

DEVELOPMENT OF UKRAINE'S RELATIONS WITH GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY CONTRIBUTORS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

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1. Ukraine in the global food dimension.

Global food security is a multidimensional and volatile state of the modern world, which involves many actors and is influenced by a range of factors. These include governments, international organizations that provide technical assistance, financial resources, humanitarian aid and coordinate food security initiatives (organizations under the auspices of the United Nations—the World Food Program (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, the IMF, and others), civil society organizations that protect the rights and needs of people suffering from food shortages and malnutrition (farmers' associations, consumer associations, charitable organizations, etc.).

Still, the main players are the governments of powerful agricultural exporting countries. Here, Ukraine is among the leaders. According to the European Commission, Ukraine accounts for 15% of the global corn market, 13% of barley, 10% of wheat, and more than 50% of sunflower oil. The sharp decline in Ukraine's share of the global food market caused by Russia's armed invasion in 2022 has resulted in current shortages and increased risks of famine in a number of poor countries in Africa and the Middle East

At the same time, it should be noted that Ukrainian agricultural exports have not always been associated with Ukraine, as the agricultural products sold were used as raw materials for the production of food products (flour, cereals, refined oil, etc.) and their further supply as goods of non-Ukrainian origin.

The disappearance of some of the raw materials for the production of consumer food products was felt immediately in a number of countries as early as 2022. Only then did a clear link between the problem of deficit and the “war in Ukraine” emerge, although without a clear link to Russian aggression. Thanks to the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the transport corridor for food exports from Ukrainian ports, the risks of famine in Africa were minimized. However, the problem remains as Russia keeps waging an aggressive war against Ukraine.

The initiative to create food hubs in Africa and the Middle East has been advocated by Ukrainian representatives since the beginning of this year. The idea of securing specific guarantees of food stability at the level of international institutions is the basis of Ukraine's relations with the countries of the African continent. It became a driver of further diplomatic activity in the region, but was never implemented due to the unstable operation of the grain corridor.

Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the revocation of shipping guarantees on July 17 this year, as well as Russia's destruction of Ukraine's port infrastructure in the second half of July, are forcing us to look for ways to restore exports and creating even more obstacles to the implementation of the food hub idea.

The idea of food hubs clearly associated with Ukraine is hardly acceptable to Russia and China, as it would damage their image of "friends of Africa" artificially created by years of propaganda. Moscow needs to cooperate with Africa to solve economic problems that have arisen as a result of the Western sanctions regime, as well as to implement plans to expand anti-Western multilateral alliances and bilateral partnerships.

On the eve of the second Russia-Africa summit on July 27-28, Moscow used the grain issue to rally sympathy for its position in the Global South, put additional pressure on African countries and the UN, and cause a new wave of sentiment against Western sanctions.

In recent years, the countries of the continent have increased their political weight in international relations. Due to their strong representation in international and regional organizations (more than a quarter of the votes in the UN General Assembly), African states have gained significant influence on the decisions of the UN Security Council.

Ukrainian diplomacy is paying closer attention to the Global South and Africa in particular. In addition to the 11 Ukrainian embassies already operating on the Black Continent: in Algeria, Angola, Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya, Libya (temporarily located in Tunisia), Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Senegal, Tunisia, the process of expanding the network of foreign diplomatic missions and honorary consulates in Africa is underway. Foreign trade is an important factor in Ukraine's cooperation with Africa. Almost three-quarters of Ukrainian exports are to five Arab countries in North Africa (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya), amounting to \$3.5 billion. The total amount of exports is 3.5 billion US dollars. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the main trading partners are Ethiopia, Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya.¹

Africa's markets, and particularly its agricultural market, are being fiercely contested by leading agricultural and food producing countries. For example, Brazil and Argentina, taking advantage of this year's high harvests, are focused on expanding their agricultural exports to Africa, filling the niche of Ukrainian supplies that has been and continues to be reduced as a result of Russian aggression.

All participants in the global food security chain must work together to enhance the global nutrition situation, prevent malnutrition and hunger in poor countries, and ensure affordable, healthy food for all. However, the reality is different. For countries such as Russia, food is a

¹ <https://mfa.gov.ua/en/5-td>

resource that can be used as a weapon, just as Russia has perfected the technology to use natural gas supplies as an energy weapon.

