



The Implications of the Russia–Ukraine War on Sustainable Development Goals in Africa

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Abstract

The existing discourses on the Russia–Ukraine war mainly focus on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and the implications for the global economy. There is a lack of policy and scholarly attention to how the war threatens the prospects for realising Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Underpinned by a critical document analysis of secondary sources available in academic and grey literature and focusing on Africa, the article explores various global challenges ensuing from the crisis. It demonstrates how such challenges impact prospects for achieving SDGs in Africa. Using the first two SDGs as an example, the study found that with the disruption of the global supply chain by the war and the international sanctions imposed on Russia, Africa now experiences food commodity and energy shortages, soaring inflation, and commodity price hikes which now threatens to worsen poverty and hunger. The article recommends that Africa prioritise structural change and regional cooperation, reconsidering the global financial system and how development finance is structured and maintaining a steady commitment to building resilience. Future research could be focused on the effectiveness of non-sanctions-based conflict resolutions.

Keywords Conflict · Russo–Ukrainian war · Russia–Ukraine · Russian invasion · Sustainable development goals

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1 Introduction

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia on 24 February 2022 came when the world was still recuperating from the COVID-19 pandemic, which had destroyed both lives and livelihoods. The advent of the Russia–Ukraine war and the sanctions imposed on Russia by the international community emerged to shatter prospects for a quick global recovery from the pandemic. Various narratives exist on the reasons for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. One narrative promoted by Russia and its allies, as well as some political analysts, is that Ukraine is being used by the United States of America to compromise the national security of Russia. Russia also believes that Ukraine was using the military to oppress Russian-speaking citizens in separatist regions loyal to the Russian government, thus, committing genocide against its citizens (Ehsas 2022). To support this narrative, Russia also believes that its ambition for a Northern Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) membership in Ukraine is a threat to its national security since this will be able NATO to expand eastward to its border, thereby posing an existential threat (Ozili 2022a; Walker 2022). Russia claims that these possibilities justify its invasion of Ukraine.

The other narrative is pushed forward by the West and other pro-West media outlets. According to this narrative, Russia is an undemocratic state run by a dictatorship and now feels threatened by Ukraine’s pursuit of democracy (Ehsas 2022). It is argued that Ukraine is being invaded for resisting Russian influence and seeking partnerships with democratic countries, and seeking to join NATO and the European Union (Balbaa et al. 2022). It is reported that Russia resists abhors Ukraine’s ambition for democracy because it could threaten Russia’s national security (Ozili 2022a; Walker 2022). Whatever the reasons for the war, what remains clear is that the war has had huge socio-economic implications, which are experienced beyond the borders of these two warring countries.

One way to understand the gravity of the severity of the war is to explore its implications on SDGs. Russia and Ukraine are critical sources of food commodities for Africa. North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia), Nigeria in West Africa, Ethiopia and Sudan in East Africa, and South Africa account for 80 per cent of wheat imports from the two countries (Mlaba 2022; One Africa 2022). After the United States and Saudi Arabia, Russia is also the world’s third-largest producer of oil, much of which is exported to Africa. The disruption of fuel has resulted in soaring prices, thus, increasing operational costs for Africa, in which 70% of the population relies on agriculture and other related activities as a major source of income or livelihood (Ndhlovu, 2018, 2020). The disruption of the movement of food commodities to Africa is already a huge concern in the continent, with the number of people undernourished growing in recent years (FAO 2017). The war, therefore, could have huge socio-economic implications for the realisation of SDGs on the continent.

Available debates on the Russia–Ukraine war rarely touch on SDGs. Balboa et al. (2022) explore the implications of the war on the global economy but do not link their discussion with SDGs. Duho et al. (2022) explored the war’s

implications on Africa, focusing much on fuel energy, but did not broaden the discussion to aspects of food shortages ensuring fuel shortages. Ehsas (2022) painted in broad strokes on the world canvas but did not consider that the war could worsen hunger and poverty, which had already been a problem in developing economies such as Africa. Mlaba (2022) posits the question of the impacts of the Russia–Ukraine war on Africa but does not further explore issues of poverty and hunger, which are concerns of the first two SDGs. Overall, no study has explored how the war threatens to frustrate global efforts to achieve the SDGs by 2030. With a focus on Africa, this study problematises the war in the context of the SDGs.

