughts.

In fact, these second thought were already at work even before this year when Indonesia cancelled an order for Russian Su-35 jet fighters and ordered French Rafales instead and Jakarta may order additional F-15EX fighters from the US. Meanwhile Rodrigo Duterte during his recently concluded presidency of the Philippines reached out to Russia in an attempt to lessen his country's dependence on US military supplies and Russia responded warmly. In 2017 the countries signed a memorandum of agreement on defense cooperation, but all did not go as well as the parties had hoped. A Russian bid to provide Manila with submarines fell through when the Department of National Defense narrowed its bid to French and South Korean shipbuilders. Meanwhile, Duterte was determined to buy 17 Russian heavy-lift helicopters, but this became controversial and Manila announced that it would "review" the procurement. Most telling of all, in his final days in office Duterte promised to open naval bases to the United States if the conflict in Ukraine spilled over to Asia. Former president Duterte had come a long way from his early days in office when he publicly called US President Barak Obama, a "son of a bitch."

The two countries with the closest ties to Russia are Vietnam and Myanmar. For a very long time, the Hanoi government has maintained a close relationship with Moscow especially during its conflicts with France and later the United States. Russia had long been an inspiration to Vietnamese nationalists beginning with the young revolutionary whose early nom de plume was Nguyen Ai Quoc, later Ho Chi Minh. During the long Vietnamese independence struggle Russia provided key diplomatic support and was a major arms supplier. For their part the Vietnamese used their Soviet ally to balance support from Beijing. This playing off of rivals to preserve its independence from the giant to its north continued a thousand-year-old Vietnamese tradition. More recently, however, Vietnam has become even further dependent on Russian military hardware. Beginning in the late 1990s Vietnam began a military modernization program that included the addition of Russian submarines and surface ships, coastal missile defense systems, and fighter jets. After 2014, arms shipments to Hanoi were greatly delayed and Vietnam began to cut back. In the new context, Vietnam might be well served to retire old Russian weapons systems especially as Russia and China become increasingly linked. European or even American weapons might better serve them should Russia choose to support its Chinese ally in a South China Sea confrontation by cutting off the supply of weapons and ammunition to Vietnam. And finally, Myanmar is in a very difficult place since it is extremely poor and increasingly an international human rights pariah making Russia its only source of weapons. As well, considering the real problems of the availability of Russian weapons, their quality, and the means of payment while Russia is

under the new broad sanctions, even if Yangon (formerly Rangoon) had the funds there is little prospect of successfully making purchases.

Despite Russia's current difficulties, its Southeast Asian based diplomats speak to their host governments' officials about possible trade and investment possibilities, even though there is little likelihood of new developments. Russia does, however, use its diplomats in Southeast Asia to present Moscow's side of the Ukrainian war. They write occasional articles for local papers that repeat Russia's arguments. However, these are so heavily tilted that only readers who might already be sympathetic to Russia or, more likely, are biased against the former colonizing western powers would be receptive.

## **Public Opinion and State Policies**

While the opinions of government leaders are easily available thanks to the local and international press, with the possible exception of strict military dictatorships such as Myanmar's, however an analysis of the country's popular opinion might deviate from the official version. It is also more difficult to determine the opinions of the typical "man (or woman) on the street" especially in countries where individual opinions are not often sought or where an interviewer's motives may be suspect. Fortunately, we already have a handful of studies in some Southeast Asian countries that have looked into popular opinion about the Ukraine conflict. Some have even revealed interesting results that are not always in synch with government policies.

In late April a report of a study of Malaysian social media appeared in *Fulcrum*, an occasional publication of the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore that discovered interesting rationales for pro-Russian sentiments. In contrast with the official government opposition to the outbreak of fighting, respondents across the political spectrum seems to view Russia as an alternate superpower that could balance the United States. According to the article's authors, Benjamin Y.H. Loh and Nunira Mustaffa, the respondents seemed to believe, ". . . that global politics can only be interpreted through a binary framework that pits corrupt and evil Western imperialists against honourable and wrongfully accused benevolent Eastern superpowers." Supporting this conclusion were strong statements of "Whataboutism" unrelated to the current crisis. They even held these beliefs despite the clear evidence that Russia was involved in a surface-to-air missile shoot down of a Malaysia Airlines flight in 2014. As a result they supported the need for Ukrainian "de-Nazification" and the notion that Russia should respond to "NATO provocations." Furthermore, these opinions seemed to be embraced by people across the local political spectrum. Even conservative respondents see the Russian leader as "more tolerant of Muslims" than the West despite Putin's brutal suppression of the Chechens in the 1990s. Especially notable was that these positive feelings about the anti-West Russia did not apply to today's aggressive China for which Malaysians have increasing fear. While the West can easily be suspect in a former colonial country, there was a tendency to dismiss local media as linked to the West and "fake news" even as Russian media

outlet such as the state outlet RT was accepted. Meanwhile, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was dismissed as "pelawak" (comedian) and as a Jew, supposedly heading a state that needed "de-Nazification"!

In a late April an international current affairs publication, *The Conversation*, featured one of Indonesia's few scholars of Russian and East European studies, Radityo Dharmaputra, who commented on the media's impact on popular opinion in his country. In Indonesia, a source affecting popular critiques of the West and the Ukrainian government was the influence of right-wing neorealist American academics. While their few writings have played little role in the West, some of them such as John Mearsheimer have been widely read and quoted by Indonesian political "experts." With influences such as these, it is little wonder according to established analysts such as Dharmaputra, that his fellow Indonesians could be misled by Russian propaganda.

Markedly different results were found in another study in Vietnam of non-government sponsored Facebook pages and comments. The study was made in early to mid-March shortly after the UNGA vote in which Vietnam abstained. It seems that a significant "chunk" of Facebook reactions were critical of the government's rationale for neutrality. In fact, the March 16 report in *Fulcrum* noted that the Vietnamese public has become increasingly pro-US which should be a concern for the strict party government. A second analysis of popular Vietnamese opinion suggested that the pro-Russian portion of the population was composed of a few people who were stridently pro-Russian, although the majority of the respondents were not extreme even though they viewed Putin in a positive light. The pro-Russians respondents in this survey were the older generation who still think of the friendship that the Soviet Union extended to the country during its long independence struggle. In addition to the usual support for pro-Russian arguments, "Whataboutism," and dismissing Zelensky, some comments showed resentment toward Ukraine for selling a Soviet era aircraft carrier to China which helps Beijing enforce its claims to Vietnamese waters and islands. There may also be strong feelings for Putin who renewed Russian support for Vietnam after the estrangement period when Boris Yeltsen was the head of state.

There is little question, however, that the plight of Ukrainian refugees touches the hearts of Southeast Asians. A particularly touching example of this sympathy comes from the southern island of Koh Samui off of Thailand's southern coast where a resort owner turned over his facility for refugees to live in exchange for enough money to keep the skeletal staff employed. Then, when one of the refugees died, the local community organized a funeral and got the abbot of a local Buddhist temple to perform religious rites at the Ukrainian's ceremony.

## **The Southeast Asia-China Relationship**

For Southeast Asia a significant consequence of the war in Ukraine is the growing friendship between Moscow and Beijing. Sanctions on Russia have made the regular operation of the Russian economy extremely difficult and has made Putin increasingly dependent on Beijing. China, as well as India, buys Russian oil and accepts Russian payment which has been critical to keep the Russian economy from collapse and thereby supports Putin's military adventures. Also critical is China's diplomatic support even as Beijing tries to maintain a certain distance so as not to antagonize the West. This emerging relationship builds on their previously ties and has real implications for Southeast Asia. To the West, China's economic rise has been obvious for some time, but her military expansion and sophistication is only now becoming fully appreciated. In contrast, China's Asian neighbors are keenly aware of Beijing's rising military prowess, especially its sea power. The fear in Southeast Asia is that a confrontation with China may result, even if indirectly, from the Ukrainian conflict. The thinking is that distracted European allies and especially the United States will embolden Chinese aggression.

