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Will Putin's Ukraine War Provoke Famine and Upheaval in Africa ?

By Dirk Kohnert

Abstract- Famines are almost always man-made often used as a deterrent. Since ancient times, food and hunger have been a weapon of war. Among the most notorious examples in Africa are the Herero and Namaqua genocide in German South-West Africa (now Namibia) from 1904 to 1908. It was the first genocide of the 20th century. Also, the subsequent famines in Biafra (South-East Nigeria, 1967-1969), when an estimated 1.5 million people starved to death, the 1980 famine in Uganda, one of the worst in African history, when 21% of the population died, and the recurring famines in Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan since the 1990s have been burned into human memory. The use of food as a weapon was condemned as a war crime by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 1998. Since most African countries are Least Developed Countries (LLCs), they will suffer the hardest in the aftermath of Putin's war in Ukraine, especially Africa's poor. They have already suffered the consequences of drought, the corona pandemic and Islamist terrorism.

Keywords: russia, invasion, ukraine, africa, famine, international trade, global power, food power, arms deals, fragile state, islamist terrorism, egypt, morocco, algeria, tunisia, libya, south africa, cameroon, mozambique, ethiopia, kenya, uganda, somalia, namibia, nigeria, sudan, energy security, china, eu, usa.

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Will Putin's Ukraine War Provoke Famine and Upheaval in Africa ?

Dirk Kohnert

Résumé- Les famines sont presque toujours causées par l'homme, souvent utilisées comme moyen de dissuasion. Depuis l'Antiquité, la nourriture et la faim sont une arme de guerre. Parmi les exemples les plus notoires en Afrique, citons le génocide Herero et Namaqua dans l'Afrique allemande du Sud-Ouest (aujourd'hui la Namibie) de 1904 à 1908. Ce fut le premier génocide du XXe siècle. En outre, les famines qui ont suivi au Biafra (Sud-Est du Nigeria, 1967-1969), où environ 1,5 million de personnes sont mortes de faim, la famine de 1980 en Ouganda, l'une des pires de l'histoire de l'Afrique, où 21 % de la population est morte, et la les famines récurrentes en Éthiopie, en Somalie et au Soudan du Sud depuis les années 1990 sont gravées dans la mémoire humaine. L'utilisation de nourriture comme arme a été condamnée comme crime de guerre par le Statut de Rome de la Cour pénale internationale en 1998. Étant donné que la plupart des pays africains sont des pays les moins avancés (PMA), ce sont eux qui souffriront le plus des conséquences de la guerre de Poutine en Ukraine, en particulier les pauvres d'Afrique. Ils ont déjà subi les conséquences de la sécheresse, de la pandémie de COVID-19 et du terrorisme islamiste. Leur position déjà affaiblie sera exacerbée par les retombées de l'agression russe en Ukraine, qui ne fera qu'exacerber la faim et la pauvreté en Afrique. D'autant plus que l'aide internationale au développement risque de souffrir d'une réorientation massive de l'aide vers le réarmement. Enfin et surtout, la guerre de Poutine en Ukraine aura un impact majeur sur les relations UE-Afrique. Compte tenu des conséquences de la pandémie de Covid-19 pour l'Afrique, cela mettra encore plus à mal la confiance mutuelle entre les deux partenaires. Environ 86 % des Africains n'ont pas encore reçu deux doses de vaccin. Un nombre croissant de chefs d'État et de gouvernement africains ne voient plus les pays occidentaux comme des partenaires fiables.

Abstract- Famines are almost always man-made often used as a deterrent. Since ancient times, food and hunger have been a weapon of war. Among the most notorious examples in Africa are the Herero and Namaqua genocide in German South-West Africa (now Namibia) from 1904 to 1908. It was the first genocide of the 20th century. Also, the subsequent famines in Biafra (South-East Nigeria, 1967-1969), when an estimated 1.5 million people starved to death, the 1980 famine in Uganda, one of the worst in African history, when 21% of the population died, and the recurring famines in Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan since the 1990s have been burned into human memory. The use of food as a weapon was condemned as a war crime by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 1998. Since most African countries are Least Developed Countries (LLCs), they will suffer the hardest in the aftermath of Putin's war in Ukraine, especially Africa's poor. They have already suffered the consequences of drought, the corona pandemic and Islamist terrorism. Their already weakened position will be exacerbated by the spill-over effects of Russian aggression in Ukraine, which will further exacerbate hunger and poverty in Africa. All the more so as international development aid to Africa is likely to suffer from a massive redirection of aid to rearmament. Last but not least, Putin's war in Ukraine will have a major impact on EU-Africa relations. In view of the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic for Africa, it will further damage the mutual trust between both partners. About 86% of Africans have yet to receive two doses of vaccine. A growing number of African heads of state and government no longer see Western countries as reliable partners.

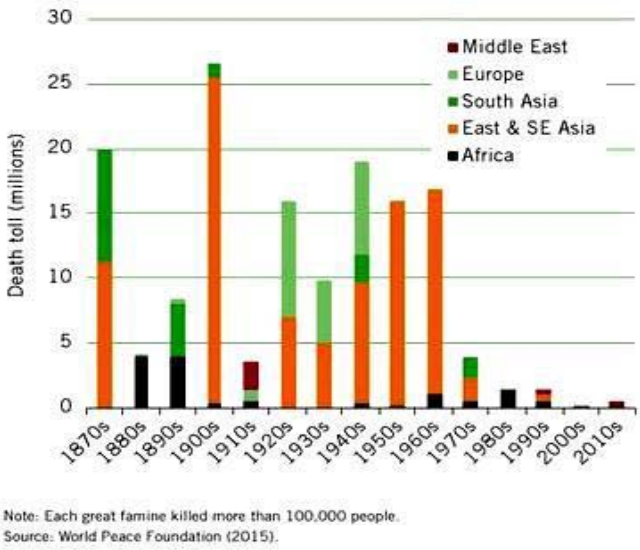
Keywords: russia, invasion, ukraine, africa, famine, international trade, global power, food power, arms deals, fragile state, islamist terrorism, egypt, morocco, algeria, tunisia, libya, south africa, cameroon, mozambique, ethiopia, kenya, uganda, somalia, namibia, nigeria, sudan, energy security, china, eu, usa.

I. Introduction

Famines are regularly man-made. During the past century, war and totalitarianism produced more famine deaths than did overpopulation, economic backwardness and climate change (Ó Gráda, 2007). In case an autocrat is interested to reduce the capacity of a group to resist his policies, there may be only a thin line of interpretation separating an intended goal of killing by the intention of elimination through starvation (Conley & de Waal (2020). Notably in Africa, that still is in common perception the continent of crisis, *failed states* and starvation, famines are often induced by politics, last, but not least, by the power to command food through a variety of market and non-market institutional means (Watts, 1991).

