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War in Ukraine

War against Ukraine: a disaster for Africa too

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The invasion of Ukraine by Putin's army will have consequences for Africa. The most obvious risk is that of an economic and food crisis which risks hitting the continent head-on. This invasion also highlights political ruptures, particularly in France's African backyard, which illustrate its weakening in Africa.

As the site of the *Madagascar Tribune* points out, there was an incessant parade of Russian and Western diplomats at the presidential palace in Anosy. [1] The goal was to try to influence Madagascar during the vote at the United Nations General Assembly on March 2 concerning the condemnation of the invasion of Ukraine. In the end, the Big Island joined the 17 African countries that abstained. Although it was expected that Mali and the Central African Republic would refuse to condemn Russia, which is now their leading military partner, more surprising was the vote in the same direction of Senegal, Togo, Cameroon, and the Republic of the Congo, and the non-participation in the ballot of Burkina Faso and Guinea. Traditionally these countries were in symbiosis with France, the former colonial power. As for the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF), considered the armed wing of French diplomacy, it refused to take a position. This illustrates the specific crisis of tricolor imperialism in Africa.

Fed up with the West

The fact that half of the countries of the continent refuse to condemn Russia reveals a certain resentment vis-à-vis the West. Some even speak of revenge against NATO, which had attacked Libya to bring down the Gaddafi regime, which benefited from a popularity that was usurped, certainly, but very real. It was annoying to see a significant mobilization for Ukraine, which has never been appropriate for wars as deadly as those of Sudan, Ethiopia or Cameroon. For some, it is a kind of satisfaction to see a man capable of opposing the power of the European Union and the USA. Moreover, the scandalous behaviour of the treatment of African and Asian refugees from Ukraine and the differentiated reception between Ukrainians and other refugees have laid bare racism in Europe. This is how some of the African leaders have stuck to the feelings of their people, especially since many countries now maintain commercial and military relations with both Russia and Western countries or are preparing to do so.

A major economic risk

This shows a prudence that is very appropriate, because the economic crisis is likely to hit the continent hard. Already, African economies are struggling to emerge from the health crisis linked to Covid-19. The decline in global demand leading to lower demand for raw materials, the virtual shutdown of tourism, the weakening of global value chains, and the nearly 40 per cent reduction in FDI (foreign direct investment) have weakened the economic health of African countries.

The war provoked by Putin will have consequences for all African countries, even if they will be differentiated. Oil and gas producing countries such as Nigeria, Angola and Algeria will benefit from the rise in prices, but they risk being quickly overtaken by the shortage of agricultural products because they are major importers of foodstuffs. The other agriculture-oriented African countries will be affected by extremely large increases in the price of energy. In any case, given the weakness of the treasuries of the countries of the continent, the shocks are likely to be violent for the populations.

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Already the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) points out that more than thirty African countries are already in a situation of food tension. The causes are multiple. These may be conflicts such as in the Central African Republic, in Niger, in Chad, in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), in Ethiopia, in South Sudan. Climate disturbances lead to droughts - this is the case in Kenya, Somalia, in the south of Madagascar - torrential rains as in Burundi, Djibouti, Congo or cyclones experienced by Mozambique and the Eastern region of Madagascar.

The World Food Programme (WFP) sounded the alarm on the food stress situation in April for many countries. The risk today with the war initiated by Putin is a large-scale famine in Africa.

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from the weekly [Anticapitaliste](#).

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[1] "Madagascar summoned to condemn the Russian invasion in Ukraine? », madagascar-tribune.com, March 1, 2022.