The most critical flashpoints are Taiwan and the South China Sea over which the PRC has long made claims. For Southeast Asian states the latter is most pressing and there has been a long history of Chinese encroachment. Observers only need to look at Beijing's so-called "Nine Dash Line" that cuts deep into Southeast Asia skirting the coasts of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam to see how threatened these smaller states feel. Confrontations and occasional clashes have taken place for years and in 1988 resulted in a naval engagement where Vietnamese naval vessels were sunk and sailors killed while defending their country's off-shore Parcel Islands. Since then, there have been more clashes in the South China Sea, especially at the Scarborough Reef that lies within the Philippine's territorial waters. In 2016, Beijing rejected the decision of the international court in The Hague that ruled in favor of the Philippines territorial claims, but Chinese occupation of the sea's island reefs has continued unchecked. Throughout the South China Sea, Beijing's military has been occupying many islands and atolls and transforming them into fortresses. Recently, Beijing has even attempted to limit free and open international access to the entire region. The fear is that the West's preoccupation in Europe will allow China to make the South China Sea its own lake which could strangle the region's economy and potentially lead to a serious shooting war with the West.

In June, China launched a new "cutting edge" aircraft carrier, The Fujian, and at about the same time information came to light that the Chinese navy will establish its own headquarters inside Cambodia's Ream Naval Base on the Gulf of Thailand and has entered into a secret military cooperation agreement with the Solomon Islands in the Pacific. These move will effectively challenge attempts to contain China and has enhanced its ability to interject itself in the region. Southeast Asians hope that China's integration in the world economy, which is greater than Russia's, as well as a strong

Western response to Putin's unilateral aggression will make Beijing think twice before initiating any aggression in their area of the world.

## **Suggested Readings**

**Books** – the following titles give a novice a comprehensive understanding of the region as a whole. The bibliographies of these titles also contain titles of books and journal articles about specific countries that may be of further interest.

Amitav Acharya, *ASEAN and Regional Order*, Routledge, 2021.

Craig Lockard, *Southeast Asia in World History*, Oxford University Press, 2009.

Anthony Reid, *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

James R. Rush, *Southeast Asia: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2018.

Meredith L. Weiss, *The Roots of Resilience: Party Machines and Grassroots Politics in Southeast Asia*, Cornell University Press, 2020.

**Journals** – the following is a brief list of three peer review journals that frequently contain articles that should offer further insights that will elaborate the present essay.

*Asian Survey* (bimonthly, University of California, Berkeley)

*Contemporary Southeast Asia* (published three times per year) and *Southeast Asian Affairs* (annual review by topics + country specific reviews) both published by the Institute of Southeast Asian Affairs Singapore (bookshop.iseas.edu.sg )

## **Publications Utilized for this Essay**

**Newspapers** – Fortunately Southeast Asia has a number of first-rate English language daily newspapers. All have access to government officials and reproduce the gist of independent research. None are government censored.

*Jakarta Post* (Indonesia) [www.thejakartapost.com](http://www.thejakartapost.com)

*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, [www.inquirer.net](http://www.inquirer.net)

*The Straits Times* (Singapore) [www.straitstimes.com](http://www.straitstimes.com)

*The New Straits Times* (Malaysia) [www.nst.com.my](http://www.nst.com.my)

*The Bangkok Post* [www.bangkokpost.com](http://www.bangkokpost.com)

## **Current Affairs Reports**

*Fulcrum: Analysis on Southeast Asia*, [fulcrum.sg](http://fulcrum.sg) published by the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore

*The Diplomat*, [thediplomat.com](http://thediplomat.com) a current affairs newsletter, Washington, DC

*The Conversation*, [theconverstion.com/us](http://theconverstion.com/us), global affairs commentary, US office, Waltham, MA

## *Chapter Eight*

### Historicizing and Contextualizing Mexico's Reaction to the Ukraine Crisis

*(Michael Bess, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, Mexico)*

To understand Mexico's posture towards the war in Ukraine, it is important to understand that its politics, like many countries that use a presidential system, are dominated by the priorities and whims of the person at the top of the power structure. Andres Manuel López Obrador, president since 2018, styles himself as a student and aficionado of history, having written several books reflecting on Mexico's past and often invoking it from the bully pulpit. It is likely not lost on the president that Mexico was the first Latin American country to extend diplomatic recognition to Moscow and the Soviet Union in 1922, receiving the Russian revolutionary Alexandra Mikhailovna Kollontai as ambassador. At that time, then-president Álvaro Obregón, and his successor, Plutarco Elías Calles, who later founded what would become the most dominate political institution in Mexico during the twentieth century, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (better known by its initials in Spanish: PRI, pronounced "pree") faced several serious diplomatic challenges. Over the years, the party sought to maintain a delicate geopolitical balance with the "Colossus to the North" that frequently infuriated U.S. officials in Washington. The following essay examines how Mexico has reacted to the on-going crisis in Ukraine, drawing on President López Obrador's proclamations, their impact on national politics, and how the country has dealt with economic and refugee issues stemming from the conflict.

#### **National Politics and Geopolitics**

In the wake of the war in Ukraine and the international community's move to isolate Russia, the Mexican president, his political party (the National Regeneration Movement, better known as MORENA in Spanish), and allies have sought to reiterate its ties with Russia. López Obrador frames his diplomatic position via the Estrada Doctrine, diplomatic principles embraced by the Mexican government in the 1930s that emphasized non-intervention and national self-determination. It guided the country's neutral posture in global affairs for more than 70 years, until it was replaced by a more internationalist, activist policy in the 2000s. In 2018, López Obrador publicly reinstated the Estrada Doctrine as the diplomatic framework for his administration.

Although the Mexican foreign minister, Marcelo Ebrard, quickly rejected the Russian invasion of Ukraine, he also emphasized that the government was not

contemplating breaking diplomatic relations, nor imposing a boycott on Russian goods. In March, in the Mexican congress, elected representatives from MORENA and the putatively left-wing Workers' Party hosted a "Mexico-Russia Friendship Committee" that included an invitation to the Russian Ambassador, Viktor Koronelli, who spoke to the group and reaffirmed President Vladimir Putin's talking points: "For us this is a sign of support, of friendship, of solidarity in these complicated times in which my country is not just facing a special military operation in Ukraine, but a tremendous media war. Russia didn't start this war; it is finishing it." López Obrador has also repeatedly denied requests from Ukraine's ambassador, Oksana Dramaretska, for military aid, citing the Estrada Doctrine. When the head of U.S. Northern Command, General Glen VanHerck, who leads U.S. military operations in North America, spoke of the possibility for Russian spies to "exert influence" from south of the border, López Obrador drew on anti-colonial rhetoric familiar to Mexicans when he responded: "Mexico is a free, independent, and sovereign country. We are not a colony of either Russia, China, or the United States." Also, in his address to the United Nations, the president reiterated, "We will not send weapons and will not carry out economic reprisals. We are adopting a neutral stance in line with Mexico's foreign policy."