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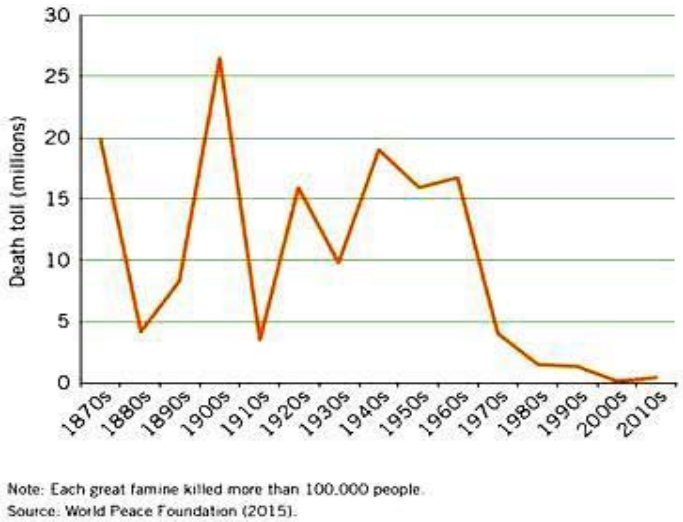
Source: Grebmer, 2015: 24

Graph 1: Death toll from great famines, 1870s to 2010, by continent

Even *food aid* has been exploited by ruthless governments to subdue their citizens by leveraging their political support and converting food aid into political power. The highly ritualized grant of food aid may pervert a present-day political and economic order to a rule where it are finally the peasants who go hungry (Phillips, 2009).

In civil war governments and rebels often control humanitarian access. They either permit entry and protect aid workers or they block access. Thereby, aid workers frequently face greater personal dangers as they move in a dangerous terrain of warfare. Under these circumstances, the provision of food aid under riskier conditions can even result in "new famines" (Grebmer et al, 2015).

In the following, the main causes and effects of *Russia's war in Ukraine* as regards famine and economic, political and social development in Africa will be analysed, taking into account the multiple facets of *hunger*. Also, a succinct review of literature on food as a weapon of war will allow for understanding the serious impact of Russia's war on Africa. The regional focus will be on the *Maghreb, Egypt* and selected countries of *Sub-Saharan Africa*. To conclude, *Moscow's* use of *wheat* and energy as a geostrategic weapon to handpick African countries for cooperation as well as the EU's alternatives for using Russian and Ukrainian wheat will be outlined.



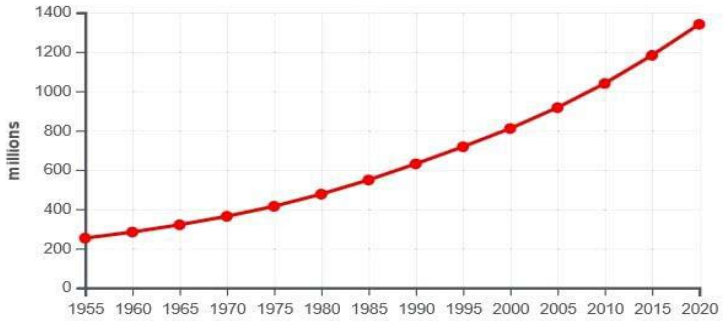
Source: Grebmer, 2015: 23

Graph 2: Global death toll from great famines, 1870s to 2010s

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II. The Impact of Russia's Ukraine War on Hunger in Africa

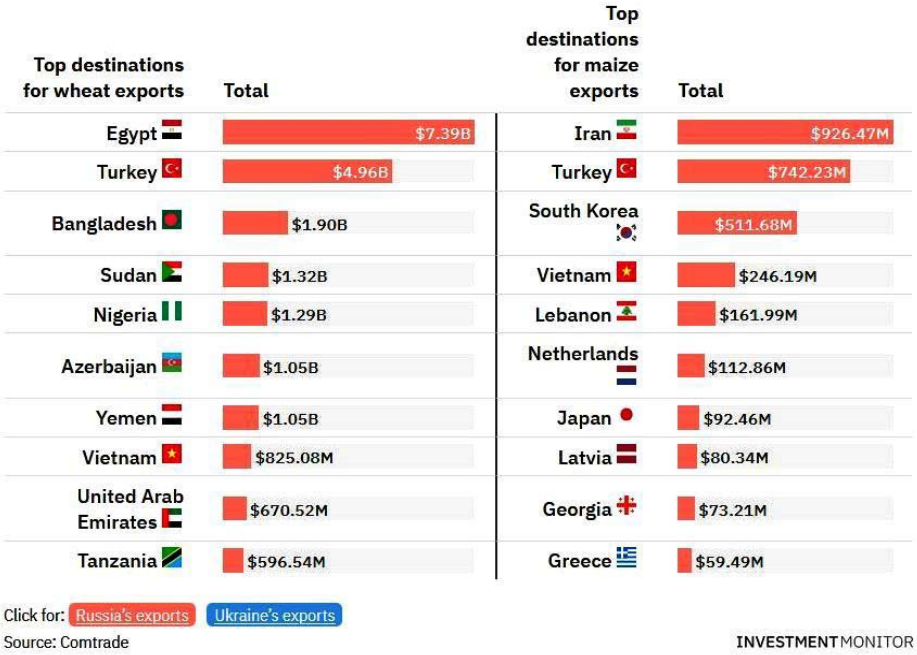
For decades, Africa shows the highest *population growth* and the largest famine troubles in the world. Its population surpassed one billion in 2009, with a doubling time of 27 years (growth rate of 2.6 % p.a.). At the same time, average *agricultural productivity* was the lowest worldwide. Moreover, Africa is likely to suffer substantially from *climate change* (Grotel, et al, 2021).



Source: worldometers, 2019[1]

Graph 3: Africa's population growth, 1955 – 2020

Therefore, African countries are particularly vulnerable because they rely heavily on Russia and *Ukraine* for their wheat imports. The top African wheat import partners of Russia were *Egypt, Sudan* and *Nigeria* (s. Graph 4). In Egypt, a total of US$ 3.02 bn of wheat was imported in 2019, US$ 1.44 bn came from Russia, and US$ 773.4 m from Ukraine. In *Ethiopia,* where a total of US$ 458.42 m of wheat was imported in 2019, $ 142.01 m came from Ukraine and $ 64.77 m from Russia (Leiva, 2022).



Source: Leiva, 2022

Graph 4: Russia's top export partners of wheat and maize Top ten countries based on total value of exports, 2016-2020

