
Global Repercussions of the War in Ukraine

The war between Russia and Ukraine has impacted the world far beyond Europe. The conflict's manifold global political, security, and economic repercussions considerably shape current and future international politics.

Ambassador Thomas Greminger

Director, Geneva Centre for
Security Policy

Marco Mussa

Global Support Group, Geneva Centre
for Security Policy

From the food crisis in Africa to the balance of power in the South Caucasus, the war in Ukraine has significant global repercussions. Because of the interconnectedness permeating the international system, the conflict has produced multifaceted reverberations on a regional and global scale: strategic objectives have been reframed, historical rivalries reignited, and a plethora of security and economic concerns have arisen. This *In Focus* provides an analysis of these global repercussions sparked by the war, excluding the consequences for Europe and North America, which have already been thoroughly addressed elsewhere.

Repercussions in Africa

The food crisis affecting the African continent is an important consequence of the war. The limitations imposed by the war on exports of wheat and fertiliser via the Black Sea ports drastically reduced shipments, leading to a [steep rise](#) in prices. Thousands of miles away, countries heavily reliant on Russia and Ukraine for these commodities have seen their food security endangered. From Egypt to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and from the Horn of Africa to Nigeria, [millions of people](#) face increasing hunger.

The food crisis compounds the already [dire and unstable](#) conditions arising in parts of Africa from climate change, local conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic. In turn, a [vicious circle](#) has emerged where external shocks and internal instability mutually exacerbate each other, leading to political destabilisation in countries with weak

governance and plunging affected regions into crisis. In this already challenging framework there is the risk that local terrorist groups may attempt to benefit from the complex situation caused by this interplay. In a resource-scarce environment, they might begin to take advantage of their control over supplies of food and water to [recruit](#) new members among afflicted communities.

Repercussions in the Middle East

The war in Ukraine has led to clear winners and losers in the Middle East. The winners – notably gas and oil exporters – have become more assertive, while the losers are suffering from the increased food shortages caused by the war. In countries plagued by long-lasting conflicts such as Syria, Yemen and Palestine, the sustenance of the local populations is largely [entrusted](#) to humanitarian organisations. These, however, are [struggling to provide sufficient food](#) to the local populations because of the war-driven hikes in prices. In the Middle East, the invasion of Ukraine has reverberated through other dimensions beyond the food crisis. For example, Russia has diverted troops from Syria to Ukraine, enabling Iran to [expand](#) its influence over some north-eastern areas of Syria.

While this could be seen as simply part of the already existing cooperation between Syria and Iran, it could lead to a more prominent role for Iran in the region. At the same time, a reduced Russian engagement might have strategic and military implications for other actors involved in Syria. For instance, the Russian [S-300 air-defence system](#) – crucial to counter Israeli aerial

incursions in southern Syria – has recently been moved to Ukraine. The removal of this weaponry may enhance Iranian vulnerability in the area, potentially reigniting regional tensions.

Repercussions in the South Caucasus

The war in Ukraine has contributed to transforming the power dynamics in the South Caucasus. On 12 September 2022 rockets fired from Azerbaijani positions landed in Armenian territory, opening another stage of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. [Experts](#) identified Russian involvement in Ukraine as the underlying [reason](#) for the resumption of hostilities. The timing of the attacks – launched shortly after the Russian setbacks in Kharkiv – was linked to new strategic opportunities.

On the other hand, the recent round of hostilities has raised questions about the Armenian [positioning](#) on the international stage: realising that its traditional protector, Russia, might no longer deliver the necessary assistance, it could seek greater support from the West. This scenario grew seemingly more plausible when Armenia and Azerbaijan joined the [EU-led meetings in Prague](#) in October 2022. However, recent talks between the two countries [in Sochi](#) about a peace deal suggest that Russia is far from losing its central role in the region.

Repercussions in Central Asia

As a result of their geographical proximity and economic ties to Russia, Central Asian countries have been critically affected by the war. Among these repercussions, their stability is put under stress by thousands of [returning foreign fighters](#) who have left in the past months to join the battle in Ukraine, fighting on both sides. If they are not properly reintegrated into local societies, there is the danger that these returnees will end up joining [extremist and criminal organisations](#).

The challenges posed by the cross-border movements of people extend beyond the issue of foreign fighters, however. In Kazakhstan, the inflow of Russian draft dodgers raises concerns among parts of the Kazakh political system who fear that these migrants could [overly inflate](#) the Russian ethnic minority in the northern regions of the country. The growing number of Russians

moving to Central Asian countries has also contributed to a significant increase in [local rent prices](#). This issue is coupled with the substantial reliance of Central Asian countries on [remittances](#) provided by migrant workers in Russia. A recession hitting the Russian economy and arising from the internationally imposed sanctions [would seriously affect](#) Central Asian countries. Nonetheless, for the time being, Russia seems to [withstand](#) these sanctions.

Repercussions in East and South-East Asia

In Asia, the war in Ukraine has engendered critical opportunities and challenges for local players. For instance, China has been actively strengthening its influence in [Central Asia](#), and it might attempt to match Moscow as the prime exporter of [low-end weapons](#) to this region. However, the war in Ukraine has also undermined Beijing's strategic and economic interests. Indeed, the conflict has caused a [significant drop](#) in rail trade on the New Eurasian Land Bridge, one of the axes of the Belt and Road Initiative lying on Ukrainian territory. China has, therefore, been compelled to re-route a segment of this infrastructural endeavour. As such, China remains concerned about continuous disruptions of the global economy and their impact on the country's economic growth and internal stability, notably as growth and stability are interlinked.

At the same time, the changes brought about by the Russian invasion of Ukraine represent a significant threat to regional actors, especially in South-East Asia. The region has been struck by the resulting rise in wheat, oil and fertilisers prices, which have worsened local food security. Countries such as Cambodia, Malaysia and the Philippines are increasingly [experiencing](#) food shortages that threaten sizeable portions of the population. To counter this worrying situation, the Asian Development Bank has recently [pledged](#) to allocate US\$14 billion to support local governments.

Conclusion

In sum, the war has produced global repercussions that are significant for many states, their citizens, and regional and international politics. Even for those regions where the security implications of

01/12/2022

IN FOCUS



the conflict seem to be limited, the economic impacts remain significant. Relevant examples are Latin America and the Caribbean region, where the war-driven rise in oil and wheat prices has sparked rising inflation and potentially dire economic consequences.

A remaining question relates to who will be able to reap the benefits of these developments. As previously highlighted, China, Iran, and Azerbaijan are seeking to strengthen their international and regional roles while simultaneously trying to mitigate the adverse repercussions of the war. In parallel, other actors – such as the European Union and the United States – are also (re-) positioning themselves in security and other international affairs. How countries will react to the global consequences of the war between Russia and Ukraine will shape not only the outcome of the conflict, but also the future of international politics.