



**AFRICA, AN UNINTENDED COLLATERAL VICTIM OF RUSSIA –UKRAINE WAR:
HOW WILL THE WAR AFFECT THE CONTINENT’S FIGHT AGAINST
TERRORISM?**

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Abstract

This paper examined security problems brought about by Russia –Ukraine war to Africa and contends that nations (which are either military aid donors or harbour companies and firms that produce and export military equipment) involved in the war for different reasons and different magnitudes at some point will focus solely on Ukraine, with military aid from donor countries involved in the war becoming limited consequently leaving Africa-a continent that relies heavily on aid faced with a serious security challenge especially in the wake of rising terrorism not only in the continent but globally. The paper inferred therefore that Africa is an unintended collateral victim of the Russia-Ukraine protracted war. The paper also used realism as its theoretical framework.

Keywords: Africa, Realism, Russia-Ukraine War, Terrorism, Unilateral Victim



Introduction

The advent of Russia-Ukraine war once again has brought to the forefront the debate on food security in Africa. Russia and Ukraine, both the countries produce approximately 30% of the total world's wheat, 12% of which is exported to Africa (Bourne, 2022). Africa imports most of its wheat supplies from Ukraine and Russia (Behnassi, 2019). North African countries, like Tunisia and Egypt, import 81% to 85% of their total wheat from Ukraine respectively (Behnassi, 2019). With the Russian-Ukrainian war, the prospect of these countries failing to import adequate wheat to meet the demand of the citizens became a reality. As the war rages on, the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) predicts a scenario where other grain producing countries in the world will start restricting exports in an attempt to meet their domestic need (FAO, 2022). Egypt is the largest African importer of wheat as it imports about 60% from Russia and 25% from Ukraine. The remaining 15% is produced locally in Africa (Das, 2022).

In 2021, Egypt acquired more than 6.1 million tonnes of wheat worth a combined US\$ 2.4 billion from both Russia and Ukraine. Egypt spends nearly \$3 billion a year on just wheat shipments. Yet because of the crisis between Russia and Ukraine, wheat prices may increase to US\$ 5.7 billion by the end of 2022. (Dawoud, 2022). Egypt would consequently likely experience greater food insecurity as a result of the war than any other country in Africa. The Egyptian case study amplifies how overly dependent Africa is on imports. Africa's economy is heavily dependent on aid and heavily import-dependent (Moyo, 2009). Over the past 50 years, Africa is thought to have received help totaling more than \$1 trillion USD (Moyo, 2009). Although being rich in natural resources, Africa has historically depended on foreign help to support its development.

Aid is used to finance development projects, technical assistance and importation of critical commodities such as food and military equipment. This paper through a miniature desktop research therefore looks at the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on security in Africa in wake of the proliferation of terrorism in the continent. Most researches have dwelled on the impact of the war on food security in Africa. This paper therefore takes a different dimension and centres on the war's implication on security in Africa. Taking a cue from other studies that have shown Africa's over reliance on aid, the paper seeks to answer this research question: what is the



implication of the Russian-Ukraine war on Africa's security in the wake of the proliferation of terrorism? To answer this research question therefore this paper postulate that Russia's invasion of Ukraine accelerates Africa's departure from the West agenda in terms of military aid and exportation of military equipment thereby leaving the continent in limbo and at cross roads thus becoming more susceptible to terrorism.

Theoretical Analysis

Theories in International Relations (IR) are products of prevailing international situation at a particular time. Scholars study the international system in order to produce theories of IR, which enable them to predict and explain changes in the international system, and how different countries or actors influence it (Vyas, 2006). One of such theories is Realism which is premised on four assumptions. That survival (self-interest) is the principal goal of every state in an anarchic system, states are rational actors- given the goal of survival, states are bound to pursue national interest, all states possess some military capacity and that power is central in ensuring a state's survival in an anarchic world (Donnelly, 2000).