This study (i) explores the implications of the Russia–Ukraine war for the achievement of SDGs in Africa with a focus on goals 1 and 2 and (ii) proposes strategies through which the challenges ensuing from the war can be dealt with to shield efforts towards the realisation of these goals. This study could further stimulate and refocus policy and scholarly attention on SDGs after increased focus on the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia–Ukraine war. The study could also demonstrate to African countries the value of self-sufficiency concerning essential commodities, such as food – the centre of goals 1 and 2. As a result, the study could provoke African governments to explore and adopt more home-based strategies for ensuring essential commodities, such as food. The study contributes both to the literature on food systems and sustainable development (SD) and to the literature on conflict resolution. Thus, the study contributes to the emerging body of literature on food systems and the Russia–Ukraine war. The study also highlights more concrete methods of dealing with conflicts so that they do not threaten the achievement of long-term development efforts.

The next section reviews existing discourses on wars, followed by a literature review on SDGs under sub-sections. The paper then outlines the research methodology for the study. Thereafter, the study's results are discussed, and proposals for dealing with challenges threatening SDGs are made. Lastly, concluding remarks are made.

2 Existing Discourses of the Implications of Wars

Wars always have huge socio-economic (Koubi 2005; Ozili 2022b; Walker 2022). Historical evidence shows that war causes huge human suffering and has significant economic and social costs (Rodrik 1999) due to human life loss, infrastructure destruction, labour force disruption, weakening of government institutions, political instability, and increased uncertainty (Ehsas 2022; Fang et al. 2020). The effects of these losses continue for years in the aftermath of wars, making it difficult for affected populations to escape the 'conflict trap' (Cerra and Saxena 2008).

The literature on the economic consequences of war is conclusive. Wars harm economic development. In particular, wars affect economic productivity by devastating cities and infrastructures, interrupting economic activities, deterring investment, and curtailing government spending (Collier 1999; Rodrik 1999), thus hampering economic growth (Nfdhlovu 2020; Ray and Esteban 2017). The effects of war could

have long-term costs (Cerra and Saxena 2008). Novta and Pugacheva (2021) found that the impacts continued beyond the war period (up to ten years after the conflict outbreak) and had substantial long-term costs for economic growth, reducing private consumption, investment, sector value addition, and trade.

The macroeconomic costs of conflicts are reflected in financial and structural losses, which negatively influence tax revenues (Rodrik 1999). This is supported by Fang et al. (2020), who observed the impact of wars on fiscal management, particularly public expenditure allocation, shifting between growth priorities and security priorities. High conflict intensity is associated with high military and low capital expenditures. Koubi (2005) avers that the costs of interstate wars for economic growth are overwhelming. Ozili (2022a) observed that cross-country differences in economic growth are analytically related to war's existence and characteristics. It was further observed that post-war economic performance positively depends on the severity and the duration of the war (Ehsas 2022). Vulnerable populations in countries are particularly exposed to the consequences of wars due to price hikes, as they dedicate a larger share of their income to food and energy (Ben Hassen and El Bilali 2022). Duho et al. (2022) explored the effects of civil wars on many economies. They discovered that wars harm economic fundamentals and that the response by the international community to civil wars exerts powerful effects on economic growth. Collier (1999) developed a model to test the economic effects of all civil wars since 1960 and observed that after long civil wars, the economy recovers rapidly. In contrast, after short wars, the economy continues to decline. Doho et al. (2022) observed that wars are very costly and that the estimated cost of the Iraq war to the United States over the decade ranged from \$100 billion to \$1.9 trillion.

Compared to the literature on the effects of wars on economic development, the number of studies that consider their social aspects is limited. Besides migration issues, wars negatively influence household welfare and net income (Ehsas 2022; Moellendorf 2020). During violent occasions, citizens usually face a trade-off between welfare and security. Wars also harm education, health, and labour market outcomes. The Russia–Ukraine war disrupted the global supply chain and, thus, caused food and energy shortages. This resulted in soaring prices for commodities globally. One of the regions most affected due to its over-reliance on commodities acquired abroad is Africa. The closure of key port operations in the Black Sea and the sanctions on Russia have destabilised commodity flows between Russia and Africa (Berahab 2022).