This firm stance against isolating Russia speaks to Mexico's long-standing relationship with Moscow as a counterbalance to Washington. During the Cold War, in the 1950s and 1960s, the country hosted cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union, including a tour from the Russian Piatnitiskiy Folk Choir. It also sought to serve as a hemispheric leader that could negotiate with the global superpowers. For example, Mexican President Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964) promoted a pacifist diplomatic posture that looked to declare Latin America a nuclear free zone. He also positioned the country's foreign-affairs apparatus to serve as a back channel in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Conservatives in the party grumbled over the president's friendly policies to the socialist bloc, while political opponents in the press went so far as to paint the PRI's left flank as patsies of the Cubans.

These issues underscored the philosophical conflict on-going for decades within Mexico and the ruling PRI. On the one hand, in 1910, the country was the site of the first successful political and social revolution of the twentieth century. That project served as an inspiration to other international movement leaders, including Fidel Castro (he lived in Mexico City from 1955 to 1956 and returned to Cuba onboard Granma from the Mexican port of Tuxpan, Veracruz). On the other hand, the PRI's leadership frequently used the symbols and rhetoric of revolutionary discourse to position the party as left-wing while conservative political bosses pushed it towards a reactionary, pro-business posture at mid-century. Moreover, as a deeply Catholic country with a history of foreign invasion, millions of Mexicans embraced an ideology that drew on anti-communism and anti-Americanism to shape their worldview. These seemingly contrary positions influenced President López Obrador's own political upbringing in the southern state of Tabasco during the 1970s. He began his career supporting left-wing PRI candidates and remained

suspicious of the United States as global political and cultural hegemon (all the while maintaining a life-long appreciation for Major League Baseball and the St. Louis Cardinals, in particular). In the 1980s he broke with the PRI and helped found the Party of the Democratic Revolution alongside other prominent leftists including Cuauhtémoc Cardenas, son of the famous, and beloved left-wing president Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (1934-1940). After creating MORENA in 2011, many leftists and former PRI members joined López Obrador, building a political platform based in pragmatism, populism, and patronage that won national power in 2018. López Obrador achieved this victory by managing the often-contradictory political currents in Mexico. He used left-populist rhetoric on the national stage while also reaching out to business leaders and Christian groups to reassure them about his intentions for the country and signal support for common causes. Framing this strategy was a form of nationalism rooted in historical grievance. Not only has the president warned the Biden administration not to interfere with Mexican internal affairs, but he also demanded formal apologies from Spain and the Vatican for the 16th-century conquest of the indigenous Aztec Empire.

## **Market and Economic Challenges**

López Obrador's flashy calls for national sovereignty, alongside the Mexican government's history of diplomatic balancing against U.S. interests could not shield the country from the global economic impacts of the Ukraine crisis, however. Overall, the finance ministry has reported inflation of nearly 8 percent across the economy since the war began. Basic materials across the Mexican economy have experienced price hikes; for example, the cost of asphalt rose 18.5 percent since February, while paint and rebar prices rose 6.8 and 3.4 percent, respectively. Rises in the global price of fertilizer have also caused food prices to increase in Mexico, but the country has largely avoided the shortages that have plagued U.S. supermarkets due to high amounts of internal production. Mexico has been sensitive to food supply shocks in the past. In 2007, Mexico City experienced severe protests after the cost of corn rose 35 percent during the preceding two years; although something similar could occur again, for now, the country has avoided a replay of this "tortilla crisis."

The government and some leading companies have sought to curb the impact of inflation on the broader population. Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim, an ally of President López Obrador, who controls much of the Mexican telephone and cellular communications business in the country said his companies would not raise prices in 2022. Major supermarket chains, such as Chedraui and Soriana, and foodstuff conglomerate, Grupo Bimbo, which is a major bread producer, have also promised the president that they would work to absorb inflation costs. While these groups have responded to the on-going economic crisis due to the war, Mexico is also in an election year (Mexicans went to the polls at the beginning of June and overwhelmingly supported the president's party in four of six statewide elections). In March, as national energy prices rose, the federal government absorbed the tax on oil production and services.

Although the national oil company, Petroleos Mexicanos (PEMEX) will see revenue increases, government interventions to shield the economy will likely cost as much as 10 billion dollars in 2022. Whether the country's government and private sector will have the resources and willingness to continue with such subsidies if the conflict enters 2023 remains unknown.

Another area of concern is tourism. Since the Covid pandemic rocked the industry two years ago, causing a dramatic decline in the sector, Mexico has seen a strong resurgence in foreign visitors since 2021. That year, roughly 65,000 Russians and 20,000 Ukrainians visited the country; the Russian airline, Aeroflot, also celebrated the re-opening of service from Moscow to Cancún (which had been dormant since 2007), but industry experts expect tourism from both countries to essentially disappear due to the impact of the war. There is also concern that inflation will lead to a drop in foreign tourism from other countries as consumers look to cut costs; for the moment, this large decline has not occurred. Amid these worries, the Mexican tourism ministry said it would continue to allow Aeroflot access to the country. Shortly after the war began, tourism minister Miguel Torruco Marqués tweeted (and since deleted) the statement: "Warm greetings to our friends at the prestigious airline @aeroflot, hoping for prompt connectivity between nations and of course to Mexico City. I remind you that tourism is a synonym of peace, friendship and understanding between people." Not one to miss an opportunity for comment, during one of his daily press conferences, López Obrador spoke on the matter air service between Russia and Mexico: "Let it be known we're not going to close to any country." Despite these grand proclamations by Mexican leaders, it is important to note that this support is largely symbolic since Aeroflot, as of June 2022, is currently not offering any flights on its website to Mexico City or Cancún.

## **Immigrants and Refugees**

Although the Mexican government has rejected military support for Ukraine, it has embraced refugee initiatives to help people fleeing the region. López Obrador has publicly supported efforts and stated that Ukrainians and Russians living in Mexico who did not want to return to their countries because of the war could apply for refugee status. It harkens to the country's history as an important sanctuary for people escaping conflicts elsewhere. In the nineteenth century, Mexico received and protected runaway slaves fleeing from antebellum America and granted refuge to religious minorities persecuted north of the border. During and after the Spanish Civil War, the Mexican government famously admitted people escaping dictator Francisco Franco's fascist regime. Spanish intellectuals played a key role in founding important institutions like the Colegio de México.

During the current crisis, the Mexican government and volunteer groups have actively worked to repatriate its citizens, their family members, and others. In March, the government evacuated more than 80 people, including Ukrainian family members of

Mexicans and citizens from other Latin American countries, via a Mexican air force plane that brought the group to Mexico City. Foreign minister Ebrard called the operation a success, while the president promised to support the evacuation of other Mexican citizens, their families, and other people from Latin America still present in the region. Moreover, thousands of people from Ukraine have been arriving to shelters in Tijuana and other parts of the country with the goal of seeking refugee status in Mexico or the United States. In the state of Baja California Norte, a local, cross-border network of volunteers worked to process Ukrainians with U.S. immigration officials. In key international airports across Mexico, including Mexico City, Cancún, and Guadalajara, national authorities have setup special areas to specifically process Ukrainian refugees who plan to continue to the United States. By early April, more than 200 Ukrainians had been granted U.S. entry at the San Ysidro San Diego-Tijuana crossing with almost a thousand more people awaiting processing in the area. Mexican volunteers working with the refugee program provided food and simple accommodations. Nevertheless, volunteers on both sides of the border described the difficulty of working long hours every day with little additional support. In Mexico City, a camp that had processed roughly 1,000 refugees with a US-backed NGO group, known as United with Ukraine, which had cooperated with the Mexican government, was marked for closure. Despite initial enthusiasm in the spring, it signaled a policy change to discourage further refugee arrivals from Ukraine to Mexico. Instead, the NGO advised Ukrainians to register directly with the U.S. government and avoid the cost of traveling to Mexico.