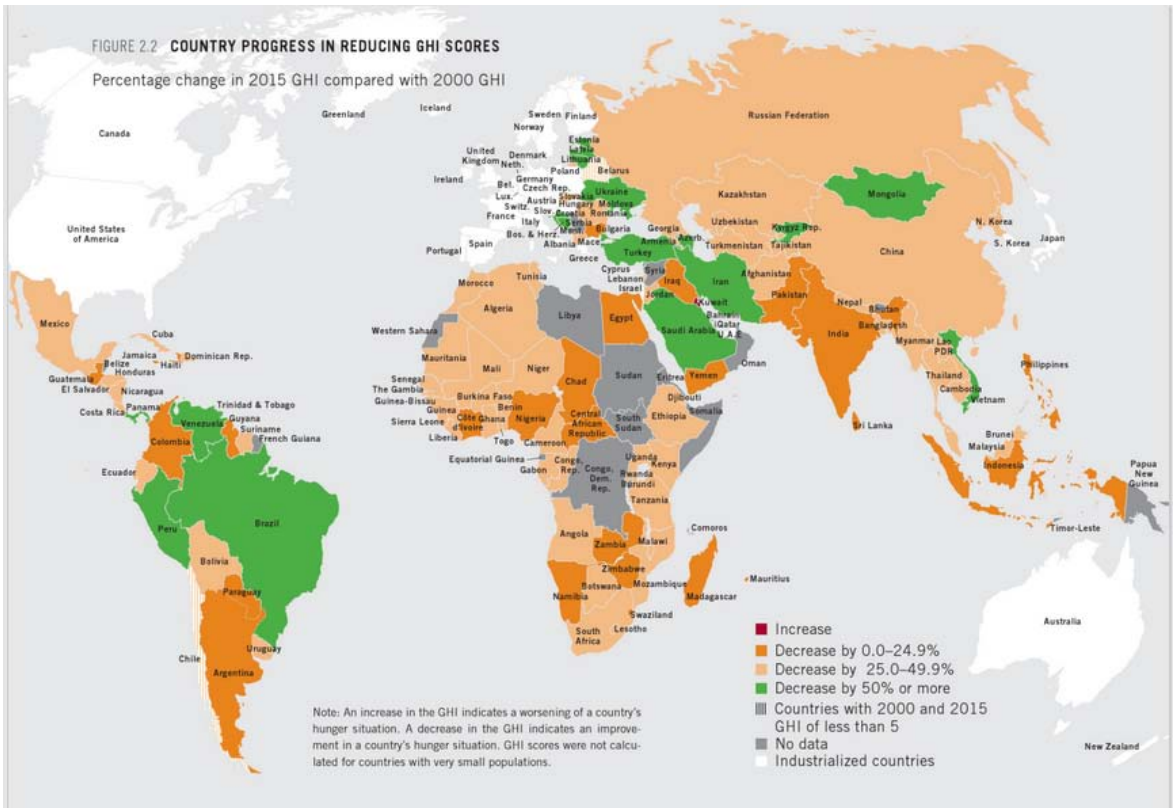
Most African countries are *Least developed countries* (LDCs) that will suffer the hardest in the aftermath of Putin's war in Ukraine, in particular the *African poor.*[1] They had already to bear the consequences of the *COVID-19 pandemic* and the climate crisis. The spill-over effects of the Russian aggression in Ukraine will increase hunger and poverty even further (Kappel, 2022). Higher energy and food prices, reduced tourism, and potential difficulty accessing international capital markets will increase vulnerability notably in African countries that have

[1] "Population of Africa (2019) – Worldometers". www.worldometers.info.; reprinted in *'Demographics of Africa'*, en.wikipedia

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minimal policy space to counter these effects of external shocks (Kammer et al, 2022). The countries progress in reducing *the Global Hunger Index* scores are lowest in Africa, notably in *Sub-Saharan Africa* (SSA).

Therefore, South Africa's *Daily Maverick news* cautioned that the impact of Russia's Ukraine war will "be felt in every village and town of South Africa and the world". African oil- and gas-producing countries, like *Nigeria* and *Angola*, might profit from the rising energy prices. Also, with the price of Ukrainian sunflower oil skyrocketing, buyers are switching to palm oil, which hit record highs on futures markets in early March 2022. *Palm oil* is a staple crop in *West Africa* (McNair, 2022). Yet, whether the poor and needy will also profit is highly unlikely given the gross inequality and widespread corruption prevailing in these countries[2]. The cost of food and transport is likely to hit the roof, with knock-on effects on the prices of nearly all other products, pushing up inflation.



Source: Grebmer, 2015: 15

Graph 5: Country progress in reducing *Global Hunger Index* scores

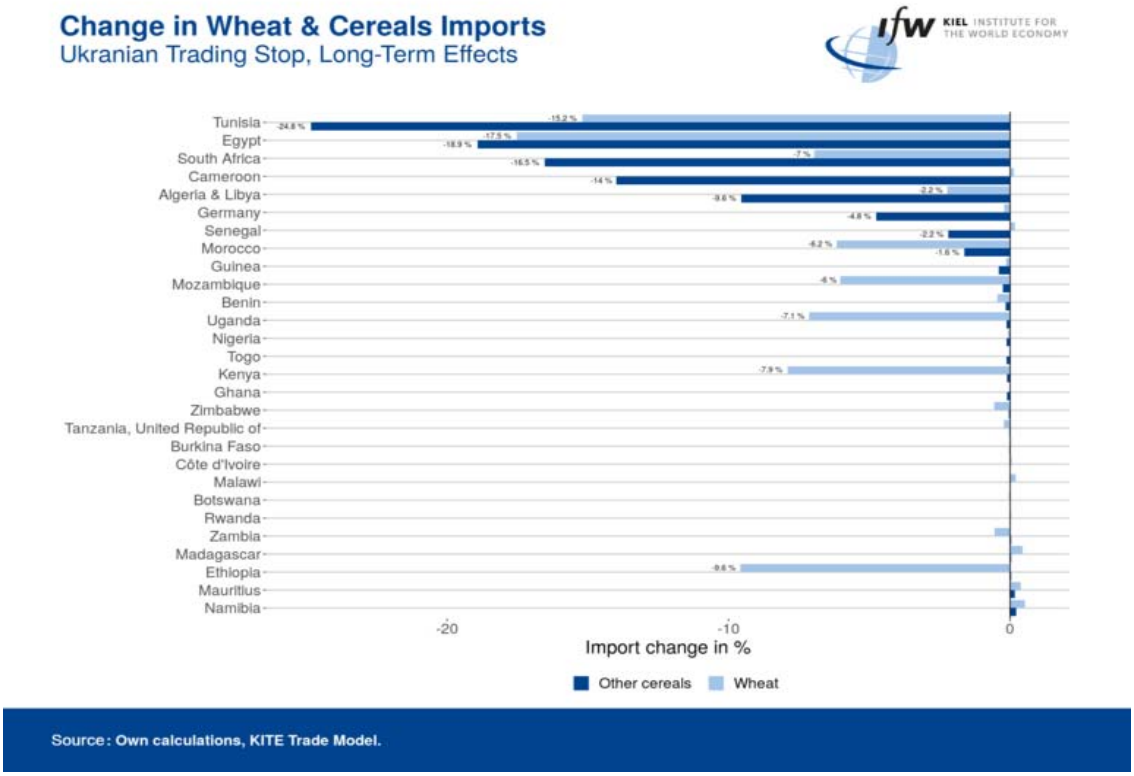
Yet, famines are difficult to predict because of the multitude of intervening factors, ranging from agricultural production and trade estimates, market price variability, weather forecasts and conflicts. The two major sources of uncertainty were associated with complex weather phenomena and social and political conflict, with uncertainty in weather forecasts being twice as important as conflict. Case studies from the *Horn of Africa* revealed that complex weather phenomena were twice as significant as the conflict in food security projection errors (Krishnamurthy et al, 2020). Moreover, the specific land tenure arrangements complicate predictions. Thus, Man-made calamities such as decentralized extensive agricultural, pastoral activities and forest clearing contribute to environmental damages and consequent food shortages. Insecure land tenure often diminishes agricultural productivity which, notably in times of drought, exacerbates famine (Azadi, H. et al, 2021). *Pastoralists* in *East Africa,* for example, experience food insecurity more frequently than do non-pastoralists (Coughlan de Perez, et al., 2019).