Therefore, The war has generated immediate implications for food security, negatively impacting harvesting and transportation and severely affecting food supplies and pricing (ESCWA, FAO, UNEP and WFP 2022). Military actions have both short- and long-term concerns about Russia's and Ukraine's capability to transport products inside and outside their borders, particularly since some ports were closed and railroads in Ukraine were destroyed (Glauber and Laborde 2022). The war affected grain shipments from Ukraine, especially maize (Mlaba 2022). About 95% of grain exports in Ukraine are sent by sea via the ports of Odesa, Mariupol, and Kherson, which have suffered substantial damage. Furthermore, all Black Sea ports were blocked, disrupting exports (Bentley 2022). Shipping grain by rail also became difficult due to a lack of an operable railway system (Wilson et al. 2022). Reuters

(2022) revealed that on 17 May 2022, four traders proclaimed that about 300,000 tonnes of Ukrainian wheat contracted by Egypt's state grains buyer for delivery in February and March got stranded in Ukraine.

Secondly, the war is preventing farmers from working in their fields, and the conscription and population displacement resulted in labour shortages (Pörtner et al. 2022). Disruptions to critical public services have also negatively affected agricultural activities (Monsalve Suárez et al. 2022). This was aggravated by reduced access to and availability of critical agricultural inputs, such as fertilisers (FAO 2022a). The war also disrupted spring planting campaigns and crop harvesting (FAO 2022a). One-third of crops and agricultural land could not be harvested or cultivated in 2022 (FAO 2022b). All this has enormous implications for food access, utilisation and availability. In addition, this also worsens poverty in Ukraine and Russia and in countries that rely on these countries for their food needs.

Thirdly, due to economic sanctions on Russia, the country is failing to export its products (Glauber and Laborde, 2022). The financial sanctions imposed on Russia have significantly devalued, impeding productivity and development while raising agricultural output costs (Dongyu 2022). Moreover, in April 2022, Russia promised to limit agricultural and food exports to only 'friendly' nations in response to Western sanctions. The restriction would exacerbate the global food-supply shortfall (Ben Hassen & El Bilali 2022). A continuing war and sanctions continue to raise prices and weaken food security for hundreds of millions of people (Rice et al. 2022). Consequently, this has substantial implications for achieving SDGs worldwide.

3 Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals: A Literature Review

Notwithstanding the existing debates on the concept of SD, the concept can generally be understood as "the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Mhlanga 2021:3). Two key issues underlie the concept of SD: First, the importance of prioritising the needs of people, especially the fundamental needs of the underprivileged. The second is an analysis of the limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the capacity of the environment to meet both the needs of the present and those of the future (Lisk and Šehović 2020; Mhlanga 2021; Mhlanga 2022a; Parris and Kates 2003; Rogers et al. 2012; Ullah et al. 2021). Available research suggests that all developed or developing nations should explain the aims and objectives of social and economic development considering sustainability (Hák et al. 2016; Rong et al. 2021; Shiyi et al. 2023) and whether the country uses a centrally planned or a market-oriented economic structure (Rogers et al. 2012). Another crucial aspect of SD is its different meanings depending on the country in question. Mhlanga (2022b) defines development as the steady alteration of a society and its economy.

In 2015, the UN adopted the SDGs as a global call to action to eradicate poverty, protect the environment, and ensure that by the year 2030, the world will be at peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs were integrated when they were established by the

UN. SDGs are predicated on the premise that any development should aim to maximise the equilibrium between social, economic, and environmental sustainability. It is believed that the SDGs were formulated with the intention of “putting an end to poverty, hunger, AIDS, and discrimination against women and girls.” (Sachs et al. 2019). The goals also emphasise the importance of innovative and financial capacities and knowledge and technology as important to accomplishing the goals (Sachs et al. 2019; Mhlanga 2022b).

