

The Russia–Ukraine Conflict and the Changing Geopolitical Landscape in the Middle East

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ABSTRACT

When it comes to the dispute between Russia and Ukraine, several countries in the Middle East have chosen a neutral stance, choosing not to support either the United States' sanctions or the camp against Russia. They have, instead, made decisions that serve their own national interests, demonstrating strategic independence. Meanwhile, as tensions rise between the United States and Russia over Ukraine, both countries are less able and less willing to exert influence in the Middle East. The strategic game of global powers in the Middle East is thus developing, and major nations have chosen a cautious and balanced approach to seeking to influence the region. It appears that regional tensions in the Middle East are beginning to ease. This has led several Middle Eastern nations to embark on processes of modernization and change. However, there is still a great deal of unseen threats associated with international politics in the region.

KEYWORDS:

Russia–Ukraine conflict, Middle East regional pattern, Great powers' game, Development and transformation

I. INTRODUCTION

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has had far-reaching effects on the reorganisation of political blocs, as well as the international system, the world order, and global geopolitics. This is due to the fact that a complicated fight and game involving Russia, the United States, and Europe underlies the political violence in Russia and Ukraine. In particular, the United States is using the war between Russia and Ukraine as a platform for consolidating, adjusting, and reorganising its global ally system. Regarding the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, other countries have demonstrated a wide spectrum of emotions towards the United States and Russia. The relative decline of the United States and the West in international politics is reflected in the fact that US allies in the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and other emerging countries and areas have not followed American leadership or taken a side in the conflict between Russia and the United States.

The Middle East has a long history of reliance and strife, with many Middle Eastern countries relying on the rest of the world, particularly the West, for aid. External involvement and internal differences have sparked protracted disputes, creating an unstable atmosphere that is detrimental to regional development and collaboration. This has led to a vicious cycle of insecurity and underdevelopment that has persisted for decades and is responsible for many of the world's most pressing problems in the Middle East. The Middle East has not totally changed in its main traits of conflict and reliance since the so-called "Arab Spring" began in 2011, although there has been a shift in power relations, notably over the previous two years. Countries in the Middle East are growing more autonomous, and the influence of major powers from outside the region is becoming more diverse and balanced, all of which is good news for the region as a whole (Liu 2022a).

The ongoing crisis between Russia and Ukraine has not had a significant impact on regional dynamics in the Middle East. Conversely, the foreign relations of the region have exhibited a notable inclination towards increased autonomy. The nations situated in the Middle East have refrained from aligning themselves with either the United States or Russia in the ongoing geopolitical dynamics (Zhang 2022; She 2022; Yang 2022; Wu 2022). The purposeful withdrawal of the United States from the Middle East, with an emphasis on major power competition, has resulted in a diminishing influence of other traditional powers such as Russia and Europe in the region. However, the repercussions of the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine have had a significant influence on the Middle East. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has posed significant challenges to internal governance and development initiatives in the Middle East. This situation has resulted in a notable increase in energy costs and has also exacerbated a food crisis in the region. A significant point of consideration pertains to the potential occurrence of a third wave of the "Arab Spring" in the Middle East. This possibility arises from the butterfly effect stemming from the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Notably, the nations currently grappling with food insecurity align closely with the countries that previously experienced two waves of the "Arab Spring" (Liu 2022b).

REACTION OF MIDDLE EAST COUNTRIES TO THE RUSSIA–UKRAINE CONFLICT

The countries of the Middle East have mostly stayed out of the game between the United States and Russia over the war in Ukraine. To protect their own interests, they work to strike a balance between the two superpowers. As a result, the influence of foreign nations in the Middle East has become more balanced, and they even ventured to reject some requests from the US.