2. The Russian factor in Africa.

2.1. Problems of the Wagner PMC.

Russia, through the Wagner PMC, began its colonization of Africa in the mid-2010s. The PMC began to provide military support to governments of poor countries, in exchange for which it received concessions for the extraction of minerals, including gold, diamonds, bauxite, lithium and chromium, allowing Russia to extract wealth from the continent, just as Western colonizers did in the past or as China is doing now.

The list of African countries with a military presence of the Wagner Group has undergone a serious expansion over the past 8 years: Libya, Central African Republic, Mali, Burkina Faso, Sudan, DR Congo, Mozambique, as well as Madagascar, Guinea, Zimbabwe, Uganda, where “political consulting” of the ruling regimes is carried out without military presence. A kind of “Wagner’s African belt” is being formed for hybrid influences on the EU countries by creating a multi-crisis—provoking political instability—food shortages—famine—a wave of refugees to Europe.

Wagner’s role in the coup d’état in Niger is obvious. Niger is trapped geographically between Mali and Burkina Faso, which already have a Wagner Group presence on their territory. Niger, headed by President Mohamed Bazoum, was one of the few African leaders who condemned Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, did not attend the Russian summit, and called for “the elimination of Wagner mercenaries from neighboring countries.” Niger has become one of the few Islamic countries to begin normalizing relations with Israel through the U.S. mediation.

One of the first steps taken by the Nigerian junta was to stop supplying uranium ore to France, which considers it a strategic resource and is partially dependent on it. This indicates that Moscow is trying to generate problems for France and the EU as a whole. But there is more.

The ousted president of Niger, through his publication in the Washington Post, made a forecast for the near future: “...the entire central Sahel region could fall to Russian influence via the Wagner Group, whose brutal terrorism has been on full display in Ukraine. Boko Haram and other terrorist movements will surely take advantage of Niger’s instability, using our country as a staging ground to attack neighboring countries and undermine peace, safety and freedom around the world.”²

The U.S. Congress tried to recognize the Wagner Group as a terrorist organization, but it did not do so, unlike the parliaments of France, Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia, and the OSCE PA. The Biden administration opposed it, fearing that it would “harm U.S. diplomatic efforts in Africa.” The State Department, which has jurisdiction over the recognition, expressed

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/08/03/mohamed-bazoum-coup-niger-democracy/>

concern that it would automatically close entry to the United States and block the assets of many officials from African governments who have dealings with Wagner³. The United States recognized the Wagner PMC as an international criminal organization, which is a lackluster substitute for recognition as a terrorist organization.

Also, the British government has not yet resorted to recognizing the Russian PMC as a terrorist organization. This was criticized in the British Parliament. The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee has stated that Wagner has conducted military operations in at least seven countries since 2014: Ukraine, Syria, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Libya, Mozambique and Mali; it has business interests in these countries, such as lucrative gold mining operations in the Central African Republic and Sudan, where Wagner's gold smuggling activities "allowed huge amounts of gold to bypass the state" and reach Russia. Wagner has also engaged in non-military activities such as election interference in Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, and South Africa, and there is evidence of the group's involvement in other countries⁴.

So, despite the hardships of Prigozhin's rebellion in Russia in June this year, the Wagner PMC not only remains the main instrument of the Kremlin's influence in Africa, but also expands the scope of its activity against the background of the West's weakness and indecisiveness. It is possible that Russia and China's converging interests in non-Western colonization of Africa allow them to act in concert, aiming at the final ousting of Western countries from the continent under the false slogans of the final elimination of neocolonialism and assistance to Africa in its comprehensive development.

The French and American fiasco in Niger, when the intelligence services of both countries failed to predict the military coup and to predict further Russian intervention through the Wagner PMC in that country, shows that the West is losing its influence in Africa and is giving way to China and Russia. The latter has developed the technology of creating migration waves to Europe on the example of Syria, and has also demonstrated its intention to create food shortages by interrupting food supplies from Ukraine, which in the case of Africa would mean that Russia is ready to create a migration wave to Europe. The goal is obvious: to force the EU and NATO to reconsider their support for Ukraine.

2.2. Kremlin propaganda in action.

On the eve of the second Russia-Africa summit, on July 24, an article by the Russian leader titled "Russia and Africa: Joining Efforts for Peace, Progress and a Successful Future" was published. The appeal to African leaders had a rather practical goal: to force Africa to support or at least be neutral about Russia's aggression against Ukraine, to explain its withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, and to help Russia circumvent the sanctions.

