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THE 2022-2024 RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR AND FOOD SECURITY POLICY

Abstract: *The aim of the paper is to determine the impact of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war on food security policy. What are the main challenges and threats that a number of states faced in terms of food security. The Russo-Ukrainian war had a significant impact on various processes in the world, among which an important place is given to food security policy. Because it took on both geopolitical and geoeconomic characteristics, which shifted the issue from a regional scale to a global format, along with other factors. As for the research methods, to obtain reliable information, we used: policy research analysis, content analysis and document analysis methods to analyze and describe the food security challenges arising from the Russo-Ukrainian war. The research process uses: “Political Realism Theory”, “Balance of Power Theory”, “Securitization Theory”. The effects of Russia’s destruction of Ukraine’s agriculture sector extend beyond global food insecurity, as Russia uses its own agricultural exports for influence in the Global South. Since Russia leverages its own agricultural exports to gain influence in the Global South, the consequences of its destruction of Ukraine’s agriculture sector go beyond the world’s food crisis. A significant part of the study was devoted to the analysis of the impact of armed conflicts and wars on food security in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the discussion of this case. Attention is also paid to the global policy of food security and the political, economic and social factors influencing it. Among them, geopolitical and geoeconomic factors of food security are analyzed against the background of modern*

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processes in the world. The article pays considerable attention to the role and importance of food security in ensuring global security.

Keywords: *food security, war, global food crisis, international security, Ukraine, Russia*

Introduction

In the modern era, the world is faced with a rather complex situation and reality regarding food security. The problem of food security is relevant for almost every country. It is worth noting that this problem is present in different doses and conditions in each country depending on its geographical location, the climate zone in which it is located, as well as the socio-political situation in a given state. However, there are also certain similarities that are important, since problems related to food security affect many countries, so it is a global problem, so this serious problem requires great attention from states and international organizations. The failure of the global food security system leads to loss of health and often to death. There are numerous cases of food counterfeiting, when counterfeit products are transported from country to country, which creates a health hazard. Among them is, to put it mildly, disregard for the law, which can lead to a dead end in political relations between two countries. Disagreements, tensions and deterioration of relations between countries will follow. Preventing such incidents and solving problems is of paramount importance today. Scientists, politicians and representatives of organizations working in the field of food security, and in particular food safety, in many countries of the world recognize that the main violations and problems in this area require urgent attention and timely solutions. Conflicts and hot spots around the world also have a significant impact on food security policy. The Russian-Ukrainian war, which began in 2022, has created a serious food problem for Ukraine and other states dependent on Ukrainian and Russian grain.

Food security is an integral part of national security and is its inevitable component. This phenomenon, in turn, is related to the fight against hunger and poverty in any country, and these two factors represent important challenges to national security. It can be said that these are asymmetric threats and challenges, the prevention and neutralization of which is precisely a component of national security.

Food security is influenced by factors that can be defined as internal or domestic political and economic challenges. These include the following factors: corruption and nepotism, food availability, significant dependence on imports, failure of economic reforms, environmental disasters, etc. As for

external factors, they can be manifested as global hunger, global epidemics, armed and military conflicts, food inflation at the global level, ecological and economic crises at the global level, etc. Both factors have a direct impact on the sustainability of food security and lead to the creation of high levels of vulnerability, both nationally and internationally.

In current international relations, food security has been identified as an inevitable component and an important factor in the geopolitical modeling of world political processes. Global initiatives have emerged, such as the “Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty”, founded by the leading actors of the global “South”: Brazil, the Republic of South Africa, and also an intergovernmental association “African Union” with a global geopolitical mission and objectives.

Food security as part of the strategy of war

Military conflicts are one of the inevitable factors that can cause countries to suffer from food insecurity due to reduced agricultural productivity, increased food prices, and the deterioration of agricultural land and infrastructure. Farmland may become fallowed and abandoned as a result of reduced investment in agricultural management caused by military conflicts³. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and attacks on Ukraine's agricultural sector have had unprecedented, completely preventable effects on global food security, nutrition, and agricultural markets. The United States and other nations responded quickly and thoroughly. However, millions of people are experiencing worsening starvation as a result of the invasion, and humanitarian aid for those experiencing the most severe types of food poverty is being delayed⁴.