The experiences of Ukrainian and Russian refugees in Mexico have highlighted the geopolitical realities of the war. Ukrainians have the support of the Biden administration to continue to the United States, but Russian nationals have faced a much more challenging scenario. While some have considered settling temporarily in Mexico, others have resorted to traveling to the border and requesting amnesty only to be turned away by Customs and Border Patrol agents. Stranded Russians have sought the support of Mexican immigration authorities; in one case, officials advised a Ukrainian-Russian couple to marry at the local courthouse in Tijuana to strengthen their amnesty appeal. The marriage made local and national headlines in Mexico, and the couple managed to enter the United States the day after wedding.

For other people who arrived, they have mixed feelings about being in Mexico. One couple living in Kyiv when the Russian bombing campaign began joined the first repatriation campaign the Mexican foreign minister had coordinated. While they returned to Michoacán, a largely rural state in western Mexico where one of the spouses had family, the high rate of local violence meant they were ultimately looking to emigrate elsewhere before starting a family. Their worries underscore the reality that even as the conflict in Europe rages, Mexico remains one of the most violent “peacetime” countries in the world, especially for marginalized people, activists, and journalists.

## Conclusion

The story of Mexico's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine has highlighted the role and possibilities of third-party states to adapt to the conflict and provide a measure of relief for people affected. The federal government has sought to limit the economic impacts the conflict has caused, in part because the country is in an election year; however, it remains to be seen whether López Obrador and his allies can maintain this position if the war extends to next year. Energy and food prices are continuing to rise along with other goods and services due to inflation, and if it worsens, Mexicans may protest as they have done in the past. The country's legacy as a supporter of non-intervention and the president's frequent calls to historical memory underscore the decision to support refugee programs, while opposing military aid to Ukraine or boycotting Russia. Nevertheless, the country's endemic violence has complicated and undermined efforts to provide sanctuary. Against this backdrop, Mexico's populist, and charismatic leader, López Obrador, has used the crisis to reassert national sovereignty vis-à-vis geopolitical interests. He (and his government) will likely continue this posture as the war unfortunately drags on.

## Suggested Further Reading

Eric Zolov, *The Last Good Neighbor: Mexico in the Global Sixties*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.

Jasmine Aguilera, "A Wave of Ukrainians and Russians at the U.S.-Mexico Border Puts Pressure on Biden's Immigration Restrictions," *Time*, March 11, 2022, online:  
<https://time.com/6156863/ukraine-russia-refugees-us-mexico-border-title-42/>

Mark Stevenson, "Mexico's ruling party Morena boosts Russia 'friendship' committee despite Ukraine invasion," *El Paso Times*, March 23, 2022, online:  
<https://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/politics/2022/03/23/mexicos-ruling-party-morena-boosts-russia-friendship-committee/7147997001/>

"Ukrainian refugee camp in Mexico's capital to close," *ABC News*, May 24, 2022, online:  
<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ukrainian-refugee-camp-mexicos-capital-close-84947091>

"After fleeing war in Ukraine, Mexico not an attractive option," *Mexico News Daily*, March 8, 2022, online: <https://mexiconewsdaily.com/news/fled-ukraine-but-mexico-not-attractive-option/>

"AMLO's Ukraine position is straining relations between Mexico City and Washington," *Le Monde*, March 29, 2022, online:  
[https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/03/29/amlo-s-ukraine-position-is-straining-relations-between-mexico-city-and-washington\\_5979305\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/03/29/amlo-s-ukraine-position-is-straining-relations-between-mexico-city-and-washington_5979305_4.html)

“Mexico to boost output of staple foods in plan to curb inflation,” Reuters, May 5, 2022, online: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/mexico-boost-output-staple-foods-plan-curb-inflation-2022-05-04/>

## Membership Application Form Association of Global South Studies

Membership is open to any person interested in Global South Studies. Membership benefits include an annual subscription to the Journal of Global South Studies (JGSS) and an invitation to participate in the annual meeting at a reduced registration rate.

### 2022 Membership Fees [for calendar year]

- Annual Global North Membership – \$60
- Annual Global South Membership – \$30
- Annual Student Membership – \$30
- Life Membership – \$400

Our preferred method of payment is by credit card using the form below (payments are processed through PayPal). If you would like to pay for your membership with a check, you can download a printable Membership Application by clicking [here](#). Fill out the application and follow the directions on the form to return it by mail, along with your payment.

Please direct any questions regarding the Membership Application or payments to:

Paul A. Rodell (Treasurer)  
[agsstreas@gmail.com](mailto:agsstreas@gmail.com)

Link to the online application:

<http://apps.gsw.edu/agss/index.php/new-membership-application/>

## *Chapter Nine*

### Waves Originating from Distant Shores: The Ripple Effects of the War in Ukraine on South American States

*Brian R. Parkinson (Georgia Southwestern State University)*

Like an unseen tsunami approaching the shore, the unprovoked Russian assault on Ukraine has produced unexpected global ripple effects. Energy prices have spiked in the wake of the invasion, and so has the cost of fertilizer. These secondary developments to the war in Ukraine will profoundly affect food security across the Global South. Despite the distance, currents of world trade have carried crashing waves of political and economic disruption from the Black Sea coast to the once tranquil shores of South America, where the region is a net exporter of food to the world market. In fact, if one excludes the countries of Venezuela and Suriname, every country in South America exports more food than it imports. As a result, the war's impact on the continent will generate long-lasting reverberations worldwide.

South America has long been a significant trading partner with Russia and Ukraine. To be sure, the region relies on vast inputs of fertilizer and hydrocarbons from these Black Sea states to harvest the crops necessary to satisfy the insatiable appetites of the world's hungry mouths. (The region conducts far more trade with the United States and European Union, however.) As the price of energy and crop nutrients continues to increase unabated, so too will the price of food traded as commodities on international markets. Of course, citizens across the Global South, where food security directly relates to income inequality and poverty, will suffer the attendant consequences of the rising cost of foodstuffs.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine coincided with a cresting wave of infections attributed to the Covid-19 Omicron variant, a time when most South Americans thought they could emerge from the pandemic and finally enjoy a long-awaited return to normalcy. Indeed, it had been a rough couple of years for the region. From an economic perspective, the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on South America cannot be understated, for the continent witnessed a wholesale reduction in investment and concurrent declines in economic productivity. Latin America experienced a more precipitous decline in GDP than any other region of the Global South during the first year of the pandemic. Governments hastily responded to the crisis by attempting to alleviate the financial encumbrance of a worldwide health crisis. Some states lifted taxes on consumables, while others increased subsidies on food and energy, inadvertently promoting inflation and assuming substantially higher debt loads in the process.

Despite the economic hardship that the region has endured throughout the pandemic and the threat to their trade with Russia, the vast majority of South American countries initially reacted to the war by advocating for Ukraine on moral grounds. It is equally probable they were attempting to curry favor with the United States and EU member states as much as to avoid a confrontation with their greatest allies and trading partners. Seven of the continent's ambassadors posted to New York supported Ukraine in the general assembly of the United Nations on multiple votes related to the war, including Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. (Yes, it is true that the Brazilian ambassador to the United Nations also voted against Russia a few times, but these votes have not matched the declarations of President Jair Bolsonaro, who has noticeably refused to make explicit criticism of Russian President Vladimir Putin.)