Main theses are the following:

"Russia's trade turnover with African countries increased in 2022 and reached almost \$18 billion".

³ <https://thehill.com/policy/international/3894376-congress-wants-to-label-wagner-group-as-a-terrorist-organization-why-is-biden-opposed/>

⁴ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/lawmakers-say-the-uk-should-ban-russias-wagner-as-a-terrorist-group>

The International Trade Center's Trade Map database does not contain information on exports and imports from Russia in 2022. However, there is data from the African side on trade with Russia. They show a completely different dynamic: in 2022, Russia's trade with African countries did not grow, but fell. It was only \$10 billion, not \$18 billion.

In 2021, the trade turnover reached almost \$16 billion, which is small compared to the volume of trade between African countries and other partners. And it does not meet the intention to reach \$40 billion in trade by 2023, announced at the First Russia-Africa Summit in 2019. For comparison, Africa's trade with China is \$127 billion (16%), India—\$87 billion (6%), the United States—\$69 billion (5%), and France—\$70 billion (5%). Moreover, there is no question of mutual benefit in these trade relations. In 2022, Russia exported \$9 billion worth of goods and services to Africa and imported only \$1 billion, leaving Africa with a trade deficit of \$8 billion⁵.

“None of the terms of the ‘agreement’ concerning the removal from sanctions Russian exports of grain and fertilizers to world markets has been fulfilled”.

The sanctions apply to individual banks, companies, and individuals, but do not limit the volume of Russian exports of grain and fertilizers. The EU and the U.S. have repeatedly pointed out that food and agricultural products remain exempt from sanctions and have called Russia responsible for the worsening food crisis.

The response to this manipulation by Putin is an article by the head of European diplomacy, Josep Borrell⁶, which states: “There are no sanctions against Russian exports of food and fertilizers to third countries. The EU has provided detailed guidance to economic operators, explaining that such exports to third countries are allowed. We have also done the necessary work with the UN to authorize the relevant payments.”

“The EU and the U.S. are using the ‘grain deal’ purely for their own enrichment, and they are not exporting grain to low-income countries”.

In his article, Putin stated that the grain initiative was allegedly used to enrich large American and European businesses. This is not true. According to the UN, 57% of the grain under the initiative was exported to developing countries, and China is the leader in importing Ukrainian grain.

“Russia can substitute Ukrainian grain both on a commercial and free of charge basis”.

As J. Borrell noted in his article, while the world is dealing with supply disruptions and rising prices, Russia is applying to vulnerable countries, particularly in Africa, with bilateral offers of limited grain supplies, pretending to solve a problem it created. This is a cynical policy of deliberately using food as a weapon...⁷

⁵ <https://voxukraine.org/brehnya-tsinoyu-v-prodovolchu-kryzu-faktchek-statti-putina-pro-afryku>

⁶ <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2023/08/2/7166849/>

⁷ <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2023/08/2/7166849/>

2.3. Moscow African Summit.

At the Second Russia-Africa Summit, the Russian Federation set out to develop a strategy that would activate target groups interested in cooperation with Africa and identify mechanisms for such work. Russia considers food supplies, construction of energy facilities and related energy infrastructure, as well as access to commodity markets, in particular, uranium ore (Niger), diamonds, gold and rare earth metals, to be key areas for the development of relations with Africa.

On the eve of the Russia-Africa summit, Russian think tanks recommended to the Russian government “find a formula for modern cooperation with Africa” *within the framework of the development vectors set out in Agenda 2063*, a document adopted in 2015 by the heads of state and government of the African Union that defines a long-term development strategy and sets out the main goals and objectives⁸.

At the summit, Russia promoted three main narratives:

1. replacing Ukraine in grain supplies to Africa;
2. economic cooperation bypassing the “unfair” Western sanctions;
3. military support.

The main event of the summit was Putin’s promise to provide Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Mali, Somalia, the Central African Republic, and Eritrea with 25-50 thousand tons of grain free of charge in the coming months as Russia withdraws from the grain initiative. The leaderships of these countries, with the exception of Somalia, have close relations with Russia. Directly or indirectly, Russia has long been trying to push Ukraine out of the food markets of a number of African countries where it is a competitor.