Dunne and Schmidt (2005) also argue that states are the main actors in the international system and are guided by survival and self-help. States are the key ontological unit of analysis in realism. The desire to survive in an anarchical world, therefore, leads to states to compete for survival. Realism has evolved over the years, from classical realism to modern realism and structural realism. Structural realism can be further divided into defensive and offensive realism. All branches of realism however are essentially about how inter-state relations are used to maximise each state's interest and desires. According to Morgenthau (1973), International relations is about power struggles and survival, which are explained by egotistical national interest promotion. In their interactions with other states, states are mainly concerned with advancing their own national interests, according to realism and its variations or branches. Maximizing one's (a state's) power at the international level is one method to advance one's national interests.

The things that fulfil a nation's material and spiritual demands are referred to as national interests. It may also cover interests in the military, economy, and culture (Donnelly, 2000). The principal national interest of a state therefore, is its security and survival. Additionally crucial to



the state's national interests are economic growth, wealth creation, military strength, and prosperity. (Jackson and Sorensen, 2003). Realism proposes that sovereign states act solely on self-interest to amass material power in an anarchical international system. This principle is premised on the belief that human beings are innately self centred (egoistic) and competitive rather than cooperative and principled. In realism, the principal actor is the state, which is accountable to its people as opposed to an external supreme authority, which is absent, nevertheless (Jackson and Sorenson, 2003). Realism as an international relations theory can be best summarised by Mearsheimer's remarks: "States should maximise power, and their ultimate goal should be hegemony, because that is the best way to guarantee survival" (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2013).

Africa, military aid and Importation of Military Equipment

Africa relies heavily on the import of military equipment especially from Russia, United States of America (USA) and selected European nations as well as China. The USA has always given military aid to Africa in different ways and at different intervals. USA's military aid to Africa is with the intention to fight terrorism, secure natural minerals and oil reserves and counter Chinese influence in the whole continent. From a realist perspective, USA interest in Africa has increased as a result of efforts to counter its strategic rivals, particularly China, who are reminiscent of the Cold War (Wiley, 2012). Included in the United States' military assistance to Africa are subsidised arms sales, military instruction and counsel, the creation of security commands, and intelligence. Since 2001, the USA has given SSA nations over \$9 billion in military assistance, and the five North African states have received about \$25 billion. Similar to this, the European Union (EU) spends over €100 million annually on military-related assistance in Africa through its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). These initiatives hope to partially halt the spread of terrorism and insurgency across Africa. (Security Assistance Monitor, 2019).

Russia, with its arms exports making up about half of the continent's imports, more than twice as much as those from European nations, China, and the United States—Russia has emerged as the continent's largest provider of weapons. Africa imported 49% of its military hardware from Russia between 2015 and 2019, with the remaining 14% and 13% coming from the US and China, respectively, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Centre (Defence world,



2020). Countries like Angola do not only import weapons from Russia but Russian firms also use Angola for distribution of Russians weapons to other parts of Africa (Defence World, 2019). Angola also aspires to be a nation that manufactures and assembles Russian weapons within its borders, as Angolan President “Joao Lourenço” revealed during a state visit to Moscow in 2018 (Klomegah, 2019). Nigeria and Russia inked a deal in 2019 at the Sochi Summit under which Moscow would send 12 MI-35 helicopters to Nigeria expressly to assist Nigeria in fighting the Boko Haram terrorist group (Reuters, 2019).

Cameroon wanted to acquire the Russian Pantsir-s1 air defence system for its armed forces to use against Boko Haram infiltration along its border with Nigeria. The system consists of two battle vehicles, surface-to-air missiles, 30-mm bullets, and a vehicle. (Army Recognition, 2019). In March 2018, Russia and Burkina Faso signed an agreement for the supply of two Mi-171Sh helicopters to help combat terrorism in the West African country which is prone to terror attacks (African Aerospace, 2018).