Especially bread prices are a major driver of political instability.[2] Already in the early 2010s, they had triggered the *Arab Spring.* In North Africa, the *Maghreb*

[2] According to governmental data from 2020, the overall Gini coefficient in Nigeria was 35.1 points as of 2019, based on World Bank estimate, i.e. rank 43 out of 159 (lowest inequality) (statista.com, 2022). Angola ranked 45, South Africa has by far the highest income inequality worldwide (rank 1) (indexmundi.com, 2022). As for corruption, Nigeria ranked 154, Angola 136 and South Africa 70 out of 180 countries; in 2021. Perceived corruption was most pronounced in South Sudan (rank 180) (Corruption Perception Index, Transparency International, 2021):

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countries *Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia* and *Libya,* as well as *Egypt,* which all are heavily dependent on wheat, will probably be among the worst affected (Kohnert, 2022). On the other hand, there exists a long-standing close relationship with these countries which is reflected by close military cooperation. The largest African customers of Russian arms, in order of sales, were Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, and Angola. Along with Russia's support to Libyan warlord *Khalifa Hifter,* the commander of the *Tobruk*-based *Libyan National Army,* this consolidated Moscow's presence along the southern flank of the European members of *NATO*. Thereby, it opened up Russia's influence in the eastern Mediterranean and enabled it to threaten strategic global junctions like the *Suez Canal* and *Bab al-Mandab Strait* at the *Gulf of Aden* (Nyabiage, 2022a). Therefore, it is not unlikely that Moscow will give these governments preferential treatment also concerning food exports.



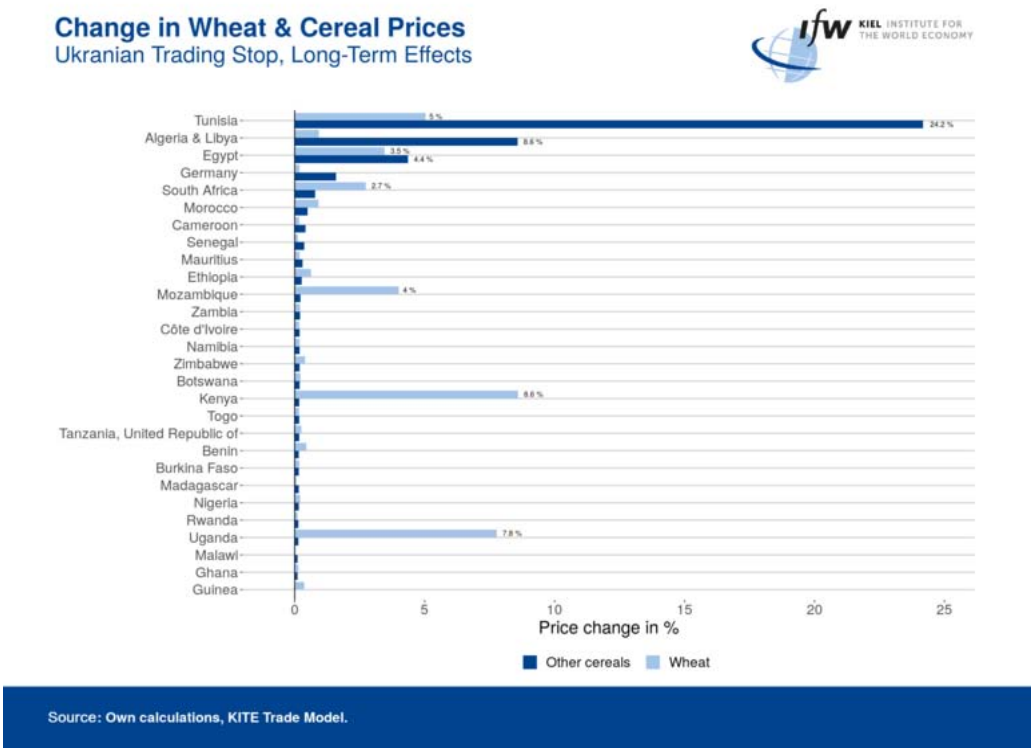
Source: Heidland, et al, 2022

Graph 6: Change in wheat and cereals imports (in %)
Ukrainian trading stop, probable long-term effects

According to model analyses of the *Kiel Institute for the World Economy,* North African countries would be particularly affected (Heidland, et al, 2022). For example, more than 30 % of the wheat consumed in *Morocco* comes from the Ukraine which is the second-largest exporter of wheat to Africa. Also, *Tunisia* and *Egypt* would be hit hard. In Tunisia, wheat imports could permanently fall by more than 15 %, while imports of other grains would fall by almost 25 % in the simulation. In Egypt, the Ukrainian wheat export shortfall would result in over 17 % being imported, and imports of other cereals would decrease by 19 %. Cairo asked already the IMF for support in reminiscence of the bloody bread riots during the Arab Spring (Saleh, 2022). *South Africa* would import 7 % less wheat and over 16 % less other cereals. Imports of other cereals would be also lower in *Cameroon* (-14 %), *Algeria* and *Libya* (-9.6 %). Wheat imports would drop significantly in *Ethiopia* (-9.6 %), *Kenya* (-7.9 %), *Uganda* (-7.1 %), *Morocco* (-6.2 %), and *Mozambique* (-6 %) (Heidland, et al, 2022; Schiller, 2022; Kohnert, 2022).

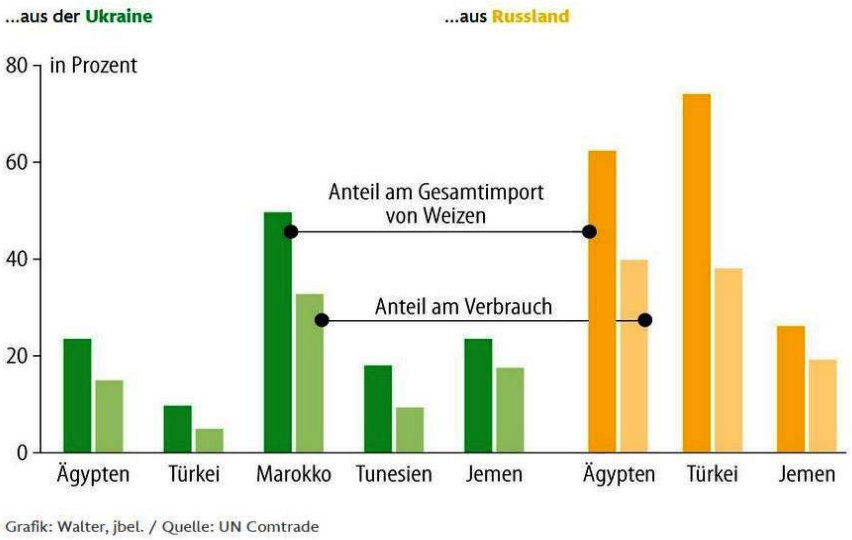
Putin's Ukraine war and the resulting Western sanctions already started to disrupt supply and pushed up prices worldwide, also in Africa. Wheat, corn, sunflower oil and fertiliser are among the products most affected, along with oil, compounding the impact of political instability and drought (Nyabiage, 2022). In *Egypt* for example, the commodity flow has been already disrupted in March 2022, both by the war and the sanctions against Russia. Before the war, Russia and Ukraine had supplied more than 80 % of Egypt's wheat needs for its estimated 102 million citizens, according to the US Department of Agriculture. Egypt buys 12 to 13 million tonnes of wheat annually. Quite aware of political implications, the government of *General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi* kept its subsidies on bread despite previous pressure from the *IMF* to drop them (Nyabiage, 2022).