Many African leaders refused to fly to the Africa-Russia summit, indicating that many African countries in the Global South are aware of the Kremlin’s use of food weapons. For example, the absence of Angolan President João Laurenço from the summit is symbolic. This country has been cooperating with the USSR and then Russia for decades, particularly in the military sphere. However, last year Laurenço said that Angola does not recognize Russia’s annexation of four regions of Ukraine: “We were a victim of external aggression by the apartheid regime (South Africa until 1994). We fought against the invaders, we understand that all other nations have the same right to do so. And we don’t understand how those who helped us do it then have now annexed four regions from its neighbor,” the Angolan president said in an interview with the Portuguese-language edition of the Voice of America, VOA Português.⁹

The new initiatives announced by Putin at the summit to expand cooperation with Africa could increase the continent’s dependence on Russia and Russian technology. These include participation in the modernization of agriculture, the development of nuclear energy (Russia is already building a nuclear power plant in Egypt and proposing a nuclear power plant project for South Africa), mining (Rosatom plans to mine uranium in Namibia and Tanzania), and arms exports. The Kremlin wants to strengthen Russian influence in Africa’s information space through joint projects with African media. The boycott by Western

⁸ <https://biz.nv.ua/ukr/markets/zernova-ugoda-yegipet-rozkritikuvav-rosiyu-za-vihid-z-ugodi-ostanni-novini-50340653.html>

⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/cne0j3z0nvw0>

countries, the reduction of embassies, and the closure of Russian media offices in Europe have allowed for the redistribution of resources, diplomats, and propagandists to work with countries in the Global South.

The search for new concepts of cooperation is relevant not only for Ukraine but also for Russia in the context of competition for Africa. At the summit, Russia expectedly offered African countries an alternative plan for grain supplies to the continent from Russia, which in fact hides the sale of Ukrainian grain stolen in the occupied territories, and, in the long run, the ousting of Ukraine from the global food market. The attempt to supply a small part of the grain free of charge is an attempt to influence African countries in order to keep a favorable vote in the UN, as well as to have the appropriate additional influence to obtain preferences in certain projects of Russian companies in Africa.

3. African countries' reaction to Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Agreement.

Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea grain deal has angered some governments in Africa, despite their pro-Russian stance, especially those facing domestic turmoil due to rising food prices that triggered Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine last year. The head of the African Union (AU), the current president of the Comoros, Azali Assoumani, called for peaceful coexistence between Russia and Ukraine and the resumption of Ukrainian grain exports. Such a reaction can be considered the result of Ukraine's launch of systematic cooperation with the AU after D. Kuleba's meeting with A. Assoumani during his visit to Ethiopia in late May.

Kenya, which is a consumer of Russian grain and fertilizers, said after the announcement of Russia's withdrawal from the initiative that Russia's move was a "stab in the back" that "disproportionately affects countries" in its region. **Egypt** criticized Russia and said it would continue to buy Ukrainian grain through alternative routes.

South African Republic. As a member of the BRICS format and the only African country that is a member of global forums such as the G-20, South Africa is seen by Russia as the "main gateway to the continent." Through the BRICS platform, Russia has the ability to influence South Africa, and in turn, the African Union. V. Putin has paid three visits to South Africa during his presidency, in addition to meetings at the G-20, BRICS, and the 2019 Russia-Africa summit. In turn, Ukraine and South Africa have no high-level visits recorded in the history of diplomatic relations, except for the recent visit of African leaders to Ukraine on June 16, 2017, within the framework of the Ukraine-Africa summit, including South African President Cyril Ramaphosa. At a meeting between the heads of African delegations and the Russian president, South African leader Cyril Ramaphosa, commenting on Putin's offer of free supplies, said that Africa was ready to buy grain, and the resumption of commercial supplies remained a key goal: "We proposed to implement the Black Sea Grain Initiative, we talked about the need to open the Black Sea, we said that we would like the Black Sea to be open to world markets. And we did not come here to ask for any "gifts" for the African continent..."¹⁰ Thus, Ramaphosa, after the story of the ICC arrest warrant,

¹⁰ <https://www.unian.ua/world/zernova-ugoda-par-rizko-vidpovila-na-podachki-putina-12344364.html>

confronted Putin at the BRICS summit for the second time on his turf—at the summit in St. Petersburg. Regional leaders of Africa: South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Nigeria are not interested in Putin's grain “multi-move” and openly say so. The behavior of African countries clearly demonstrates the need for Ukrainian grain.