An extrapolation can be made therefore that Russia’s inability to achieve its military objectives in Ukraine as quickly as Kremlin anticipated (as opined by many European political commentators) will likely lead to Russia and its firms not fulfilling their contractual obligation of weapons supplies to most African countries, it is inevitable therefore that a protracted war means Russia will concentrate all its military equipment on its current objective-the war in Ukraine (Fontenrose, 2022). Observers also expect Russia’s defence industry to lose access to key components used in manufacturing of military equipment due to sanctions (alongside significant equipment losses in battle), making it less likely that Russian defence firms will meet production targets or fulfil arms contracts to buyers in Africa (Fontenrose, 2022).

By offering military assistance, the United States of America, the European Union, China, and Russia are progressively vying for dominance across Africa. Such rivalry takes place in a globalised economy where access to new consumer markets and the extraction of valuable minerals and natural resources are highly valued. The USA, EU countries, China, and Russia offer military aid and assistance missions for “real hard-nose politics in pursuit of their own selfish



strategic interests” (Matisek, 2020). But their strategies and focus will likely shift towards Ukraine for different reasons thus leaving Africa as an orphan.

What’s in for the USA/EU and Russia in Ukraine?

The International Relations theory of realism, which purportedly described the grand strategies of the superpowers during the Cold War, seemed to have outlived its usefulness, opening the door for the dominance of "new developing theories" like liberalism and other theories. Europe's expedition towards stability and prosperity, with democratic and liberal principles at its core, brought peace to the continent after the Cold War. However, Russia's recent incursion of Ukraine and, more significantly, the stance it took, portended a potential revival of the realists' perspective (Walker, 2022). The choice of semantics by President Putin underlines the realist-specific themes such as “security”, “survival”, and “an existential threat” (AFP, 2022). President Putin refers to Ukraine’s dallying with the USA and its prospects of joining North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) as an “existential threat”. According to Walt (2022), the war also serves as an example of another realist idea: the notion of a security conundrum, to which Putin appeared to react by threatening the use of sanctions, military action, and, if necessary, nuclear weapons (Noak & Westfall, 2022).

Despite Ukraine's non-membership in NATO, the USA gave it \$4 billion in military aid from 1991 to 2014. Since then, more than \$2.7 billion have been added, along with more than \$1 billion from the NATO Trust Fund, making up a small portion of all defence expenditures in Ukraine. With this, the USA hopes to separate Ukraine from Russia and bring it into the West (Mearsheimer, 2014). All of this was done to free Ukraine from the oppressive sway of Russia. Realists will assert that the United States created a security dilemma with Russia by enlarging the NATO alliance and theoretically giving countries like Georgia and Ukraine a chance to join NATO. This, they claim, led to Russia invading Georgia in 2008, then Ukraine in 2014, and attacking Ukraine in February 2022. Moscow had to take action as a result.

Many realists predicted the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and many of them were correct. The Ukrainian conflict was supposed to be Russian President Vladimir Putin's crowning accomplishment and a symbol of how far Russia had advanced since the fall of the Soviet Union



in 1991. The annexation of Ukraine is intended to be the first phase of the Russian empire's reconstruction. President Putin wanted to show that the United States is a "paper tiger" outside of Europe and that Russia is preparing for a leadership place in a future multipolar world (Fix & Kimmage, 2022).

As Ukraine fully assimilated into the Western orbit, Russia began to think that Ukraine was leaving its sphere of influence and moving against its own national interests. President Putin believes that Russia technically includes all former Soviet states. Russia then started an invasion to stop the West, represented by NATO and the European Union, from further encroaching near its borders after no workable diplomatic solution to the issue could be found. When Ukraine successfully resisted Russia's initial offensive and Russia's invasion was postponed due to Ukraine's fortitude, the United States and its European allies gave just the right amount of military support to prevent Russia from winning and to, in the words of United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, "see Russia weakened". The continuous help rendered by the USA and its allies as well as Russia's continuous offensive shows the great intent of the two sides wanting Ukraine to their side (Latham, 2022).

According to Mearsheimer (2014, 77-8), Russia's decision to annexe Crimea and destabilise the Donbas region in 2014 was primarily motivated by NATO's eastward expansion and, to a lesser extent, the European Union's (EU) promotion of democracy, both of which President Putin repeatedly and emphatically stated threatened Russia's core strategic interests. To counteract the impact of the other, Russia and the USA both want Ukraine for themselves. NATO shouldn't be so near to Russia's borders (Jibladze, 2007).