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Source: Heidland, et al, 2022

Graph 7: Change in wheat and cereal prices (in %)
Ukrainian trading stop, probable long-term effects



Source: Schiller, 2022

Graph 8: Dependency of Northern Africa on wheat from the Ukraine and Russia
(share of total wheat import and share in consumption in %)

Morocco, a lower-middle-income country, importing over 90 % of its energy and half its cereals, is also among the African states most exposed to the crisis. Yet, its impact is difficult to predict, because of the intervening effects of the Corona pandemic, the unsustainable size of public debt and inflationary pressures, which are likely to intensify, especially if the conflict continues (Ali, et al, 2022).

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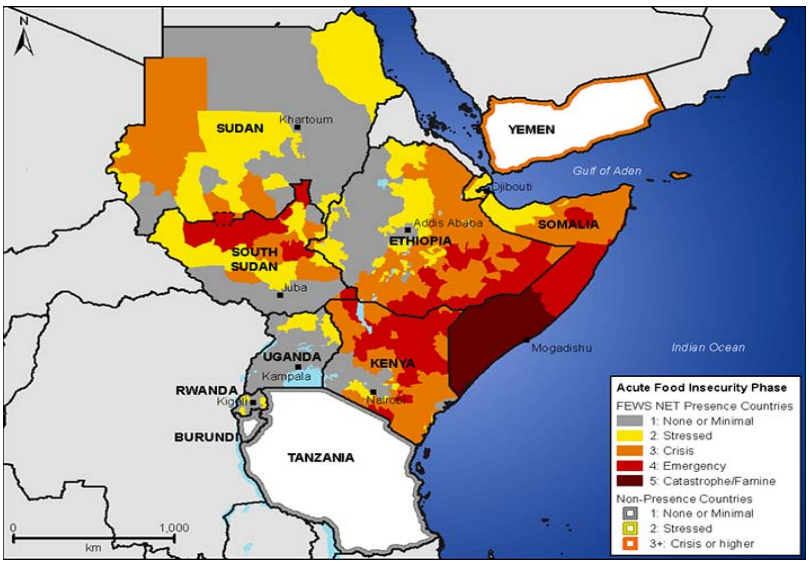
TOP 10 UKRAINIAN EXPORTS	SHARE OF GLOBAL IMPORTS (%)	SHARE OF UKRAINIAN EXPORTS (%)	TOP 10 RUSSIAN EXPORTS (%)	SHARE OF GLOBAL IMPORTS (%)	SHARE OF RUSSIAN EXPORTS (%)
Vegetable oils	6.7	9.3	UN Special code*	14.2	13.0
Cereals	6.0	20.0	Manufactured fertilizers	12.5	2.0
Oil and fruit seeds	3.1	5.0	Coal/coke/ briquettes	11.6	4.0
Iron and steel	2.3	18.8	Petroleum and products	10.9	45.5
Animal feed	1.8	3.0	Gas Natural &manufactured	8.7	6.8
Metal ores/ metal scrap	1.1	8.3	Cork and wood	8.4	1.5

Source: Ali & Azaroual & Bourhriba, 2022: 3

Graph 9: Main Ukrainian and Russian exports and their shares of global trade

III. Food as a Weapon of War

Already irrespectively of the potential effects of Russia's Ukraine war, food and starvation have been used as a weapon of war since Antiquity. The most infamous examples in Africa include the *Herero and Namaqua genocide* in *German South-West Africa* (now *Namibia*) from 1904 to 1908. It was the first genocide of the 20th century. Also, the subsequent *famines in South Sudan in* 1993, 1998 and 2017, caused by civil war and political unrest, have been engraved in the memory of mankind. Food has become such an inhuman weapon that the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* of 1998 included it in article 8 (paragraph 25) as a *war crime* (Rivoal, 2015). Apart from military considerations, food can also be used in conflicts for geopolitical or domestic political purposes such as displacing populations within the same country or intentionally starving parts of its own population. This was for example the case in Ethiopia in 1984 when massive amounts of food aid had been accepted and distributed only in specific parts of the country so that the populations had to move toward these regions (Rivoal, 2015). Similar politics had been used in *Southern Sudan* in *1993, 1998* and 2017 (Wikipedia) as well as in the *famine in Somalia in 1992* connected with the Somali Civil War. An estimated 220,000 - 300,000 people died during this famine (*1992 famine in Somalia,* Wikipedia). Subsequently, during the East African drought in 2011 which caused a severe *food crisis* across *Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia* and *Kenya,* the livelihood of 9.5 million people was threatened. A major reason was that many refugees from southern Somalia had fled to neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia, where crowded, unsanitary conditions together with severe *malnutrition* led to a large number of deaths (*2011 East Africa drought,* Wikipedia).



Source: Famine Early Warning Systems Network – USAID, 23 July 2011

Graph 10: Projection of the 2011 East Africa drought for October-December

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It is obvious that conflict is the main cause of persistent severe hunger. However, whether famine and hunger are also major drivers of conflict is less evident (Grebmer, 2015). Often famines are portrayed as direct or indirect impact of climate change, for example in the *Sahel zone.* However, the *Sahel droughts* are not just an effect of climate change, though it was without question a major cause, but also man-made famines, caused by transhumance and overgrazing, deforestation, and poor land management (McLaughlin & Purefoy, 2005; Eden Foundation, Sweden, 1994:1). Thus, environmental havoc induced land scarcity which itself increased segmentation between and within social groups. Thereby, the self-regulating forces of civil society, e.g. African traditional chiefs, and other domestic social, political and economic institutions were frequently weakened both in the formal and *informal sectors.* Altogether, these dynamics augmented social grievances, ethnicity and the social exclusion of the 'other'. They generated breakdowns for individuals and social groups, affected by lack of resources, which drove them to engage in violent conflict, as revealed also by case studies of South Africa and Rwanda (Percival, 1995).