Since the launch of the grain corridor, about \$200 million of donor assistance has been raised under the “Grain from Ukraine” initiative. As of June 2023, 6 vessels have already delivered more than 170 thousand tons of grain from Ukrainian ports to East Africa—Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Yemen as part of the initiative¹¹. The second Grain from Ukraine summit is planned for this fall to raise additional funds to keep the program running. A wider range of countries should be encouraged to join the program.

4. The idea of food hubs.

As a result of official visits of the Ukrainian delegation to African countries, Senegal, Nigeria, and Ghana¹² expressed interest in grain hubs for transshipment of Ukrainian grain earlier this year. Egypt also showed interest in discussing the possibility of creating a similar logistics center on its territory. In June of this year, the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine and Lagos Free Zone Company (a subsidiary of the Singaporean Tolaram Group) signed a memorandum of understanding on Ukraine's participation in the project of a grain terminal in the Nigerian deepwater port of Lekki¹³. **The Sultanate of Oman** offered Ukraine to create a grain or grain and food hub on its territory to supply Ukrainian grain to the Horn of Africa. Oman is ready to develop trade and economic ties with Ukraine, but this country is not as influential as other Gulf states. The UAE's excessive focus on Russia and active assistance to it in circumventing sanctions complicate the development of relations with the Emirates, although negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement are progressing with the UAE. Rather, it is advisable to focus on deepening cooperation with **Saudi Arabia**. Ukraine is negotiating with **Tunisia** and **Morocco** to sign preferential trade agreements.

Following the results of the **II African tour**¹⁴ (Morocco, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Nigeria), Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba emphasized: *“In the previous three decades, Ukraine's African policy was developing by inertia from the Soviet era, and Ukraine was gradually losing Africa. Today, the MFA is implementing a policy of Ukrainian-African renaissance.... We seek to ensure that African countries vote effectively for our resolutions in the UN General Assembly, as well as to encourage efforts within their capabilities to isolate Russia in the international arena. This is a complicated story, as Russia has long been systematically investing in Africa...”*

Russia has been building its policy in Africa quite systematically for years and has created many “leads” and “footholds” on the continent. Ukraine's task is to contribute to the

¹¹ <https://mfa.gov.ua/en/grain-ukraine>

¹² <https://agropolit.com/news/24877-nigeriya-zaproponovala-ukrayini-stvoriti-logistichniy-hab-dlya-postavok-zerna-ta-produktiv-harchuvannya>

¹³ <https://www.world-grain.com/articles/18693-ukraine-lagos-free-zone-to-partner-on-grain-terminal>

¹⁴ <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/dmitro-kuleba-pidbiv-pidsumki-drugogo-afrikanskogo-turne-afrikanski-partneri-gotovi-do-povernennya-ukrayini-na-kontinent>

liberation of African countries from them through quiet diplomatic work together with its Western partners, to the best of its modest ability.

5. Key criteria for the location of possible regional hubs for Ukrainian grain.

5.1. A Ukrainian grain hub cannot be located in countries where there is a Russian military presence, either officially or in the form of private military companies, or where the country follows Russian policy or helps to circumvent sanctions.

5.2. When locating grain hubs, preference should be given to countries that have supported Ukraine politically and diplomatically since the beginning of Russian aggression in 2014.

For reference: Despite the fact that no African country has imposed sanctions against Russia or supported a special tribunal to investigate Russian crimes, Ghana, Liberia, Niger and Côte d'Ivoire joined the Crimean Platform in 2022. Some African countries supported the expulsion of Russia from the UN Human Rights Council, such as Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Libya, Sierra Leone, Malawi¹⁵ on April 7, 2022. Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Niger, Somalia, Zambia, Benin, Cape Verde, Comoros, Malawi¹⁶ also supported the recovery of reparations from Russia in the UN GA resolution of November 14, 2022. Obviously, after the military coup, Niger will fall out of this small list of African countries that were on the side of Ukraine.

In an interview with Africa Report, President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti condemned the war against Ukraine and called for the protection of civilians. The support of Sierra Leone and Liberia was facilitated by the participation of Ukrainian peacekeepers in establishing peace in these countries. Angola, despite its close relations with Russia, voted in favor of a UN resolution condemning the annexation of four Ukrainian regions.

Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria are Ukraine's promising partners in West Africa. These states are negatively affected by the rise of jihadists in the region, which has led to the establishment of military dictatorships in Mali and Burkina Faso, which have begun cooperation with the Wagner PMC. In East Africa, Ukraine's closest partner is Kenya. On the eve of the Russian attack, Kenya's representative to the UN, Martin Kimani, condemned Russia's recognition of the so-called DPR and LPR¹⁷. To the south, Botswana, one of the most stable countries with a long history of democratic rule, is a promising partner. Botswana supports Ukraine's integrity at the UN.

South Africa, which has been the most active in commenting on the war in Ukraine, abstained from voting on all five resolutions. Uganda has the same position. The Republic of the Congo ignored the vote on Crimea in 2014 and abstained in all other cases. Egypt supported three resolutions in support of Ukraine, but abstained from voting on Crimea in 2014 and on reparations in 2022. Senegal supported only the resolution adopted after Russia's annexation of four regions of Ukraine. The country's representative to the UN missed the last two votes. Zambia, which abstained from voting on the resolution condemning the annexation of Crimea, continued to support all General Assembly votes on Ukraine, including the resolution on reparations. The pool of African countries

¹⁵ <https://www.slovoidilo.ua/2022/04/07/novyna/svit/rosiyu-vyklyuchyly-rady-oon-prav-lyudyny>

¹⁶ <https://www.slovoidilo.ua/2022/11/14/novyna/svit/henasambleya-oon-pidtrymala-rezolyuciyu-shhodo-vyplatu-rf-reparacij-ukrayini>

¹⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-65965889>

that did not support the Ukrainian peace formula during the vote on the resolution “Principles of the UN Charter underpinning a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine” in February 2023 included: Eritrea, Mali, and South Africa. Mali was one of the two African countries, along with Eritrea, that voted against the resolution recognizing the integrity of Ukraine.

5.3. The location of the hub should take into account the location of the countries with the largest population, which are themselves at risk of hunger and are large markets (Nigeria, DR Congo in West Africa, Ethiopia in the East, Egypt in North Africa).

5.4. The presence of a seaport hub with a developed infrastructure for transshipment of agricultural products in the country of location.

5.5. It is desirable, but not obligatory, to localize regional offices of international organizations, in particular, the United Nations.

In view of the above, the following options may be proposed:

- Tunisia (port of Bizerte) for North Africa (Egypt, Libya, Algeria)
- Nigeria (Lagos port area) for West Africa (Nigeria, DR Congo)
- Kenya (Mombasa Port Zone) for East Africa (Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya)
- Saudi Arabia (Jeddah port in the Red Sea) as an alternative to Kenya.

Finally, it should be noted that the hub will not be able to function commercially without the resumption of sea transportation of food from Ukrainian ports, as it is large deadweight shipping that can provide cost-effective transportation over long distances. Africa is inaccessible for rail transportation, and the delivery of small consignments by river-sea vessels is a priori unprofitable. If the Black Sea Grain Corridor is not restored, the logistics of grain through the Danube River ports with transshipment to ocean-going bulk carriers for delivery to Africa will require grant support from international organizations under the auspices of the UN and charitable foundations.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. Ukraine does not have the financial resources of Russia, and a large part of its budget is currently funded by Western financial assistance. However, over the past year, Ukraine has made more progress in its political relations with Africa than in all previous years of independence. At present, only by working with partners from Western countries, in particular, neighbors who have intensified their African policy (Poland and the Czech Republic), can Ukraine help weaken Russian propaganda in Africa and ensure that grain exports to the continent are maintained.

2. In Africa, after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, they are increasingly aware of their dependence on Ukrainian grain supplies. Some African governments are realizing that Russia's actions are the cause of the food crisis in the world. Systematic diplomatic work on Africa to counteract Russian influence in the region lays the groundwork for further cooperation, which requires the creation of platforms for dialogue. More platforms for dialogue, more institutionalized formats—all this gives a chance to prevent the Russian policy of squeezing Ukraine out of the African food market.

3. Increasing opposition to Russia’s initiatives on the African continent is necessary for Africans to understand the essence of the Russian war in Ukraine, which requires not only image and reputation influences, but also economic initiatives. In this context, the humanitarian initiative “Grain from Ukraine” is a strong step. Systematic outreach to African media is also needed.