According to Götz (2016:302), Russia's actions are "simply an attempt by a local great power to maintain a sphere of influence around its borders in the face of increasing external pressure" and that such an action is not atypically Russian but rather the typical course of action that any great power would pursue in such circumstances. The United States is obligated to behave similarly to Russia if China or Russia approach Mexico, a neighbouring country. According to President Putin and reality, Russia's primary national interest is to keep Ukraine secure from the



US, EU, and Western ideologies. The 2014 invasion's characteristics and justification were carried over into the current attack; only the scale was different.

In 2017, the EU gave Ukrainian citizens visa-free entry to the EU's Schengen area of free movement, which enables people to travel without passport checks between most European countries, in an effort to win Ukraine over to its side and away from Russia prior to the 2022 war (Barber, 2019). In retaliation for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU placed sanctions on Russia and defended Ukraine from Russian maritime aggression. Additionally, the EU gave Ukraine foreign assistance totaling more than €13 billion (roughly \$14.2 billion) in loans and €2 billion (roughly \$2.2 billion) in grants from 2014 to 2019. The EU declared in 2020 that it would give Ukraine essential assistance totaling more than €190 million (\$205 million) to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Later, the EU gave additional loans nearly €1.2 to €1.3 billion to help "limit the economic fallout" of the COVID-19 pandemic (European Commission, 2020).

On the 23rd of December 2022, during his first visit to the USA Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky was promised \$1.85 billion in military aid by the administration of USA President Joe Biden ([http:// Aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/23/russia-ukraine](http://Aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/23/russia-ukraine)). Additionally, US President, Joe Biden, promised nearly \$3 billion in new military aid to Ukraine in August 2022. This aid included anti-aircraft missiles, artillery, counter-drone defences, and radar technology. It is the largest contingent of US military aid provided to Ukraine to date, totalling over \$13 billion in support provided or pledged by the US under the Biden government. (<https://www.theguardian.com › world › aug › joe-biden...24 Aug 2022>).

This shift means that military aid to Africa is likely going to be reduced as USA concentrates its military aid to Ukraine. Africa, however has and will always be in dire need of military aid. To buttress this, on the 11th of November 2014, the then Nigerian ambassador to the USA attributed Nigerian army's failures to deal decisively with Boko Haram to the USA's refusal to sell military weapons and equipment like drones to the Nigerian army because of its questionable human rights (<https://www.bbc.com › news › world-africa-30006066>). Without importation of equipment or military aid African countries will always struggle to take care of their security.



Terrorism in Africa

Terrorism particular in Africa is constantly gaining ground. Today, many countries devote a good part of their resources and energies to fight and protect themselves against this phenomenon, depriving vital sectors such as health and education of the resources they need. In the twenty-first century, terrorist incidents in Africa have increased dramatically (Cronin, 2002). This can be attributed to various things. One of these relates to the military offensive launched by the United States and its allies in Afghanistan and Iraq after the events of September 11, 2001, which dispersed terrorists to other parts of the globe. Terrorists wanted to attack the USA and its western allies as easy targets (Cronin, 2002). Terrorist groups attack on African territory as a means of returning to the USA because Africa hosts massive commercial and interest of the USA and several EU countries (Crenshaw, 2011).

Two well-known extremist organisations, among others, are based in West Africa. Ansar Dine works out of Northern Mali, while Boko Haram, formally known as Jama'atu Ahl as-Sunnah li-Da'awati wal-Jihad, primarily operates in Northern Nigeria and Cameroon. The former was established in Maiduguri (Bourne state) in 2002, and the Hausa name Boko Haram was given to the organisation primarily due to its opposition to western education. Boko Haram see western education as an abomination (Onuoha, 2010). In the Horn of Africa there is the Al- Shabaab which continues to cause havoc in the East. Al Shabaab also has links with Al Qaeda (Onuoha, 2010). In the 2013 Al- Shabaab carried terror attacks at Westgate shopping mall and in 2015 carried out the Garissa University massacre in Kenya.