Food access has long been a crucial factor in conflicts. It seems to be a key component of sieges as a military tactic, and military historians have studied how both armies and civilians have dealt with food shortages during conflicts. The global food system has changed over the past few decades, bringing with it new interdependencies that affect food security and preparation well beyond the front lines. Whether or not there is a clear plan to take advantage of food exports during a conflict, a conflict between two major food producers has an impact on societies all over the world, with potentially dire local

³ Y. Ma, D. Lyu, K. Sun, S. Li, B. Zhu, R. Zhao, M. Zheng, K. Song, *Spatiotemporal Analysis and War Impact Assessment of Agricultural Land in Ukraine Using RS and GIS Technology*, “Smallholder Farming under External Shocks: New Perspectives and Solutions for Future Crises” 2022. <<https://www.mdpi.com/2073-445X/11/10/1810>> (12.10.2024).

⁴ C. Welsh, *Russia, Ukraine, and Global Food Security: A One-Year Assessment*. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2023, <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-ukraine-and-global-food-security-one-year-assessment>> (14.10.2024).

repercussions⁵. Given the climate problem, it may be more crucial than ever to pay attention to food security. The global food system is both a contributor to and a danger to unsustainable living patterns, in addition to the consequences brought about by antagonist actors. Food and the food supply may be the primary security concern of the future due to the anticipated rise in the global population. This is especially true when food production declines in many parts of the world.

A familiar military strategy involving food is starvation as part of siege tactics. This strategy has very old records but seemed to vanish after the end of the Cold War. In recent years, however, Hägerdal (2020) notes that the tactic has reappeared in relation to civil wars, and in particular urban warfare contexts. He argues that the militaries of Western democracies may face conflicts between the military utility of starvation as a tactic and its political values. Warring parties may prevent the international community from acting on such military strategies, and humanitarian organizations may have trouble assisting civilians when a siege is complemented by heavy bombing⁶. After a protracted time of no food, water, or electricity, the Russian capture of Mariupol in 2022 may have qualified as a siege because, at the very least, the troops and civilian population were compelled to evacuate. Because of the shooting and bombing, the international humanitarian community was unable to oversee long-term humanitarian bridges into the city.

There is a positive link between food security and stability. Conversely, especially in a globalized era, armed conflicts can be a key driver of food insecurity that affects regions beyond the battlefield; the food crises of the past decade have laid bare the systemic challenges in fending off food insecurity in conflict settings. These crises reveal why governments or belligerents lack either the capacity or the will to address them, and why humanitarian aid struggles to reach people in need⁷. The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine has brought attention to fundamental flaws in global food security while also causing fresh food insecurity.

Armed conflicts make it more difficult for countries, families, and individuals to meet their food demands. Activities aimed at growing and harvesting, processing and transporting, and supplying and marketing food may be hampered by these conflicts. More precisely, conflicts can impact the ability of food systems and supply chains to operate effectively: production can

⁵ A. Holmberg, *Food security in light of the war in Ukraine: food studies meets defence studies*, Taylor & Francis, "Defence Studies" 2024, Vol. 24, No. 4, <<https://www.ifpri.org/blog/russia-ukraine-crisis-poses-serious-food-security-threat-egypt>> (15.10.2024).

⁶ A. Holmberg, *op. cit.*

⁷ M. Behnassi, M. E. Haiba, *Implications of the Russia–Ukraine war for global food security*, "Nature Human Behaviour" 2022, <<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-022-01391-x>> (16.10.2024).

decrease because producers are involved in the conflict and cannot produce or escape the country; agricultural inputs can be disrupted on international markets; or military operations can destroy agricultural yields and water infrastructure. Due to the issue of food supply or their dwindling purchasing power, armed conflicts can also impact consumers' ability to obtain enough food. Such conflicts affect the ability of international food aid to meet growing food needs in times of crisis; they disrupt energy markets, which negatively impacts the purchasing power of importing countries; and they raise food prices on local and international markets, which negatively impacts low-income countries that import food. Therefore, any strategy employed throughout the conflict management process should take into account these food difficulties, which today represent a significant aspect of armed conflicts.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine serves as an example of how food security is affected by conflict. The effects of climate change will worsen this relationship because rising sea levels, rising temperatures, and more frequent hazards make this relationship worse. The combined effects of climate change and geopolitical conflict also make the situation of global food security worse than it has ever been.

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and food security policy

Ukraine is a major supplier of agricultural products, such as grains and sunflower oil, and is frequently referred to as the breadbasket of Europe. It is essential to provide for many countries' food needs. With prolonged disruption of agricultural production, distribution networks and trade routes, the continuing conflict in one of the most fertile countries in the world has exacerbated existing challenges and created new hurdles for ensuring access to food and improved socio-economic wellbeing for millions of people. The pain of the fighting extends far beyond Ukraine's borders⁸.