REACTION OF ARAB COUNTRIES TO THE RUSSIA–UKRAINE CONFLICT

Middle Eastern countries with a clear stance on Russia's side or Ukraine's were scarce at the outset of the conflict. Despite outward differences in reaction, most countries in the region took a stand of neutrality. Only two countries took clear stands on Russia: Kuwait, which opposed Russia's military intervention against Ukraine, and Russia's longtime ally and protector, Syria. However, Syria and Kuwait could not exert much of an impact. The United States is putting increasing pressure on its Arab allies, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, to take part in confrontation and sanctions against Russia as the conflict between Russia and Ukraine continues to escalate. Arab states and even US allies were not unanimous in supporting US sanctions on Russia, and striking a delicate diplomatic balance between the United States and Russia has become a central focus of Arab foreign policy. By refusing to increase oil output as requested by the United States, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are only two examples of countries playing strategic games with the country. U.S. officials have repeatedly requested that Saudi Arabia significantly increase oil production since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in an effort to slow the meteoric rise in oil prices around the world. However, Saudi Arabia has insisted on sticking to production agreements it had already made with Russia and other major oil-producing countries.

REACTION OF TURKEY TO THE RUSSIA–UKRAINE CONFLICT

Turkey's position towards Russia, Ukraine, the United States, and Europe in the Russia-Ukraine crisis is based on the country's national interests and identity. By acting as a high-profile mediator between Russia and Ukraine, balancing the interests of Russia and Ukraine, the US and Russia, blocking Finland and Sweden's entry into NATO, and demanding that the West accommodate Turkey's interests on Kurdish issues, Turkey has essentially launched a diplomatic offensive in pursuit of its own interests as a US ally and NATO member. In sum, this strategy exemplifies the country's diplomatic independence and focus on its own national interests. Turkey's strategic autonomy in the game of major powers between the United States (US), Russia (Russian Federation), and Europe (European Union) has been greatly bolstered by its balanced foreign policy towards Russia (Russian Federation), Ukraine (Ukraine), and the United States (NATO). To further cement its position as a major force in Eurasia, Turkey used the crisis to actively mediate among all sides, focusing particularly on food transport and the security of the Black Sea waterway. The necessity to protect national interests and an appreciation for the tangled historical roots of the crisis between Russia and Ukraine inform Turkey's cautious diplomatic approach. It is the product of Turkey's own diverse and complicated identity (Yang 2022) as well as the balancing of political forces among many factions in the country.

REACTION OF IRAN TO THE RUSSIA–UKRAINE CONFLICT

Iran has made reaching consensus on the Iran nuclear accord a top priority in order to lift sanctions and improve the country's dire economic situation. The nuclear agreement with Iran has been badly impacted by the Russia-Ukraine crisis, especially due to changing attitudes on the part of the United States. The United States, on the one hand, stresses delaying the Iran nuclear negotiations under various pretexts, while on the other, it emphasises decoupling sanctions against Russia due to the Ukraine crisis from the Iran nuclear issue. The Russia-Ukraine war has encouraged the growth of a Russia-Iran partnership because both countries are under severe Western sanctions. Iran not only refrained from joining in on the sanctions against Russia in the wake of the crisis between that country and Ukraine, but it also bolstered its strategic cooperation with Russia. Russia and Iran have been working together more closely on all fronts since the crisis began, including the political, diplomatic, military, economic, financial, energy, and transportation sectors. A long-term collaboration pact is still in the works, but the two sides have already signed a \$40 billion energy cooperation agreement. Putin's trip to Iran in July 2022 (Tang 2022) demonstrated Russia's high regard for the country.

REACTION OF ISRAEL TO THE RUSSIA–UKRAINE CONFLICT

When it comes to the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine, Israel is taking a very careful approach. Israel successfully mediated the dispute by taking into account all relevant elements in a way that avoided irritating either side while protecting Israeli interests. Israel has been careful in its language, refraining from making any overt attacks on Russia. The country has been hesitant to join the West in imposing harsh sanctions on Russia and has been cautious about taking a firm stance against Moscow in international forums like the UN Human Rights Council. While Ukraine has asked for help with offensive weapons, Israel has

offered substantial humanitarian aid. Additionally, Israel has made multiple diplomatic efforts to address Ukraine's political assistance needs and has voiced concern over the country's current position (Wu 2022). Israel has adopted a somewhat neutral stance, leaning more towards Ukraine and the US than either Russia or Ukraine, in order to avoid insulting either side and, more importantly, to avoid provoking Russia. Israel's goal is to safeguard Israeli interests, which includes continuing to work with Russia on the Iranian nuclear issue and the Syrian situation. Israel and Russia work together on many fronts, including commerce, energy, and defence. Ukraine is a major trading partner and technology collaborator with Israel, and the Israeli economy benefits greatly from this relationship. Israel also has to work with Russia and Ukraine to ensure the security of Jews living abroad.