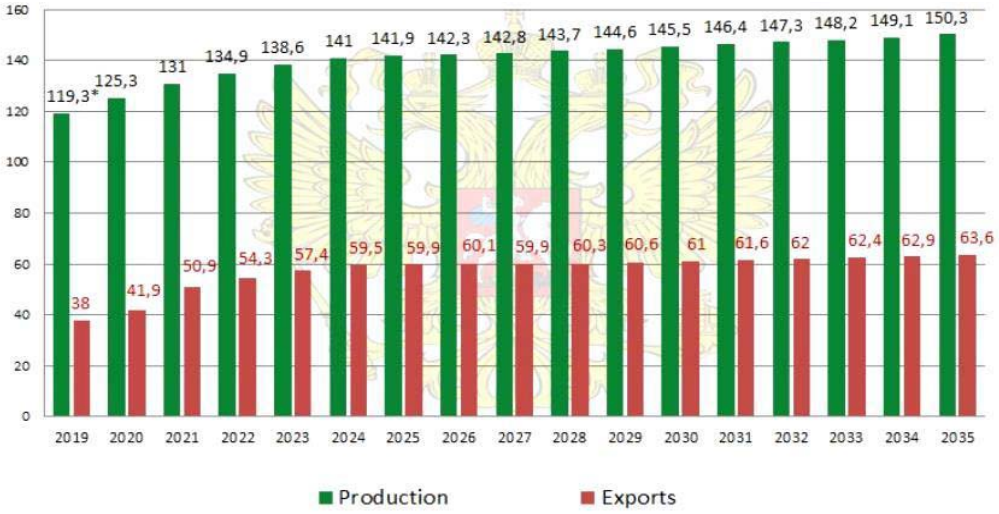
Thus, drought, as the initial driver of the crisis, triggered a multitude of responses like crop failure, famine, starvation and often subsequent despotic actions of the rulers to counter political unrest. According to the *Bible* and the *Quran,* one of the oldest records of the consequences of great famines in ancient Egypt was that in the time of *Joseph* (7th – 5th century BCE) when people were enslaved by the Pharaoh's government. It forced its subjects to plough all available fields to preserve its people alive and furnish food. However, whether this allows for the general conclusion of *Pitirim Sorokin* (1889 – 1968), a renowned Russian-American conservative sociologist in post-war America, that 'calamities have on the whole a more favourable than an unfavourable selective effect on human stock' is highly questionable (Sorokin, 1942).

In the most serious cases, it finally resulted in acute socio-economic and political change like the Arab Spring uprisings in the early 2010s. The repercussions of this enforced change impacted also on other aspects of everyday life, like health issues, increased mortality, a transformation of religious beliefs and a political disorder. For example, the African Christian *"Ethiopian" Church* which originated already before the colonial conquest, widened its influence. New churches were founded and they increased their independence from established European Churches, notably in areas where African–White relations were strained (Pribyl, et al, 2019).

The early days of colonial rule in *Southern Africa* were especially prone to gross human rights violations by the Colonialists related to famines. Thereby, Africans frequently associated the blights devastating the land with colonial expansion. The *Matabele* in *Rhodesia,* for instance, blamed drought, locusts and cattle plague on the establishment of the rule of the *British South Africa Company.* This was not without reason. The company had requisitioned, before and during the drought of 1895, *Matabele* cattle which fuelled the tensions up to March 1896. As strategic means of war, the British occupation troops destroyed local grain stores after the failed harvest of 1896, which aggravated the famine even more. During the same time African peasants in South Africa's *Langeberg region,* already famished by the drought, had been forced to pay *hut-tax* to the British. The latter's radical approach to stamp out the rampant *Rinderpest,* which especially threatened the *settler* farmers, led to further rebellions in summer 1896–97. Rumours and rebellion spread to other regions, including *Zululand, Natal* and *Basutoland* (now *Lesotho*). In 1898, the *Venda,* who settled close to the South African border with Zimbabwe were subjugated (Pribyl, et al, 2019).

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IV. Will Russia use Wheat and Energy as Geostrategic Weapons to Handpick African Countries for Cooperation?



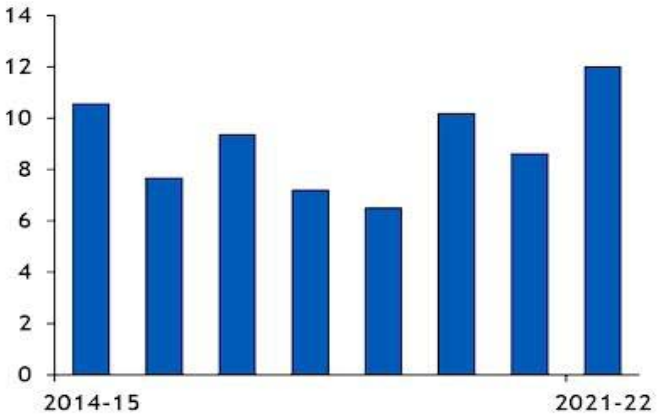
Source: Melikian, 2020

Graph 11: Production target in Russia, all grains (Mt) – optimistic scenario

Russia has the potential to destabilize the world over the food issue. However, 80 % of its grain exports are exported via Ukrainian ports like *Mariupol* and *Odessa.* Russia's bombing of these ports will impact on its exports (Admin, 2022). Regarding the Ukrainian delivery failure because of the war, Russia is also causing food shortages in many countries. Thus, Moscow announced in mid-March 2022 that it would restrict the export of wheat, barley, rye and other grains. African governments could be held to ransom by Moscow because of their high dependency on Russian wheat exports (Admin, 2022).

Moreover, Moscow was looking for new markets. For example, it had sent test batches of wheat and other agricultural products to different countries. Also, it strengthened its position in existing ones, such as countries in *North Africa, Turkey* and the *Middle East.* To hedge its 'closed shop', Russia tried to develop not only the ports of the *Black Sea* but also in the *Far East,* the *Caspian* and the *Baltic* ports (Melikian, 2020; Lu et al, 2022).

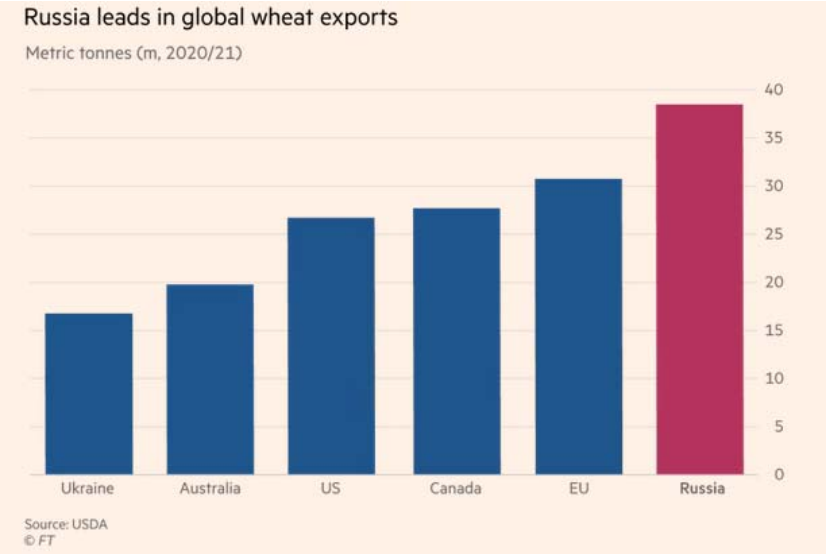
To counter this threat, *Brussels* wants to try to close the global food gap as much as possible. Yet, the *EU* up to now is a net exporter of wheat. To increase production the *EU Commission* proposed to set up an aid package for farmers amounting to € 500 m. This, however, is difficult to match with the EU's competing environmental goals and its proposed switch to less intensive agriculture as part of the *Green Deal* climate and environmental package. As a consequence, about 13 % less food would be produced by EU member countries (Admin, 2022). Yet, the *German environmental party* argues that it would make more sense to limit the consumption of animal foods so that less agricultural land is required for animal feed. According to them, up to 70 % of the raw materials produced on agricultural land in Europe end up in tanks or troughs (Admin, 2022).