Despite contributing a mere 2% to the global gross domestic product (GDP), Russia and Ukraine are notable producers and exporters of essential agricultural commodities, energy resources, and fertilizers⁹. Russia and Ukraine export 40% of the world's grain, making them major exporters. According to the United Nations, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict have combined to cause the largest food catastrophe since World War II, with up to

⁸ L. Emediegwu, *Update: how is the war in Ukraine affecting global food prices?*, "Prices & Interest Rates" 2024, <<https://www.economicsobservatory.com/update-how-is-the-war-ukraine-affecting-global-food-prices>> (19.10.2024).

⁹ T. B. Hassen, B. E. Bilali, *Conflict in Ukraine and the unsettling ripples: implications on food systems and development in North Africa*, "Agriculture & Food Security" 2024, <<https://agricultureandfoodsecurity.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40066-024-00467-3>> (20.10.2024).

1.7 billion people living in poverty and hunger, a number that is currently at an all-time high. About 30% of wheat and barley are supplied by Russia and Ukraine, resulting in a concentrated structure in the global grain market. Their contribution to the wheat market is vital in specific global markets, principally in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, where wheat is a fundamental food source. Russia and Ukraine are important contributors to barley's global production and export, accounting for 20% of the total output, and are the third and fourth exporters¹⁰. A total of 36 countries, including some of the world's most vulnerable and impoverished, import more than half their wheat from them. Because of this, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia quickly derailed global food supplies and led to high prices. It pushed millions into extreme poverty and worsened hunger and malnutrition and there were 222 million people in 53 countries and territories suffering from severe food crises and in need of emergency assistance¹¹. Implications for regional and global food security will be far-reaching, with 41.5 million ha of highly fertile land larger than the agricultural area of France (18 million ha), Germany (12 million ha) and Poland (11 million ha) combined, given Ukraine's traditional role as a breadbasket and a main exporter of wheat and sunflower oil. After the start of the war, grain prices rose well above the levels experienced in the 2007/08 food crisis, highlighting agriculture's geostrategic role¹².

The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war of 2022-2025 has not only changed the agenda of these two countries, but also created serious problems for the world order in terms of food security. Ukraine, which is considered one of the largest suppliers of grain to the world market, faced the problem of exporting its agricultural products as a result of the war. Here, the so-called "domino principle" worked - food shortages arose in countries that were largely dependent on Ukrainian grain. In response to this crisis, in 2022, at the initiative of the United Nations and the Republic of Turkey, an agreement was approved, the purpose of which was to restore and ensure the transportation of Ukrainian grain - wheat, which in itself implies ensuring global food security. It was signed in Istanbul on 22 July 2022, and was at first valid for a period of

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ F. Lin, X. Li, N. Jia, F. Feng, H. Huang, J. Huang, Sh. Fan, P. Ciais, X-P. Song, *The impact of Russia-Ukraine conflict on global food security*, "Global Food Security" 2023, <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211912422000517>> (22.10.2024).

¹² K. Deininger, D. A. Ali, N. Kussul, A. Shelestov, G. Lemoine, H. Yailimova, *Quantifying war-induced crop losses in Ukraine in near real time to strengthen local and global food security*, "Food Policy" 2023, <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306919223000167>> (24.10.2024).

120 days¹³. However, this landmark agreement, designed to ensure humanitarian and global food security, turned out to be part of an information war, a propaganda tool and, as a result, almost acquired a diplomatic lever for managing global reactions and crises. In February 2022, the Russian Federation's military aggression in Ukraine, which escalated into a full-scale war, not only undermined regional security and had a serious impact on relations between the warring countries, but also brought global security issues to the forefront. An agenda that covers virtually all areas of international relations around the world, including the global economy and trade, as well as agricultural supplies.

In the first days of hostilities, land transportation from Ukraine was seriously disrupted and agricultural exports along the Black Sea corridor virtually ceased. As a result, Ukraine, the world's largest wheat producer and exporter, was unable to fulfill its obligations. This led to food and feed shortages in regions and countries dependent on Ukrainian grain. There is no doubt that the conflict has exacerbated the vulnerability of several countries, particularly in the Global South. It threatens their food security with potentially serious humanitarian consequences, especially in regions that are most dependent on Russian and Ukrainian food exports, such as Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region¹⁴. Being the world's most water-scarce region, the MENA area is heavily dependent on food imports. It is also regarded as one of the areas most susceptible to climate change worldwide. Furthermore, political instability, fragility, and ongoing conflicts are common in the region (see, for example, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and Sudan), which leads to a large number of refugees being housed by neighboring countries and widespread food shortages. The situation was particularly difficult for less developed countries in Middle East and Asia, where their populations faced the threat of famine and humanitarian catastrophe. The problem required an immediate response, and to overcome the crisis, the foundation of the "Black Sea Grain Initiative" was laid with the participation of important players of the world order.