Ansar Al-Shariya is a terrorist organisation based in Tunisia that carried out the assaults on the Bardo National Museum and Sousse in 2015. The assaults on the Radison Blu Hotel in Egypt and Mali, as well as the 2015 crash of a Russian plane in the Sinai, were both carried out by Ansar Dine in Mali. 276 mostly Christian female pupils between the ages of 16 and 18 were abducted by Boko Haram from the Government Girls Secondary School in the town of Chibok, Bourne State, Nigeria, on April 14 and 15. (Efobi & Asongu, 2016). According to a recent report on the Global Terrorism Index (GTI, 2014), Boko Haram in Nigeria was accountable for about 6,644 deaths,



compared to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which claimed responsibility for 6,073 fatalities (Efobi & Asongu, 2016).

Till recently the Southern African region has always been regarded as relatively less volatile in comparison to other regions of the continent. However, on October 5, 2017, 20 armed members of Ansar al-Sunna attacked three police stations in Mocimboa da Praia, a coastal neighbourhood in Cabo Delgado Province. This attack marked the beginning of a terrorist insurgency organisation in Mozambique. Portuguese, Kiswahili, and Kimwani were the assailants' three languages (a language widely spoken along the coast of Cabo Delgado Province). Two police officers were mercilessly murdered during the raid (Adrian, 2017). Since then, the group has left and continues to leave a massive trail of devastation throughout Mozambique. This led the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a regional bloc, to step in and dispatch a military peacekeeping force in July 2021.

Discussion

Specific themes such as security, survival, existential threats and national interests are what define realism in international relations. Russia sees Ukraine's close camaraderie with EU and USA as an existential threat to its security. President Putin's Russia has always viewed parts of Ukraine and Georgia as part of Russia's territory and Russia's national interest will therefore be to keep both Ukraine and Georgia under its sphere of influence. On the other hand, the USA the EU and their allies also want to extend their influence on Ukraine as a way of neutralising Russia. To this end Russia sees USA and EU as 'stealing' Ukraine from under its wings. It is these stark opposing interests that make the opposing sides continue their involvement in Ukraine albeit at different scales with Russia launching a full military operation, while the USA, EU and their allies offer military aid to Ukraine. These concerted efforts in Ukraine by Russia as a loner and the collective of EU/USA and their allies' effort has calamitous consequences for Africa. As Russia on one hand and the USA/EU and their allies on the other channel most of their resources towards Ukraine, Africa will be forgotten in terms of military aid, military equipment and military training. This paper induces therefore that the focus on Ukraine will leave Africa in limbo with regards to its security.



Africa is continent that relies heavily on military aid and importation of military equipment from Russia, EU the USA and other countries. With these countries channelling most of their resources towards Ukraine for different reasons and objectives and capacities, Africa's vulnerability to security challenges and its military failures to curb those challenges is bound to increase. Militaries in Africa are likely to find themselves in short supplies of military equipment to deal decisively with terrorism which is on the rise in the continent. It follows therefore that the Russia-Ukraine war therefore makes Africa an unintended collateral victim in the face of a serious security conundrum. In order to bring itself out of this over reliance quagmire of foreign aid and importation of basic valuables African leadership must strive for economic independence, build strong institutions, invest in education and technology and create a fertile ground for local industries to flourish.

Conclusion

The Russia-Ukraine war inadvertently poses a security threat for Africa. As countries like Russia, USA/EU jostle for influence in Ukraine and channel most of their resources towards attaining objectives albeit different ones in Ukraine, Africa will likely receive less military aid disproportionate to its need as Ukraine takes a centre stage. Moreover, some companies in Russia's and EU which manufacture military equipment may be forced to reduce their supplies to African countries because whatever they manufacture is likely going towards replenishment of the damaged equipment used by the Russian army or used as part of military aid to Ukraine by the USA/EU. The end results of this will be an African continent with limited resources to battle terrorism which is on the raise.

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