The war compelled South American states to reevaluate their international relationships and their perceived roles in regional politics relative to any economic harm they might suffer due to the war. Unfortunately, reliance on traditional Cold War alignments fails to adequately explain the regional reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The new state of affairs begs for a novel method of describing an inchoate paradigm. The collective responses of South American states to the Russo-Ukrainian War can be interpreted using a new dialectic: Most countries in South America have forgone their old Cold War allegiances with the West predicated on a common aversion to communism in favor of new alliances based on the shared values of participatory democracy and reliance on mutually beneficial economic relationships. Of course, not every country fits nicely into this model. For example, Bolivia and Venezuela, in contrast to the majority of South American states, have adhered to traditional ties with the Russian Federation, the principal constituent republic of the former Soviet Union.

As one might expect, the reaction to the war has been as mixed and varied as the region itself; a broad spectrum of responses has emerged. Countries that have unambiguously championed Ukraine, like Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Uruguay, occupy one end of the spectrum while pro-Russian partisans, such as Bolivia and Venezuela, occupy the other. Naturally, a degree of variation exists between these diametrically opposed poles, with some states generally favoring Ukraine, including Paraguay, Peru, and Argentina, while others, like Brazil, have attempted to remain neutral.

## **Ardent Defenders of Ukraine**

As a group, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Uruguay, have unequivocally supported Ukraine in the conflict, despite the potential damage to their economies from the concomitant effects of the war. At first glance, these countries seem to lack many shared commonalities apart from their history as former colonies of the Spanish Empire. However, these four countries have aspired to play a more prominent role in the region's leadership of late. They also seek to maintain a relatively healthy diplomatic and

economic relationship with the United States and European Union member states. After all, they are far more reliant on trade with the United States and European Union than with Russia, despite the latter's importance to the global fertilizer and energy markets.

Collectively, the presidents of these four countries have displayed a probity to criticize Russia explicitly; cosigned the Organization of American States' declaration of condemnation of Russia; cosponsored the General Assembly of the United Nations Resolution on Ukraine; voted to censure Russia in the General Assembly of the United Nations; voted to create a United Nations Human Rights Council commission of inquiry on Ukraine; and voted to suspend Russia from the United Nations Human Rights Council.

In the far south of the continent, in Chile's capital of Santiago, support for Ukraine runs strong. The outgoing president, Sebastián Piñera, a liberal-conservative from the National Party, described the Russian invasion as a violation of the territorial sovereignty of Ukraine, "These acts violate international law and threaten innocent lives, international peace and security." Meanwhile, president-elect, Gabriel Boric, who represents the Broad Front, a left-wing coalition, criticized Russia's invasion in unmistakable terms, "Russia has opted for war as a means of resolving conflicts. From Chile we condemn the invasion of Ukraine, the violation of its sovereignty, and the illegitimate use of force." Clearly, sympathy for Ukraine has transcended political ideology in the long and narrow land.

At the other end of the continent stands Colombia, where president, Iván Duque, a member of the Democratic Center, a conservative political party, concurred with Piñera and Boric, "Colombia categorically rejects the premeditated and unjustified attack that has been perpetrated against the Ukrainian people by Russia, which not only threatens its sovereignty but also threatens world peace." Despite their leaders' uncompromising language, neither Chile nor Colombia has joined the United States and the EU to impose economic sanctions on Russia. They are not voicing meaningless proclamations, however. Their economies are simply too fragile to do so. To a degree, they have benefited from the sanctions, filling government coffers with the receipts of profitable commodity exports, base metals from Chile, and hydrocarbons from Colombia.

Still, the leaders of Chile and Colombia fully comprehend the implications of inflationary pressures on international markets and have taken steps to mitigate the worst effects of the war at home. While consumer prices have surged across the region, some currencies, like the Chilean and Colombian Peso, have improved relative to the dollar and enabled their governments to maintain fuel subsidies. Acceptable balance sheets have also allowed these countries to send humanitarian aid to Ukraine. Colombia dispatched a group of specialists to teach Ukrainians how to identify and remove landmines. It also allocated funds destined for Ukrainian refugees. In the meantime, Chile donated \$100,000 to Ukrainian relief efforts from their Chile Fund against Hunger and Poverty.

Like its Andean neighbor to the north, Colombia, Ecuador's principal export is Brent crude. Though the price of petroleum is relatively high by historical standards, it cannot rescue the government of Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso from the current crisis. As part of its International Monetary Fund loan program, Ecuador had previously agreed to budget cuts, including cuts to fuel subsidies. Despite Ecuador's precarious financial position, Lasso, a member of Creating Opportunities, a center-right political party, echoed the other staunchly pro-Ukraine presidents' sentiments: "Ecuador condemns Russia's decision to launch a military operation and the violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity." Since the onset of hostilities in Ukraine, however, the situation in Ecuador has deteriorated considerably. In recent weeks, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador instigated a series of mass protests, demanding President Lasso address the cost of living crisis. Lasso eventually relented and promised to reduce the cost of fuel.

Over in the tiny Uruguayan village of San Javier, initially settled by Russian peasants in 1913, one would be hard-pressed to find any backing for Russia amongst their descendants. To be sure, the country has sided with Ukraine. This includes President Luis Lacalle Pou, of the center-right National Party, who adamantly repudiated the Russian assault on Ukraine, "Russian military forces launched an offensive against Ukraine. Uruguay is a country that is always committed to peace. We reject actions contrary to international law and UN policies." Under Lacalle Pou, the country has weathered the repercussions of the pandemic and subsequent war relatively well, though it has also suffered from general inflationary pressures. Still, Lacalle Pou has rejected any notion of resorting to a price fix, "They know that the practice of this government is not pricing. We believe that there are other mechanisms that can help balance and regulate this increase." An exporter of mostly agricultural commodities, Uruguay has benefited from gains against the dollar, though energy costs have effectively negated much of those gains. Perhaps it is for this reason that while Lacalle Pau has backed Ukraine in his rhetoric, it has not translated to any foreign aid for the war-torn country.

## **Pragmatic Supporters of Ukraine**

Not all South American countries have been so perspicuous in their support of Ukraine, however. As opposed to taking a moral stance towards the war, *realpolitik* has governed the behavior of Paraguay, Peru, and Argentina. These states currently inhabit the periphery of US-South American relations but are particularly vulnerable to war-driven economic disruption, especially in global commodity markets. For this reason, financial considerations appear to have prevailed over principled positions, and these countries have adjusted their diplomatic communiqués accordingly. The trio has attempted to chart a middle course, hoping to avoid alienating either Russia or, more importantly, NATO-aligned states. In this context, Paraguay and Peru voted in defense of Ukraine on every resolution before the Organization of American States and the United Nations. Still, their presidents have taken great pains to eschew even mentioning Russia

or Vladimir Putin in reference to the conflict. At the same time, Argentina's president belatedly censured the Russian president but refused to sign the OAS declaration.

Paraguay features prominently in South America as the only country that conducts more trade with Russia than it does with the United States, mainly soybeans and beef. Taking this into account, President Mario Abdo, a member of the right-wing Colorado Party, prevaricated in his disapproval of Vladimir Putin, "The Paraguayan government condemns the attacks on the Ukrainian people, in violation of the principles of sovereignty and international law, and urges the aggressors to stop their actions, calling for dialogue for peace and world stability." Abdo understands that Paraguay, as an agricultural exporter, relies on Russian fuel and fertilizer inputs to sustain seasonal crop yields. Sanctions, therefore, represent an existential threat to the Paraguayan economy.

In the months since Russia's opening salvos against Ukraine, the Paraguayan Guarani has made gains against the dollar, effectively boosting revenue earned from Paraguayan commodity exports. Still, Abdo arbitrarily sided with concerns of private gas stations and eliminated the fuel subsidies of the state oil company, Petropar. In response, Paraguayans of all persuasions erupted in protest; the Union of Production Guilds entreated its unionists to protest until the government removed the selective consumption tax on petroleum.