Source: Muftuoglu, 2021

Graph 12: EU soft wheat exports mn t

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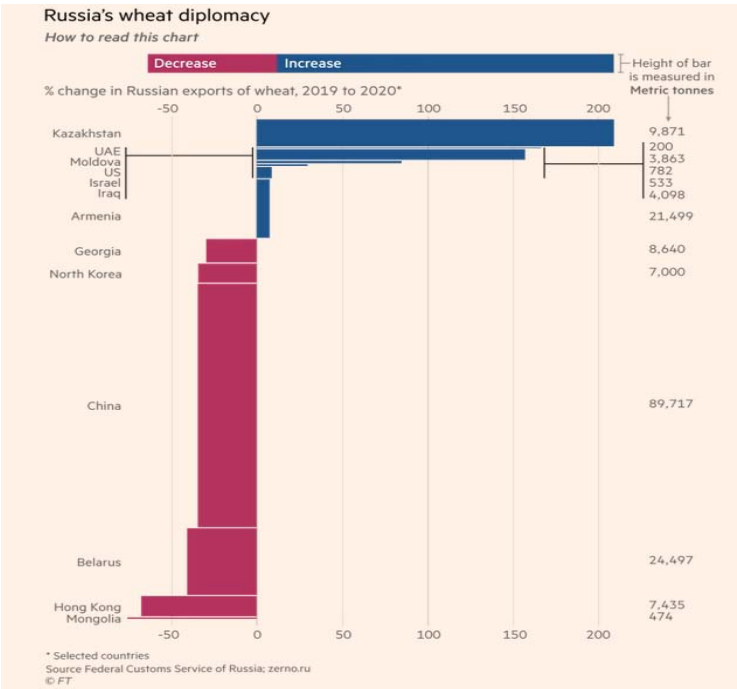


Source: Astrasheuskaya, 2021

Graph 13: Russia leads in global wheat exports

In the past, Russia had been a net importer of grain. The *Soviet Union* preferred to rely on imports and to pay no subsidies for the production of wheat. This changed when *Putin* launched a programme aimed at stimulating investment and developing agricultural production through state-led projects in 2004 to ensure 80 % to 95 % of self-sufficiency in key products, including grain (Astrasheuskaya, 2021).

The severe devaluation in the rouble in 2014 as a consequence of US and EU sanctions against Moscow after the annexation of Crimea made its exports cheaper. Also, Russia's counter-sanctions, banning most food imports from the west, further boosted domestic producers with the effect that Russia became the world's biggest wheat exporter, passing the US and Canada for the first time in 2017. Thus, Russian grain became Moscow's new geostrategic weapon, comparable with oil. Putin declared proudly that Russia made its way across *Eurasia, Africa,* and *Latin America* as an agricultural export powerhouse, reducing its reliance on energy export, identifying new markets and extending its global diplomatic reach (Astrasheuskaya, 2021).



Source: Astrasheuskaya, 2021

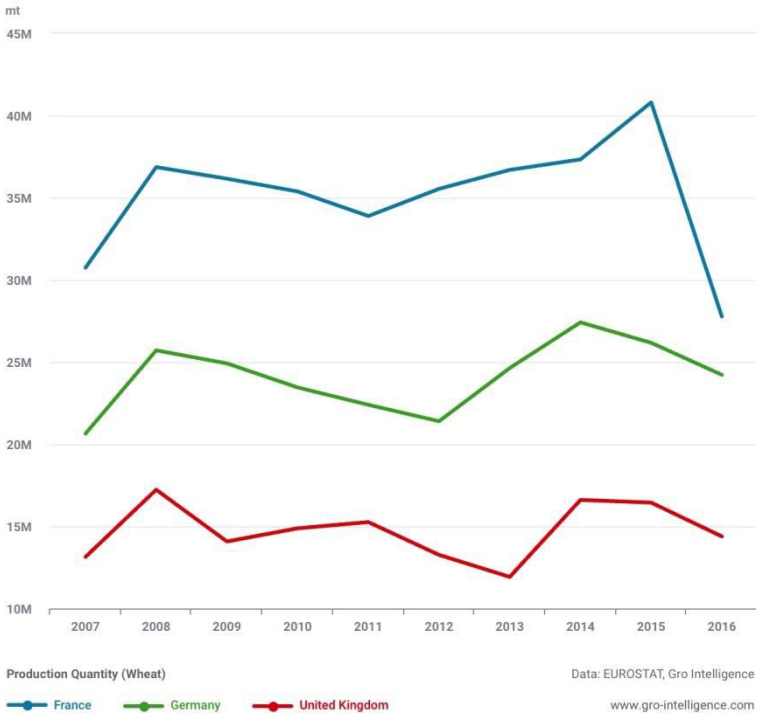
Graph 14: Russia's wheat diplomacy, 2019 - 2022

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For example, also *Saudi Arabia* opened its huge market for chicken and grain for Russian imports which now account for 10 % of Saudi Arabia's grain imports, mostly *barley.* Putin's *leitmotif* apparently was: all over Africa, the Middle East, the Asia-Pacific countries, the Far East, the shortest and easiest way to satisfy your need is through supplies from Russia, i.e. not just 'oil and Kalashnikovs' as in the olden days of the Soviet Republic. Last, but not least, Russia gained an advantage over competing producers because of economic, political and environmental and *climate change* that made life more difficult for some of its main rivals. For example, US grain producers had one of their worst seasons in 2019 due to low margins and the trade war with *China.* Many American companies that previously relied on state support went bankrupt when it was removed and as world market prices dropped. Yet, in Russia, climate change opened up new frontiers for more agricultural usage of land in the north with the melting of permafrost. This, apparently offset droughts in the south, at least to a certain extent. Regarding its landmass, Russia practised rather *extensive agriculture* without high inputs of fertiliser and chemicals but emphasized *bio food* production. Thus, it could respond to buyers growing demand for ecological food production (Astrasheuskaya, 2021).

V. EU's Alternatives for using Russian and Ukrainian Wheat

Within the EU, France is the largest producer and exporter of wheat. Inside Western Europe, Britain is the EU's third-largest producer. Up to Brexit, EU wheat exporting countries tended to compete for similar markets and France was the largest exporter to most of the UK's wheat trading partners (Dry Bulk, 2017).



Source: Dry Bulk, 2017

Graph 15: Wheat production quantity of France, Germany and the UK, 2007 to 2016

At least for consumers in EU member countries, a simple and effective solution for lacking wheat from the Ukraine and Russia would be available. According to Brussels, an 8 % reduction in the use of cereals for animal feed in the EU would save enough wheat to make up for the expected deficit (Greenpeace European Unit, 2022).