There is a sizable Jewish community in Ukraine. Kiev, Dnipro, Kharkov, Odessa, and other cities in Ukraine are home to a significant Jewish population (200-400k, according to Dashefsky and Shekin 2022). The Israeli government has regularly cooperated with Russia to ensure the security of Jewish communities in Ukraine as part of its efforts to mediate the crisis between Russia and Ukraine. Israel, feeling immense pressure from the US and the West, has changed its policy on some fronts, including giving defensive weaponry and equipment to Ukraine and joining Western sanctions against Russia (Wu 2022). The Middle East pattern is being influenced by a wider and more evenly distributed range of forces from significant states outside the region.

While the United States seeks to strategically withdraw from the region, the Middle East has been experiencing an ongoing Arab Spring for over a decade. It is an objective trend that the United States must boost its strategic investment in the Middle East due to the region's rapid political transformation. This development is at odds with the United States' (subjective) goal of retreating from its prior Middle Eastern approach. The United States has not announced a comprehensive Middle East policy since the start of the Biden administration and has instead reduced its strategic involvement in the region. Among the main tenets of its Middle Eastern policy are policy shifts designed to lessen the region's strategic burdens, such as reviving talks to return to Vienna on the Iran Nuclear Agreement, de-escalating crises like the war in Yemen, cutting back on military aid to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other allies, re-introducing the "two state solution" to the Palestinian issue, and withdrawing troops from Afghanistan in a disastrous fashion without a plan for how to replace U.S. policy towards the Middle East since the beginning of the crisis between Russia and Ukraine has mirrored the strategy's internal tensions. To better compete with other major nations, the United States has lowered its strategic investment in the Middle East. However, the Middle Eastern countries, particularly the energy-producing countries, need to join the US and Russia in putting sanctions on Russia as part of the strategic game surrounding the Russia-Ukraine conflict. As trust in the United States declines, countries in the Middle East, particularly US allies, are seeking strategic balance among key countries. This great-power balance doctrine is seen in the Middle Eastern response to the crisis between Russia and Ukraine.

The outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has resulted in a majority of Middle Eastern nations adopting a neutral position (Bobkin, 2022). The individuals in question do not endorse Russian military operations and emphasise the importance of safeguarding Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, they also decline to participate in imposing sanctions on Russia, which serves as evidence of Russia's notable accomplishments in its management of the Middle East over recent times. The outbreak of the conflict has had a limited impact on Russia's bilateral relations with Middle Eastern countries. Prominent nations within the region, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Qatar, Israel, among others, have expressed their intention to uphold their strong affiliations with Russia across several domains, including geopolitics, economy, technology, energy, and other pertinent spheres. The conflict will lead to a reduction and limitation of Russia's influence in the Middle East. The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine has resulted in a decrease in Russia's national strategic resources, hence posing challenges for the country's efforts to expand its investments in the Middle East. Furthermore, the economic, trade, energy, military, and other forms of cooperation between Russia and Middle Eastern nations are likely to encounter substantial obstacles due to the imposition of Western sanctions and heightened pressure exerted by the United States on these countries. Ultimately, although the majority of Middle Eastern nations tend to avoid taking sides, the United States' Middle Eastern partners will face pressure from the US and exercise greater caution in their cooperation with Russia.