Energy market instability has also complicated economic plans for Peru, which has been looking to recover from a pandemic that witnessed the highest death rate in the world on a per capita basis. Refined petroleum is, after all, the principal import to Peru, making the country extremely susceptible to price shocks, which have had detrimental economic and societal consequences for the Andean nation. With that in mind, President Pedro Castillo, who represents Free Peru, a Marxist political party, sought to balance delicate diplomatic concerns against the economic pain Peruvians are experiencing from the rising cost of fuel and fertilizer, "We hope that through dialogue a peaceful solution will be achieved in favor of both nations." To the principal combatants, the former teacher expounded, "Let funds not be invested in bullets or ammunition, let them be invested in sitting down to talk in order to attack common enemies, such as poverty, inequality and disease, around the world." His attempted colloquy failed to assuage the concerns of ordinary citizens suffering from the worst inflation in a quarter-century. Within weeks of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, protesters, including many truck drivers, poured into the streets of Lima to demonstrate against the rising price of gasoline. Farmers also expressed their discontent at the increasing costs of fertilizer, a burden they have passed to consumers in grocery stores across Peru. Clashes between marchers and the police ensued. In an effort to placate the masses, the Castillo government finally suspended the gas tax and implemented a minimum wage hike. Unfortunately for the average Peruvian, inflation has counteracted these pragmatic steps.

The presidents of Paraguay and Peru withheld specific condemnation of Vladimir Putin, and so did Argentina's Alberto Fernández, a center-left Peronist from the

Justicialist Party. In truth, he initially equivocated on Russian culpability in his first statements following the outbreak of hostilities, displaying a predilection to remain impartial. After all, the value of the Argentine Peso has declined significantly against the dollar since the beginning of the war; only elevated commodity prices of grain and energy have sustained the economy in the interim. A major exporter of wheat and hydrocarbons, Fernández referred to Argentina as “a reservoir of what the world needs right now: food and energy.” Additionally, the primary economic consideration for Argentina had been to gain leverage in its debt negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, and President Fernández desperately needed some Russian cooperation. (Many Argentines, both on the left and the right, harbor no illusions that the United States obliquely controls the IMF.) Argentina is slated to eliminate fuel subsidies this year as part of a parsimonious austerity plan mandated by the IMF. But doing so could cause an eruption of mass demonstrations, much like those in Ecuador. In this context, Fernández visited Moscow in the weeks leading up to the war and remarked, “Argentina must become the gate of access” for Russia in South America.

Following the commencement of Russian military operations, President Fernández released prosaic statements that only tacitly referenced the war, such as, “We suffer many deaths caused by the pandemic. Humanity has suffered a lot. This creates a moral imperative for the parties to commit to the peaceful settlement of the dispute, acting with the utmost prudence and responsibility to guarantee world peace.” Fernández eventually succumbed to domestic political pressure to adjust his rhetoric, as members of the opposition, as well as the Ukrainian Embassy in Buenos Aires, encouraged the president to adopt a more forceful position against Moscow. Only then did he expressly refer to Russia, “We call on all parties not to use military force. We call on the Russian Federation to put an end to the actions undertaken and for all parties involved to return to the dialogue table.” Sufficiently reproached, the Fernández government offered foreign aid to Ukraine, including food, medicine, and clothing. The president also deployed Argentina’s White Helmets humanitarian task force to the Ukrainian-Polish border.

## **Brazilian Neutrality**

Although Argentina’s Fernández had been an unhurried and reluctant supporter of Ukraine, his opinion did evolve in the face of domestic opposition. Conversely, Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil’s defiant leader from the conservative Social Liberal Party, has persisted in his intransigence and expects to persevere as a nonaligned party for the duration of the conflict. Certainly, Bolsonaro has espoused a position that puts him at odds with most of his government ministers, who seem eager to defend Ukraine. This dichotomy has created an interesting case study because of its unusual, if not polarized, nature. It has also led to some remarkable interactions between the president and the civil servants who serve at his pleasure. Take the case of Ronaldo Costa, the Brazilian Ambassador to the United Nations, who voted against Russia on three resolutions in the United Nations related to the war. As Russia began a campaign against its neighbor,

Costa took to the floor of the Security Council and asserted, “We live in unprecedented circumstances- The threat to the international order and the violation of the UN Charter. We are gravely concerned with the Russian military operation against targets in southern Ukrainian territory.” While Costa spoke out against Russia, Bolsonaro, a retired Army captain, met the commencement of hostilities with a conspicuous silence. Only when his Vice President, Hamilton Mourão, a reservist general himself, declared that economic sanctions would be insufficient and that the West must consider using force to counteract Russian aggression in Ukraine did the Brazilian president allude to the invasion. For exceeding limits defined by the Foreign Ministry, Bolsonaro promptly deauthorized his vice president from speaking on the matter. He proclaimed that the war was beyond the vice president’s purview, “To make it very clear, article 84 of the Constitution says that the president is the one who talks about this subject and the president is called Jair Messias Bolsonaro. And full stop.”

The Brazilian president’s comments came less than a fortnight after a much-criticized meeting with Vladimir Putin in Moscow. There, the two BRICS leaders discussed strengthening their strategic partnership and economic cooperation. What has become apparent in the intervening time is that Bolsonaro has abrogated any moral obligation to Ukraine. Rather, his response to the war has been rooted in an obsequious desire to avoid offending Putin, with whom he shares an ideological alignment. Putin’s intractable stance against Western liberal democracies appeals to Bolsonaro, and so does the Russian leader’s image as a defender and upholder of Christian values.

Economic concerns related to the price of energy and crop nutrients are also vital to Brazil. It greatly relies on Russian energy and fertilizer inputs to enhance agricultural production. Russia has also invested heavily in the Brazilian oil and gas sectors, and today Brazil exports more Brent crude than any other country in South America. However, it lacks sufficient refining capacity and must import gasoline from abroad, stimulating inflationary pressure on consumables in the country. To that end, Bolsonaro, as well as an increasing number of perceptive politicians, recently pressured Petrobras to reduce the price of gas for its customers at a time when the state-run oil company has posted record profits.

Despite increased energy exploration and industrialization, farming continues to represent the backbone of the Brazilian economy and is particularly susceptible to inflation. Brazil must import nearly 90 percent of its crop nutrients, a large portion of which originates in Russia. In fact, the current set of circumstances has become so dire that Brazil petitioned for an exemption of fertilizer from the list of sanctioned goods imposed on Russia at a recent meeting of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization last month. In this context, Bolsonaro proclaimed at a February 27 press conference, “We are not going to take sides. We are going to continue to be neutral and help however possible to find a solution.” Thus far, Bolsonaro’s impartiality seems to be in step with the

general sentiment of the people. Although most Brazilians support Ukraine in the war, they want their country to remain neutral.

## **Russia's Bulwark in South America**

While Brazil has maintained neutrality in the ongoing dispute between Russia and Ukraine, Bolivia and Venezuela have been obdurate in their support of Russia. Under the aegis of Vladimir Putin, Russian foreign policy astutely targeted these politically debilitated South American states facing a series of challenges. (Bolivia suffered a political crisis in 2019, and Venezuela is still contending with a crisis of legitimacy, for the international community backs the government in exile of Juan Guaidó.) Putin has a pattern of cultivating ties with states suffering from vulnerable democratic institutions and international isolation in order to bolster support in the region and act as a backstop to American hegemony there.

Consequently, Putin has exploited social media in these countries with expert finesse, taking advantage of the current political atmosphere and simmering discontent with the history of American foreign policy in the region. Russia has invested heavily in both countries too. For example, Putin supplied large-scale shipments of Russia's domestically developed Sputnik V vaccine to Bolivia and Venezuela. Russia has also financed the development of the Bolivian and Venezuelan petroleum industries.