However, this apparently is no short-time fix for all sorrows. To change consumer habits takes a lot of persuading and time, as well as restructuring the agricultural industry that up to now prefers high profits from meat production. Enforcing the *polluter pays principle* in the EU against the powerful agricultural lobby would be a lengthy and arduous task. As usual, Brussels followed the line of least resistance. In March 2022, the EU Commission, backed by several governments, announced € 500 million in financial aid to farmers facing drawbacks due to the Ukraine war, including special aid for the pork sector to keep prices high. It also wanted to loosen environmental protections in the *EU's common agricultural policy* and to delay the implementation of key elements of the *Green Deal* and the *Farm to Fork Strategy* (Greenpeace European Unit, 2022). In recent years, the European environmentally

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orientated catering industry envisaged a policy labelled '*From farm to fork*' or '*Farm to table*' that allowed certified traceability of fresh meat and eggs by a fair, healthy and environmental-friendly food system. The crusade was based on a *social movement* that promoted serving *local food* at restaurants through direct acquisition from the producer. Given the new wheat shortage, the movement might gain additional appeal.



Source: EU Comission (2022)

Graph 16: EU *Farm to fork strategy*

VI. Conclusion

The reactions of the countries concerned by Putin's Ukraine war have been mixed. The *sanctions of Western powers* remained without appreciable effect up to now. How will the countries hit by the supply shortfalls cope with this situation? As for the EU member countries, the response depends to a great deal on their political and economic guidelines already decided well before the war. *Germany* for example still shies away from stopping Russian gas and oil imports. Different German governments in the past decades had relied too much on good economic relations with Moscow, despite the critical votes of major allies. The controversial *Nord Stream 2* gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, running through the Baltic Sea, financed by *Gazprom* and German and other European energy companies is just an example. Now, Berlin is at pains to reconcile the demands of German environmentalists and of the co-governing German Green Party for an exit from nuclear and fossil-fuel energy with the actual need for timely delivery of energy. *France,* on the contrary, had relied already before the war on nuclear energy, as well as *Britain.*

The concerned African countries are in a more difficult situation also because of the indirect repercussions of Russia's aggression. For example, international development assistance for Africa is likely to suffer from a massive diversion of aid into rearmament, away from poverty alleviation (Heywood, 2022). The *World Food Programme* (WFP) had already reduced rations for refugees and other vulnerable groups in East Africa because of decreased funding and rising food costs. Thus, WFP shipments from the Ukrainian port of *Odessa* would be affected, which had been destined for *West Africa*. The Norwegian Refugee Council for West- and *Central Africa* indicated that some donors were already inclined to cut aid to *Burkina Faso* by up to 70 % to support operations in Ukraine. The *UN*, for example, is more than US$ 300 m short of its $ 957 m funding target for assistance in the northern region of *Tigray*, *Ethiopia* (Brooke-Holland, 2022). The aftermath of Russia's aggression in Ukraine will impact on current and pre-existing humanitarian crises, including those in *Somalia* and Ethiopia. In the Tigray region alone, half a million people have died from war and famine in the past 16 months. The WFP procures half of its wheat from Ukraine. *Egypt*, for example, has reserves that will likely last until June 2022, thereafter costs could skyrocket. David Beasley, WFP director, revealed in March that his institution was already cutting food rations by 50 % because of a lack of funding even before the war (McNair, 2022).

As explained above, one of the immediate dangers for Africa will be related to the soaring bread prices that could trigger political instability like in the *Arab spring*. According to the *IMF,* global food prices will affect Africans disproportionally. Whereas expenditure on food accounts for 17 % of consumer spending in advanced economies, it amounted to up to 40 % in *SSA.* As many as 25 African countries imported more than one-third of their wheat from Russia and Ukraine. Moreover, domestic African agriculture production will be affected by rising fertiliser, pesticide, transport and fuel costs as well as supply-chain disruption. All together this will result in higher production costs and

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subsequently in higher prices, increasing the pressure on state budgets, including food subsidies (Brooke-Holland, 2022). Other countries like *Kenya* are also concerned about other impacts the war and financial sanctions on Russia have, for example on Kenya's vital tea industry. Russia is among the top five consumers of its tea, helping Kenya to earn foreign currency (Heywood, 2022). Now it will have to find new outlets for huge quantities of black tea in record time for about US$ 3.5 m of tea initially destined for Russia (Africa Intelligence, 2022).

Last, but not least, Putin's Ukraine war will have a significant impact on It not only encouraged unparalleled shifts in European economic, foreign, and energy policy but led also to greater solidarity within the EU and NATO. However, it may also risk distracting Europe's attention away from Africa. Just a week before Russia's invasion, European and African leaders had mapped out their common future, at the on 17–18 February 2022 in Brussels. A common vision of cooperation at eye level, labelled '*A Joint Vision for 2030'*, had been outlined. Now the world has changed, raising the stakes of that partnership (McNair, 2022) [3]. Putin's war, combined with the impact of the on Africa, will have repercussions on the mutual trust between the EU and Africa. About 86 % of Africans still have to receive two vaccine doses. In Africa and the Middle East, the pandemic has already pushed between 29 million and 43 million people into extreme poverty. Some African leaders do no longer see Western countries as reliable partners, as South African President pointed out at the EU-AU 2022 summit (McNair, 2022).

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Zusammenfassung: Hungersnöte sind fast immer menschengemacht, oft werden sie zur Abschreckung eingesetzt. Seit der Antike sind Nahrung und Hunger eine Waffe des Krieges. Zu den berüchtigtsten Beispielen in Afrika gehört der Völkermord an den Herero und Namaqua in Deutsch-Südwestafrika (heute Namibia) von 1904 bis 1908. Es war der erste Völkermord des 20. Jahrhunderts. Auch die nachfolgenden Hungersnöte in Biafra (Südostnigeria, 1967 bis 1969), als schätzungsweise 1,5 Millionen Menschen verhungerten, die Hungersnot von 1980 in Uganda, eine der schlimmsten in der afrikanischen Geschichte, als 21 % der Bevölkerung starben, und die wiederkehrenden Hungersnöte in Äthiopien, Somalia und im Südsudan seit den 1990er Jahren haben sich in das Gedächtnis der Menschheit eingebrannt. Der Einsatz von Lebensmitteln als Waffe wurde 1998 durch das Römische Statut des Internationalen Strafgerichtshofs als Kriegsverbrechen verurteilt. Da die meisten afrikanischen Länder zu den am wenigsten entwickelten Ländern (LLCs) zählen, werden sie unter den Nachwirkungen von Putins Krieg in der Ukraine am härtesten leiden, insbesondere der Armen Afrikas. Sie hatten bereits die Folgen von Dürre, Corona-Pandemie und islamistischem Terrorismus zu tragen. Ihre bereits geschwächte Position wird durch die Spillover-Effekte der russischen Aggression in der Ukraine noch verschärft, die Hunger und Armut in Afrika noch weiter verschärfen werden.

Dies umso mehr, als die internationale Entwicklungshilfe für Afrika wahrscheinlich unter einer massiven Umleitung der Hilfe in die Aufrüstung leiden wird. Nicht zuletzt wird Putins Ukraine-Krieg erhebliche Auswirkungen auf die Beziehungen zwischen der EU und Afrika haben. Er wird, angesichts der Folgen der Covid-19-Pandemie für Afrika, das gegenseitige Vertrauen zwischen beiden Partnern weiter beeinträchtigen. Etwa 86 % der Afrikaner müssen noch zwei Impfdosen erhalten. Eine wachsende Zahl afrikanischer Staats- und Regierungschefs sieht westliche Länder nicht mehr als verlässliche Partner.

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