China has assumed a progressively constructive role in matters pertaining to the Middle East. China has established a diverse range of strategic partnerships with over ten nations in the Middle East, encompassing cordial cooperation with Arab countries, Iran, Turkey, and Israel. China's economic policies are influenced by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which seeks to promote collaboration between China and Middle Eastern nations in various domains such as infrastructure development, new energy, information technology, aerospace, and other developmental endeavours. This initiative encourages joint consultation, joint construction, and resource sharing as means to facilitate practical cooperation. China has emerged as an exemplar for the

practise of mutual learning among civilizations through its demonstration of respect towards the social and cultural trajectories as well as institutional decisions of Middle Eastern nations. Moreover, China places significant value on the varied civilizations present in the region and actively engages in the exchange of governance experience with neighbouring countries. China places a significant emphasis on security matters and demonstrates its commitment by actively safeguarding Middle Eastern security through various means, such as engaging in peacekeeping operations, counterterrorism efforts, anti-piracy initiatives, and other related endeavours. This commitment is underpinned by China's adherence to a set of values that prioritise shared responsibility, comprehensive approaches, cooperation, and long-term sustainability in the realm of security. China prioritises political resolutions to the difficulties in the Middle East and emphasises the importance of fairness and justice when addressing volatile circumstances (Liu and Fan, 2017).

Amidst the intensifying geopolitical rivalry between China and the United States, the United States has adopted a vigilant stance, exerting pressure on Middle Eastern governments to counterbalance China's expanding influence in the region. The primary strategies involve exerting pressure and impeding the collaborative efforts between Middle Eastern nations and China in relation to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Additionally, there is a call for the Middle East to cooperate with the United States and Western countries to exert influence on China regarding matters pertaining to China's fundamental interests. The influence exerted by the United States has not been found to have a detrimental effect on the policy orientations of Middle Eastern nations, with a specific focus on Arab countries, vis-à-vis China. The party in question maintains a commitment to enhancing comprehensive and pragmatic collaboration with China, while also expressing strong support for China's endeavours to safeguard its sovereignty, security, and developmental pursuits. Despite the escalating tensions between China and the United States, countries in the Middle East express a desire to maintain their collaborative engagements with both nations. According to Adelal-Jubeir, the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, in the aftermath of President Biden's visit to the Middle East, the kingdom intends to enhance its relations with both China and the United States (She, 2022).

OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGES AMID SHIFTING MIDDLE EAST DYNAMICS

Pressure to speed up growth and transformation in some Middle Eastern countries has increased since the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011. This is because of the United States' shift in global strategic focus to power competition and its strategic retreat from the region. The strategic game between the United States and Russia has turned its attention from the Middle East to Ukraine since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, forcing countries in the Middle East to make strategic adjustments. The international situation in the Middle East has recently showed encouraging signals of improvement. Many countries in the Middle East share the desire of becoming more modern and progressive. As the United States has taken on a more damaging role in the Middle East, progress towards better relations amongst regional superpowers has stalled, and conflict zones in the area have been pushed to the periphery. There are many unseen threats within the current regional dynamics as a result of the Russia-Ukraine war worsening the economic and social crisis in several Middle Eastern countries.

RARE RELAXATION IN REGIONAL INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND HIDDEN WORRIES

Since the onset of the Arab Spring in 2011, the international relations of Middle Eastern countries, particularly those among the region's major nations, have been marked by conflict and a prevalence of zero-sum games. The confrontation between the regional group and ethnic and sectarian conflicts exhibits the characteristic elements of identity politics, namely a tendency towards polarisation, ideological framing, and the utilisation of proxy actors. There exists a significant divergence between Sunnis and Shiites, with a particular focus on Saudi Arabia and Iran (Byman, 2014). Additionally, a notable division can be observed between the "pro-Muslim Brotherhood camp" and the "anti-pro-Muslim Brotherhood camp," with Turkey and Saudi Arabia assuming leadership roles in each respective faction (Liu and Zhao, 2018). The proxy game observed in Yemen, Iraq, and Syria serves as a representative instance of the diverse array of regional power confrontations witnessed in the Middle East. This is further exemplified by the diplomatic crises that unfolded in 2016 between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as in 2017 between Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

In the initial phase, there has been a reduction in hostilities between the Saudi and Iranian factions. Since the occurrence of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 (Bakhash, 1984), Saudi Arabia and Iran have experienced geopolitical and ethnic/sectarian conflicts, leading to a state of discord between the two nations. The bilateral relations between the two nations have remained closely intertwined since the onset of the Arab Spring in 2011. Prior to cutting relations in 2016, Chen and Shen (2021) assert that they engaged in proxy competition in Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen. Multiple rounds of negotiations have taken place in Iraq since 2021 between the two parties, with the expectation of an imminent restoration of diplomatic relations. The protracted conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran has had a detrimental impact on regional stability in the Gulf and the broader Middle East. The amelioration of bilateral relations, particularly between Iran and the Arab world, as

well as among Arab nations, has led to a notable thawing in diplomatic ties. This development holds considerable strategic importance.