This platform, which has a purely humanitarian content, is aimed at creating safe routes and routes for the transportation of agricultural products in the Black Sea basin, which would allow transport structures to supply Ukrainian grain to the world market.

The "Black Sea Grain Initiative" as a purely humanitarian and economic agreement has become an integral part of political propaganda and political insinuations. The "agreement" was turned into a tool of propaganda warfare by

¹³ C. Steuer, O. Rieker, *Food Security in the Context of the War in Ukraine*, Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, Praha 2023, <<https://www.iir.cz/food-security-in-the-context-of-the-war-in-ukraine>> (26.10.2024).

¹⁴ T. B. Hassen, B. E. Bilali, *op. cit.*

the warring countries: Russia and Ukraine, as well as their allied forces. Both sides, including neutral countries, voiced their versions and tried to create established visions of the agreement to advance their broader interests and goals, or at least to strengthen their global influence.

The second initiative was to control the current food crisis. The Food Agriculture Resilience Mission (FARM), a partnership between France and the UN World Food Programme, aimed to help the nations most affected by the crisis by promoting sustainable agriculture and guaranteeing that the most vulnerable nations received agricultural commodities at a fair price. It accomplishes this by emphasizing the effectiveness of agricultural markets, encouraging locally produced food that is sustainable, and working with the private sector to distribute food surpluses to the nations who need them the most.

At the European level, important decisions have been taken, including those for providing emergency financial help and 1.5 billion euros to support the development of sustainable agriculture in the Eastern and Southern neighborhood. Most notably, the EU created “solidarity lanes” as alternative logistical routes for transporting cargo shipments of grain to the Black Sea region by rail, road, and river. 60% of the Ukrainian grain product was exported through the European “solidarity corridors,” and the rest of it through the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Moreover, the EU allocated 7.7 billion euros for food security in the period 2021–2024¹⁵.

Russia’s withdrawal from the Black Sea grain deal in July 2023 and any further reduction of Ukrainian grain exports are likely to have serious implications for both Ukraine’s agricultural sector and economy and for food security far beyond Europe’s borders, driving up food prices and hindering humanitarian agencies’ ability to respond to food crises¹⁶. In addition to increasing market volatility, Russia’s decision to leave the Black Sea Grain Initiative has decreased the world’s grain supply at a crucial moment for those who are most in need worldwide. In an obvious attempt to weaken Ukraine’s capacity to export food to the rest of the world, Russia has also targeted Ukrainian civilian grain and port facilities in a methodical manner. It will take years to undo Russia’s activities, which have long harmed Ukraine’s agriculture industry, which has been so important to the world’s food supply. However, Ukraine’s food production and exporting capacities have both been affected by the war. Widespread landmine and explosive remnants of war (ERW)

¹⁵ C. Steuer, O. Rieker, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ M. Riquier, H. Garbino, *War in the breadbasket: Landmines and food security in Ukraine*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2024. <<https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2023/war-breadbasket-landmines-and-food-security-ukraine>> (02.11.2024).

contamination could render vast tracts of agricultural land unusable, possibly for years, endangering food security both at home and abroad. Important issues regarding the priority and regulation of humanitarian mine action should be taken into consideration by the Ukrainian government as it prepares a new mine action policy. Over one third of Ukraine is suspected to be contaminated with landmines and other explosive hazards, and nearly 6.5 million acres of the country's farmland has been adversely impacted by the Russia's aggression, according to Ukraine's Ministry of Economy¹⁷. Millions of citizens' livelihoods are in danger due to widespread mine pollution, which also hurts the economy by lowering Ukraine's agricultural output. The United States is dedicated to assisting Ukraine provide safe access to arable land and return that land to communities for long-term productive use, as it is the largest humanitarian demining assistance contributor to Ukraine. The ongoing presence of landmines and other explosive dangers left by Russian forces in Ukraine's prime agricultural land poses a serious threat to food security, investment, and human life.

Ukraine's ability to produce and export has already been impacted by Russian strikes that have damaged its farms, storage facilities, arable lands, and agricultural equipment. This, together with Russia's move to prohibit fertilizer exports, is probably going to keep driving up food costs. In light of this, the IMF is calling on governments and donors to provide assistance for the most disadvantaged, guarantee the effectiveness of the agricultural market, and eliminate detrimental subsidies. There is no longer space for structural reforms in those nations (such as Egypt and Tunisia) who are already having trouble with the rise in their foreign debt brought on by the spike in wheat prices. They could get through the current crisis with the aid of a debt reduction.