Presently, Russia is reaping the seeds of discontent sown over decades of meddling in the region, harvesting goodwill from the likes of Luis Arce in Bolivia and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, both of whom voted against all of the OAS and UN resolutions in support of Ukraine. They also abstained on a vote to suspend Russia from the UN Human Rights Council. Disciples of Evo Morales and Hugo Chavez, respectively, their collective response to the war has been driven by traditional Cold War alignments. Indeed, the two socialist governments adopted pro-Russian ideological stances toward the war; they remain unconcerned about offending Western sensibilities and are willing to challenge the established liberal order.

Once famous for Cerro Potosí, a mountain of silver that supplied the Spanish Empire's royal treasury, Bolivia presently finds itself in a unique financial position to withstand the adverse economic effects of the war. Unlike its neighbors, Bolivia has sustained economic growth throughout the conflict because of the rising value of its primary exports, specifically hydrocarbons and precious metals. Sanctions against Russian fertilizer have benefitted Bolivia too. It exports a significant amount of crop nutrients, mostly ammonia and urea. Receipts have bolstered government coffers, enabling it to subsidize gas and foodstuffs. Together, this has helped the government manage inflation, currently reported to be the lowest in the region. Economic gains beget political gains. As the standard-bearer of Movement towards Socialism, President Luis Arce has fostered reconciliation in the country following the 2019 political crisis, a crisis

that the partisans of Evo Morales continue to refer to as a coup d'état. Taken together, Bolivia's solid financials and political stability have enabled it to establish an ideological position on the war, as opposed to one based on the shifting currents of economic change.

President Arce has been noticeably mute on the dispute. He has preferred to let his government ministers speak on his behalf, who, along with former president Evo Morales, have offered disparate and incompatible views on the war. For example, Diego Pary, the Bolivian Ambassador to the United Nations, equated American military adventurism in the Middle East with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, "My country firmly rejected and rejects all invasions and unilateral actions carried out by several powers throughout recent history in violation of international law and the United Nations Charter itself. Examples of this are Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Palestine and today Ukraine." Meanwhile, Freddy Mamani, Bolivia's Deputy Foreign Minister, adhered to Bolivia's stated foreign policy principles and opined that "Bolivia was a pacifist State in all multilateral scenarios. Bolivia's position on Ukraine in multilateral spaces is clear, we are a pacifist State and we promote the political-diplomatic negotiation from the culture of dialogue and peace." Finally, Morales offered an unsolicited observation that implied corrupt complicity between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United States, for it has "caused the death of millions with the atomic bombs against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Condor Plan in Latin America and NATO interventionism in so many countries of the world now threatens to make Russia 'pay a high price' for defending its continuity as a sovereign state." With so many dissenting voices, Bolivia has lacked a clear, consistent, and coherent message regarding the conflict.

Like Bolivia, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela takes its name from Simón Bolívar, El Libertador. At first glance, President Maduro's pro-Russian stance toward the war appears to be purely ideological; however, economic concerns are of paramount importance to the Bolivarian Republic. While Bolivia's unique Andean geology has enabled its economy to weather the worst side effects of the war, Venezuela's financial ledgers have eroded like the riverbanks cutting through the Orinoco plains. The impact of international sanctions against Russia have extended to Venezuela, a politically isolated country without many friends. For this reason, Venezuela depends heavily on Russia. Banks in Moscow negotiate transactions on behalf of the Venezuelan oil sector. (It is even believed that Venezuela maintains large reserves of rubles, the value of which has plummeted under the strain of sanctions.) From Maduro's perspective, Venezuela's political quarantine necessitates the maintenance of its alliance with Russia, "From Venezuela, we repudiate the perverse plans that seek to surround Russia militarily and strategically. All support for President Putin and his people. We are sure that Russia will emerge united and victorious from this battle, with the admiration of the brave peoples of the world." A Russian defeat against Ukraine would spell disaster for an already economically weakened Venezuela.

President Maduro also suffers from a crisis in political legitimacy at home, where he depends on Russian military systems and political support to maintain domestic security. Most Venezuelans support the internationally recognized government in exile of Juan Guaidó. Worse still, Venezuela is just one of two countries in South America that relies on food imports to provide for its population. As inflation continues unabated, it will have a deleterious impact on the cost of groceries, food security will become a major issue, and Venezuela will find it harder to purchase food imports. Though Maduro has been known for using food as a political tool, rationing could trigger protests, if not political upheaval.

The war has exacerbated inflationary concerns across the region. Yes, much of South America has benefited from local currencies performing better against the dollar since the beginning of the war, allowing citizens and companies alike to purchase imports at favorable rates. Exporters of consumables like food and fuel also realized benefits attributable to the war. But the rising commodity prices that have militated against these fortuitous circumstances have been offset by consumers reducing consumption. The constriction of global supply chains, combined with declines in regional consumer spending, has limited the purchasing power of the majority of South Americans. At the same time, interest rate hikes in developed nations, used as a means of curbing inflation, have restricted access to capital from less-developed countries. Taken together, these factors hinder the prospects of growth for South America. Poor economic forecasts portend inauspicious winds of political change across the continent for the parties in charge. We have already witnessed the rise of opposition parties in Chile and Colombia. Perhaps Brazil is next.

### **Suggested Readings**

Astrada, Marvin L., and Martín Félix E., *Russia and Latin America: From Nation-State to Society of States*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Davydov, V. M. *Latinoamérica y Rusia: Rutas Para La Cooperación y El Desarrollo*, Buenos Aires: Clacso, 2018.

Ellis, Robert Evan. *The New Russian Engagement with Latin America: Strategic Position, Commerce, and Dreams of the Past*, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2015.

Mainwaring, Scott, and Pérez-Liñán, Aníbal. *Democracies and Dictatorships in Latin America: Emergence, Survival, and Fall*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Rouvinski, Vladimir, and Jeifets, Victor, eds. *Rethinking Post-Cold War Russian-Latin American Relations*, London: Routledge, 2022.

## Notes on Contributors

**Michael K. Bess** is an Associate Professor in the Department of History at the Center for Research and Teaching in Economics and affiliated faculty in the business school at the Pan-American University in Mexico. He completed an MA in History at Georgia Southern University and a PhD in Borderlands History at the University of Texas-El Paso. In 2017, the University of Nebraska Press published his first book, *Routes of Compromise: Building Roads and Shaping the Nation in Mexico, 1917-1952*. He is co-director of the digital humanities initiative, MX.DIGITAL, dedicated to preserving and visualizing historical statistics. His next book project is a history of mobility and transit policy in Mexico City from 1867 to 1985.

**William Biebuyck** received his PhD in Political Science and Political Economy from Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada). He is currently an assistant professor in the International studies program at Georgia Southern University where he teaches specialized courses on global food security, transnational organized crime, and qualitative research design. Broadly speaking, Biebuyck's research focuses on the emergence and intensification of transnational governance over the contemporary period, with a particular interest in the spaces of postwar Europe and the global food system. Among other venues, William's publications appear in *The European Journal of Social Theory*, *Comparative European Politics*, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, and the recent edited collection *Decentering Europe* (Routledge). He is also finalizing a book project that fashions an 'agrarian-centered' history of governance and political rule in Western Europe, spanning the period from Absolutism to the contemporary EU.