Furthermore, there has been a decrease in tensions between the faction supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood, spearheaded by Turkey, and the faction opposing the Muslim Brotherhood, spearheaded by Saudi Arabia. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood occupies a crucial position in the ongoing battle between the two factions. During the period from 2012 to 2014, Turkey and Qatar provided assistance to the Muslim Brotherhood, whereas Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates expressed opposition towards the group. This divergence in stance occurred during a time when the Muslim Brotherhood briefly attained power in Egypt, only to be subsequently ousted by the military under the leadership of Sisi. The aforementioned event further intensified the already strained diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Qatar in the year 2017. Saudi Arabia terminated diplomatic relations with Qatar and implemented economic measures after Qatar, along with Turkey, expressed support for the Muslim Brotherhood (Liu and Zhao, 2018). Since the year 2021, Turkey's diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt have experienced a notable improvement. Since the year 2022, there have been several instances of significant diplomatic exchanges between the leaders of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. These interactions have resulted in the establishment of various cooperation agreements. These developments indicate a potential resolution to the conflict between the factions commonly referred to as the "pro-Muslim Brotherhood camp" and the "anti-Muslim Brotherhood camp."

The Middle East is currently undergoing a broad trend of improving international ties following an extended period of instability. Numerous risks, though, persist undetected: Firstly, it is important to note that the negative impact of the United States in the region remains unchanged. The United States' persistent encouragement of regional confrontations, such as urging countries to address Iran, constructing a military alliance system, and irresponsibly withdrawing troops from Afghanistan and Iraq, has impeded internal endeavours to reorganise diplomatic dynamics in the Middle East. One of the key concerns pertains to the delicate nature of global diplomatic ties at a regional level. Numerous obstacles persist in the endeavour to alleviate tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, while the fundamental disparities among the United States, Israel, and Iran continue to be profound. The facilitation of diplomatic relations among nations in the Middle East is impeded by the enduring presence of profound divergences among regional states about sensitive issues such as Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Iraq. The reconstruction of regional dynamics in the Middle East is hindered by several significant issues. These include the marginalisation of the Palestinian issue as the central concern in the region and the recurring conflicts between Palestinians and Israelis. The United States has exhibited a greater inclination towards Israel and demonstrates a reduced readiness or capacity to engage in peace negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis. Israel's strategic approach of normalising relations with Arab countries, as seen by the establishment of diplomatic ties with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan under the Abraham Agreement between 2020 and 2021, has resulted in the further marginalisation of the Palestinian issue (Liu, 2022a).

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES COEXIST IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION OF MIDDLE EAST COUNTRIES

To attain national revitalization and prosperity, several Middle Eastern countries have looked to economic development. Many different ideologies and political systems have been tried in the Middle East, from capitalism and socialism to nationalism and Islamic revivalism. Unfortunately, most nations' development initiatives have failed and there are just a handful of proven development templates. However, a vicious cycle of violence and setbacks in development has emerged, making the achievement of both peace and development a pipe dream for many in the Middle East. The people of the Arab world attempted, once again, during the Arab Spring, to push for political and economic reform and progress. The wave of popular protest, however, did not only fail to achieve its political and economic goals but also led to the collapse of some Arab countries' regimes or created new turmoil and conflict and intensified inherent contradictions within the Middle Eastern countries due to complex internal and external factors.

Development and reform have been chosen as strategic priority by Middle Eastern countries in recent years, following a long period of painful exploration and setbacks. The Middle Eastern countries are widely varying in their stages of growth and transition. The beginning and stalemate of the Russia-Ukraine conflict have presented significant new opportunities for, and serious problems to, countries in the Middle East, particularly in regards to the global energy market and food security.