The conflict in Ukraine has disrupted vital supply networks and increased expenses for struggling businesses attempting to ship goods globally, which are subsequently passed on to customers. Maintaining unrestricted trade in food, fuel, and fertilizer is essential to reducing the rise in food insecurity in Ukraine and around the world. This involves protecting food supply chains and agricultural output in general, as well as the infrastructure and storage facilities used to transport foodstuffs—particularly grains—out of the nation. To guarantee that food produced in Ukraine can freely travel to the rest of the globe, the blockade of Ukrainian ports must end right away.

More prosperous economies appear to be successful in adapting to and mitigating the food impact of the war in Ukraine. But many developing and emerging economies are still grappling with the food crisis problem. Just like

¹⁷ R. Yang, *Improving Food Security in Ukraine Through Demining*, U. S. Department of State 2024, <<https://www.state.gov/improving-food-security-in-ukraine-through-demining/>> (04.11.2024).

Covid-19, the issue of food insecurity should be a global concern, as ‘hunger in one country is a threat to other countries’¹⁸. In order to help struggling nations, coordinated measures must be done. After all, one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2) of the UN is to eradicate hunger and malnutrition worldwide. This in turn is a critical component in the fight for global food security and a shared global challenge that can only be addressed through international collaboration across countries, organizations and sectors, and through innovation in science, technology and more open sharing of data, methods and expertise¹⁹. Global conflicts pose a serious risk to achieving this goal.

The war in Ukraine has also emphasized the interconnection of food chains and food systems, as well as the necessity for more international scientific collaboration and knowledge-sharing to address the complex and interdependent challenges facing the agri-food sector²⁰. Through this partnership, nations can share best practices, gain knowledge from each other's experiences, and develop cooperative solutions to global environmental and food security issues. The variations in impact levels and channels among nations and regions must also be taken into account by policymakers. They must acknowledge the interconnectivity of the global food system while utilizing context-specific approaches tailored to the unique opportunities and difficulties faced by each location.

Conclusion

Based on the above, modern international security challenges, such as climate change, conflicts, conventional wars (on the example of the Russia-Ukraine war), international terrorism, illegal migration, illegal arms transit and organized criminal groups based on them, global-level technogenic disasters, drought, entomological warfare, during which insects are used against enemy crops, therefore, it poses a threat to agriculture, etc. are directly correlated with ensuring food security and vulnerability.

The war t in Ukraine serve as examples of how inadequate security and defense policy understanding of the factors influencing food security is. A conflict between two major food producers impacts societies all across the world, regardless of whether there is a clear plan to take advantage of food

¹⁸ L. Emediegwu, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ I. Becker-Reshef, C. Justice, B. Barker, M. Humber, F. Rembold, R. Bonifacio, M. Zappacosta, M. Budde, T. Magadzire, C. Shitote et al., *Strengthening agricultural decisions in countries at risk of food insecurity: The GEOGLAM Crop Monitor for Early Warning*, “Remote Sens of Environ” 2020, <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0034425719305735>> (12.11.2024).

²⁰ T. B. Hassen, B. E. Bilali, *op. cit.*

security during a conflict. Many people have already died in the fight. Reducing the number of people affected by food shortages should be a top priority for decision-makers everywhere.

First, a significant vulnerability in the global food system is the concentration of power. Second, many nations' reliance on food imports raises the possibility of future conflict dynamics. Third, the challenges of managing the global food system must be considered in attempts to direct food preparation within defense policy frameworks. Fourth, the conflict in Ukraine has highlighted the crucial role that the international community – exemplified by the FAO – plays in providing nations with food-related assistance.

In the end, we need to change the way we handle conflict and its effects. The issue of food security is a vital national security interest and should be a focus of attention for countries around the world. The effects of war, such as migration, supply chain disruptions, and food shortages, are no longer limited to a single location. A issue in one area can swiftly turn into a worldwide disaster since the whole community is intricately linked and only gets more so. The only way to solve the problem is to address the root causes of food insecurity.

Ensuring food security should meet the interests of all states, which can be achieved by avoiding wars, conflicts and destabilization of the situation in the world. And the resources spent on these processes should be directed to the creation of a sustainable food security policy that will eliminate food shortages, effectively manage the negative processes caused by climate change and provide the world's population with food to meet its growing needs. In this general policy, along with states, a decisive role is given to regional and international organizations, whose work should be more pragmatic and effective.

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