**Kalyan Chatterjee** graduated with a degree in political science from Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. He first worked as a professional journalist for twenty years and a mass communications professor for another twenty. He currently lives in Delhi and writes for online media. His interests range from political and social issues to science and environment. He is the author of the book *Media and Nation Building in Twentieth Century India: Life and Times of Ramananda Chatterjee* published by Routledge in 2019. He also authored the chapter "Media and Imagination" in *Media and Utopia*, eds Arvind Rajgopal and Anupama Rao, Routledge, 2016. He has travelled widely in India and abroad.

**Dorothea A L. Hoffman-Martin**, Professor Emerita of East Asian History, Appalachian State University. She taught World History and East Asian history for 26 years, and continues to research and write on topics related to modern world history with an Asian focus. She is a founding member of the World History Association and a life member of AGSS having served in various capacities. Her PhD is from the University of Hawaii in Modern Chinese history, MA from UC San Diego in Third World History and BA in history from University of New Orleans. *The Making of a Sino-Marxist World*

View combines her major fields of interest. She also did a Study Report for the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik on Chinese – East-European Relations from the 1970s to early 1980s focusing on China's perspective of the Soviet Union in that region. Her current project explores nineteenth century Chinese labor migration to Latin America.

**Jacek Lubecki** is Associate Professor of Political Science and International Studies at Georgia Southern University. He was born in Poland, and studied Law and Romance Language at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan. His MA and PhD in International Studies are from University of Denver. He specializes in comparative politics, Eastern-East Central European studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and military history and defense policy. He recently co-authored *Defense Politics of East-Central European Countries after 1989: Creating Stability in a Time of Uncertainty* (with James Peterson, 2019), and co-edited *Defending Eastern Europe. The Defense Policies of New NATO and EU Member States* (with James Peterson, 2021). He served as associate editor for the Middle East, *Journal Global South Studies*, 2016-19.

**Aran MacKinnon** is Professor of African History, and Chair of the Department of History and Geography at Georgia College. He is the former Director of the Center for Interdisciplinary and Global Studies at the University of West Georgia. He earned his PhD in history from the University of London, UK, his MA in history from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa and his BA in history from Queen's University, Kingston, Canada and has taught in Canada, the UK, the US and South Africa. He is the author of *Nelson Mandela. A Reference Guide To His Life and Works* (2020), *The Making of South Africa* (2nd Edition, 2012), co-editor with Elaine MacKinnon of *Places of Encounter, Time, Place and Connectivity in World History*, Volumes 1 and 2 (2012), and co-author of *An Introduction to Global Studies* (2010) as well as numerous articles on South African history in various scholarly journals.

**Elaine MacKinnon** is Professor of Russian History and teaches in the Department of Art, History and Philosophy at the University of West Georgia. She earned her M.A. and Ph.D. in Modern European history from Emory University and her B.A. in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Princeton University. She recently translated and edited Ludmilla Miklashevskaya's memoir, *Gender and Survival in Soviet Russia: A Life in the Shadow of Stalin's Terror* (2020). She is the author of *The Forgotten Victims: Childhood and the Soviet Gulag, 1929-1953* (The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies 2012); co-author and editor with Aran MacKinnon of *Places of Encounter, Time, Place and Connectivity in World History*, Volumes 1 and 2 (2012); and translator and editor of V.A. Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the USSR* (2002). She has published numerous articles on Soviet history in various scholarly journals and translations.

**Brian R. Parkinson** is Professor of History and former chair, Department of History and Political Science, Georgia Southwestern State University. He received his B.A. in

History from Georgia Southern University. After an internship at the Goethe-Institute in Atlanta, he matriculated to Florida State University, where he earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in History. He taught at Florida State's London Study Centre. While there, he was an invited speaker at London University, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). Dr. Parkinson co-authored *World History: Cultures, States, and Society to 1500* (2016). He has published peer-reviewed articles, book reviews, and encyclopedia articles for assorted scholarly journals and presented seventeen papers at national and international conferences. Dr. Parkinson has served as an executive board member for the Association of Global South Studies since 2017. He has also concurrently served on the board of editors for the *Journal of Global South Studies*.

**Paul A. Rodell** is Emeritus Professor of History, Georgia Southern University specializing in Southeast Asia. He served in the Peace Corps in the Philippines working in agriculture extension (1968-1971). He did MA work at the Asian Center, University of the Philippines and his PhD at SUNY Buffalo. He is Treasurer of the Association of Global South Studies (2019-present). He was chair of the Philippine Studies Group, Association for Asian Studies (2009-2011) and executive director for the Association of Third World Studies (1996-2002). He has written over forty articles and book chapters and edited an anthology on Southeast Asia (2000). His *Culture and Customs of the Philippines* (2002) won the Cecil B. Currey Book Award of the Association of Third World Studies.

**Cathy Skidmore-Hess** is an Associate Professor of African History at Georgia Southern University. She earned her M.A. and Ph.D. of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has published several articles relating to the history of seventeenth century Angola as well as nineteenth and twentieth century Botswana. Her current research focuses on gender, religion, and the environment. Her current projects consider belief, gender fluidity, hunting, and tsetse fly. She has lived in both Cote d'Ivoire and Botswana and has helped direct faculty and student trips to Southern Africa and Senegal. She is currently President of the Association of Global South Studies.

**Philip Szmedra**, is Emeritus Professor of Economics, Georgia Southwestern State University (GSSW) is currently an Associate Teaching Professor, Dahlkemper School of Business, Gannon University, Erie, PA. He served in the Peace Corps in Morocco as an economist in the Ministry of Agriculture in Rabat. He was an analyst at the Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1986-96 and a Senior Lecturer, University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji, 1996-2000. He taught at GSSW from 2001 to 2019, with a year spent as a visiting professor, American University, Bulgaria, 2006-07. He has been Secretary of the Association of Global South Studies since 2014. Dr. Szmedra has published twenty-eight articles and presented seventy papers at domestic and international conferences. While at GSSW he was awarded the Vice President's Award for Excellence in Research in 2010, was the Featured Scholar in 2013-2014, and the Jane and Larry Comer Faculty Scholar from 2016-2019.

## **About the Association of Global South Studies, Inc.**

In 1983, Dr. Harold Isaacs founded the Association of Third World Studies (ATWS) as an international structure for the humane and scientific study of Global South peoples, problems and issues, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of their lives. In early 2016, by vote of the association's members, its name was changed to Association of Global South Studies (AGSS) and its journal to the *Journal of Global South Studies* (JGSS).

Since 1983 the Association has held 38 annual international conferences, published 78 issues of its journal plus conference proceedings and an occasional newsletter. In 1992 Georgia Southern University became its Executive Headquarters now located at Louisiana State University Shreveport. In 1995 the United Nations granted U.N. "consultative status," thus enabling the Association to increase its direct impact on Global South issues and developments.

In addition to these activities AGSS has had an international impact through its chapters in South Asia and Africa (Kenya & Nigeria) and its welcome of scholarly articles to the *JGSS* by Global South scholars. The South Asia chapter held fifteen successful conferences and members of chapters in Kenya and Nigeria have attended AGSS annual conferences and are prolific journal contributors.

### **Objectives:**

- Provide ongoing open forums to discuss and analyze Global South problems and developments from different perspectives or viewpoints.
- Promote professional development through the encouragement of research, publication and teaching in the area of Global South Studies.
- Facilitate professional and social communication by sponsoring activities which will bring together persons interested in Global South Studies
- Promote the enhancement of the quality of life of Global South peoples through application of primary research findings, and formal association with private and public institutions involved with development in the Global South.

### **Activities:**

- Sponsor lectures, seminars, symposia, conferences, including an Annual Meeting, focusing on Global South problems and developments.
- Encourage interested individuals to support institutions and organizations associated with development in the Global South.
- Recognize excellence in research, publication and teaching by appropriate awards and prizes.