DEVELOPMENT AS THE COMMON CHOICE OF MIDDLE EAST COUNTRIES

The Middle Eastern countries may have many contrasts, but they share a common goal: to advance economically. The countries in the Middle East can be loosely classified into four groups based on their level of

political stability and other measures of economic progress. The United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia are all examples of the first category, which consists of countries that actively support and pursue reform and development. These nations are reliable sources of energy and have stable economies and, in most cases, monarchies. Following the uprisings of the Arab Spring, many Gulf states have adopted "post-oil era" development plans to spur economic and social change, such as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, the United Arab Emirates' Centenary 2071, Oman's Vision 2040, Kuwait's Vision 2035, and Qatar's Vision 2030. The second category includes Arab Spring success stories like Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen. Stability and people's livelihoods have improved thanks to the political and economic rehabilitation underway in these countries. In the third category are the nations hit by the second wave of the Arab Spring in 2018-2019, such as Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon, and others. There is a lot of pressure on these countries to adapt while they are still in the midst of the transition era, but the need for development and change is great. Countries like Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Iraq fall into the third category because they have experienced severe violence and volatility as a result of the Arab Spring and ongoing external intervention. All of these countries are dealing with the challenges of post-war reconstruction and national change while also experiencing a pressing need for internal stability and growth (Liu, 2022c).

THE RUSSIA–UKRAINE CONFLICT BRINGS BOTH OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES TO DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Effects of rising energy prices on individual Middle Eastern countries have been mixed (Liu 2022b). One bright aspect is that energy exporting nations are benefiting economically and politically from the price hikes. On the other hand, this situation could have a chilling effect on the countries' efforts to diversify their economies over the medium and long terms. Rising global oil and gas prices since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine conflict have benefited Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries by improving their financial situation, strengthening their position in the global energy market, and even boosting the global economy (Tang 2022). But the long-term development goals, especially the "post-oil era" development visions, of the Gulf Arab countries will be impacted by the rise in oil prices. Indeed, the persistent drop in oil prices and the dilemma of the old oil economy in the decade prior to the Russia-Ukraine conflict served as the impetus for the economic change of the Gulf countries. Therefore, the financial strain on the Gulf countries will likely be reduced for a time due to the increase in oil and gas prices brought about by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, thereby diminishing the drive for their economic diversification. Generally speaking, most energy-producing countries in Central and East Africa have been hit worse by the spike in oil prices, both politically and economically. One could argue that energy-importing countries in the Middle East have had an already heavy burden increased by the sharp increase in oil prices. However, the rising cost of transporting grain and other goods due to rising energy prices would further exacerbate the food crisis.

Second, there is a higher chance of a food crisis, which will put transitioning countries' ability to govern to the test, and there is also a higher chance of a third wave of the Arab Spring. More than half of the wheat consumed in the Arab world comes from Russia and Ukraine, with Russia providing 34.4% and Ukraine 15.9%, according to a report dated March 2022. As soon as the crisis between Russia and Ukraine broke out, food security in the Arab world became an acute concern (Han 2022). Countries in the Middle East that experienced the Arab Spring because of the elimination of food subsidies and inflation, including Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Syria, Sudan, and Lebanon, and Iran, whose economic difficulties are worsening, are at risk of large-scale public protests because of the food crisis. Since 2022, political and social instability in various Middle Eastern countries has intensified due to protests over rising food and energy prices (Tang 2022). Most Middle Eastern countries have had a hard time developing since the Arab Spring and the COVID-19 pandemic problem occurred at the same time. The economic and social crisis in the Middle East, especially in the transitioning Arab countries, was exacerbated by the food crisis, which in turn was exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

As a conclusion, the number of non-Middle Eastern superpowers with influence in the region has expanded since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war, and the power game between these superpowers has heated up. The dynamics of the region have been shifting in a positive direction, with less conflict between key regional powers, warmer international ties, and a heightened commitment to independence and development change among regional countries. However, we can't deny the destructive effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on the Middle East. The Middle East continues to face significant problems, including a more intense competition between major countries, a stalemate over regional hotspots, and mounting pressure on regional national government.

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