4. Russia continues to make efforts to break down sanctions, hoping that Türkiye will support its position. “Our position remains unchanged, i.e., first of all, solving systemic problems: reconnecting Rosselkhozbank to SWIFT, resuming the supply of spare parts, establishing transport logistics and insurance, restoring access of Russian companies to their foreign assets...”, said Deputy Foreign Minister M. Galuzin¹⁸. In this context, it is important to neutralize the pro-Russian activity of the Turkish leader, who believes that the resumption of the grain corridor depends on Western countries that must fulfill their promises to Russia¹⁹.

5. Modern Western air defense systems (NASAMS, IRIS-T, SAMP/T, Patriot), the effectiveness of which has already been proven by the Air Force of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, can protect Ukraine’s port infrastructure and elevators. Diplomatic assistance in obtaining air defense equipment as soon as possible to create a layered air defense of southern Ukraine in order to continue the grain initiative is important and should be a priority for diplomacy. At the same time, this will help to protect neighboring Moldova from the south. This approach coincides with the vision of Polish experts, who note that Ukraine needs additional radar systems and various types of air defense systems to protect against both cruise and ballistic missiles such as Iskander-M and Kinzhal, as well as additional mobile gun anti-aircraft systems such as Gepard or Avenger²⁰. Given the possibility of attacks from the sea by Russian Black Sea Fleet ships, Ukraine needs additional protection of its coast with long-range anti-ship missiles. Polish experts point to NSM or RBS-15 cruise missiles with a range of 200 km²¹.

6. The communiqué of the Vilnius NATO Summit contains an important point: “*Allies are working to enable exports of Ukrainian grain and actively support international efforts to alleviate the global food crisis.*”²² It is advisable to intensify the negotiation process with NATO and the member states of the Alliance on the routes of movement of ships with grain within the territorial sea of Romania, Bulgaria, and Türkiye, with their escort by minesweepers and air control.

7. Work with the EU to explore the possibility of grant support from the European Commission and/or various aid agencies for a rapid project to comprehensively identify the optimal locations of regional grain hubs in Africa, their advantages and disadvantages, in accordance with (but not exhaustively) those proposed in Section 5 above.

¹⁸ <https://agropolit.com/news/26283-zernova-ugoda-rf-bilshe-ne-hoche-vidnovlennya-roboti-amiakoprovodu-tolyatti--odesa>

¹⁹ <https://www.dw.com/uk/erdogan-vidnovlenna-zernovoi-ugodi-zalezit-vid-zahodu/a-66478568?maca=ukr-rss-ukrnet-ukr-all-3816-xml>

²⁰ <https://pism.pl/publikacje/mozliwosci-zabezpieczenia-swobodnej-zeglugi-handlowej-na-morzu-czarnym>

²¹ Ibid.

²² https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm?selectedLocale=en

8. Türkiye, as a NATO member, is one of the biggest beneficiaries of the grain corridor: it receives port fees from ships passing through the Bosphorus and is an important transshipment point. Türkiye's levers of influence on Russia include assistance in circumventing sanctions and the export of Russian gas to Europe through the Turkish Stream pipeline. It is possible that during the meeting in August, R. Erdogan will be able to get V. Putin to agree to continue the grain initiative. However, it is necessary to prevent the so-called compromise at the expense of another hole in the sanctions (lifting sanctions against Rosselkhozbank, connecting it to SWIFT, allowing Russian ships to enter EU ports, etc.)

9. The absence of a grain agreement forces investments to be reoriented to other export routes, in particular, the Danube, which, according to agricultural experts, could double in size (up to 4 million tons per month). Until now, given the option of exporting by sea, the market has been cautious about investing in rail transshipment. Now, its participants will have to work harder to secure alternative routes.

10. After the war, Ukraine could significantly help with security issues in African countries bordering those where jihadists and Wagner PMC units operate. Security is the number one problem in this region. The military juntas in Mali, Burkina Faso, and now Niger, which are now actively cooperating with Russia, came to power precisely because of the failures of civilian governments in the fight against jihadists. To prevent new juntas from coming to power, West Africa needs security assistance. Therefore, Ukraine could provide West African countries, such as Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, or Benin, in cooperation with Western partners, with experience in border security, training for their security forces, and tactics and strategies for countering Russian private military companies. No one in the world understands Russian tactics better than Ukraine, so our experience in countering Wagner fighters can be very useful for African countries.

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