The available research on SDGs covers aspects such as the strategies that can be implemented to achieve these goals and the challenges that may be experienced (Hák et al. 2016; Okpevra 2021; Rogers et al. 2012; Wang et al. 2023). According to Hák, Janouková, and Moldan (2016), at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York, an Open Working Group formed by the UN General Assembly formulated a series of worldwide SDGs that contains 17 goals and 169 targets. This set of goals was referred to as the SDGs. The term “Global Goals for Sustainable Development” refers to these SDGs. However, Hák et al. (2016) aver that users are frequently unable to accurately determine how correctly the indicators are used to estimate the occurrences being watched. A preliminary set of 330 indicators was released in March 2015 after the SDGs were formed. In addition, some SDGs are based on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which came before them, while others include whole new concepts. Thus, Hák et al. (2016) emphasise “the necessity of operationalising the SDGs aims and evaluating the relevance of the indicators.” Sachs et al. (2019) state that many stakeholders do not share a clear view of how the 17 SDGs might be implemented. According to Sachs et al. (2019), every transition outlines prioritised investment opportunities and regulatory issues, calling for behaviour by well-defined administration elements working in partnership with companies and civil society. In addition, each transformation calls for a different set of actors to take action. Therefore, it is conceivable for reforms to be quantified inside the government structures while respecting the significant interdependencies among the 17 SDGs.

Globe is experiencing a steep rise in wars in recent years, with 62% of those in extreme poverty estimated to live in countries at risk from high levels of violence by 2030. In the last two decades, the world has seen a rise in extremist attacks worldwide; the Arab Spring, the ongoing conflict in Gaza, the rise of terrorist groups in Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and parts of Africa; several mass shootings and incidents of civil unrest in America–Paris–Dhaka–Belgium–Turkey, and most recently, the Russia–Ukraine war. In 2014 alone, 13.9 million people became newly displaced—four times the number of the previous year. Worldwide, there were 19.5 million refugees (up from 16.7 million in 2013), 38.2 million were displaced inside their own countries (up from 33.3 million in 2013), and 1.8 million people were awaiting the outcome of claims for asylum (against 1.2 million in 2013). Most alarmingly, however, it showed that over half of the world’s refugees are children. The rate of children leaving primary school in conflict-affected countries reached 50% in 2011, which accounts for 28.5 million children, showing the impact of unstable societies on one of the major goals of the post-2015 agenda: education. Syria is the world’s biggest producer of internally displaced people (7.6 million) and refugees (3.88 million at the end of 2014). Afghanistan (2.59 million) and Somalia (1.1

million) are the following biggest refugee source countries (UNHCR 2015). Almost 9 of every ten refugees (86%) were in regions and countries considered economically less developed (Kumar and Roy 2018).

To mitigate the negative impact of violence and insecurity on development, the 2030 Agenda includes peace as a cross-cutting issue as well as SDG 16, to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.” However, measuring progress toward such a goal and deciphering universal targets and indicators at the national level is a severe challenge. SDG goal 16 has the highest number of targets (10) and the lowest number of means of implementation (2), making the pursuit of peace, justice, and good governance, destined to remain the stuff of romantic hopes. The current study qualitatively explores the implications of the Russia–Ukraine war for achieving SDGs in Africa, focusing on goals 1 and 2.

4 Materials and Methods

This article straddles two fields of study: peace and security and sustainable development. Therefore, the most suitable methodological approach would allow for an in-depth understanding of how these fields interact regarding the issues under investigation. It was in this considered view that the authors settled for the semi-systematic literature review methodology. This methodology suits topics without a complete systematic review process (Snyder 2019). In this article, reviewing all the available papers could not be possible. So, a research strategy of this nature was needed. The approach allowed the authors to link the war and peace debates with sustainable development prospects. Most importantly, the approach was suitable for identifying and apprehending the avenues through which the attainment of sustainable development goals can be undermined by the Russo-Ukrainian standoff.

After an initial literature review, the authors found key terms such as the Russia–Ukraine war, the Russo-Ukrainian war, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and the Russian offensive on Ukraine. These keywords were then used to search for relevant articles for analysis. The search was conducted in the Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Researchgate databases. A total of 96 papers were identified using this method (Web of Science – 37; Google Scholar – 33; Researchgate 26). The search was done in August 2022. The selection was further narrowed down using specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were that articles had to be published between 28 February 2022 and July 2022. A total of 52 articles remained after the implementation of this inclusion criteria. Another 20 articles were eliminated when only articles written in English were considered the study was being conducted in English.

Furthermore, the articles also needed to focus on SDGs 1 and 2. After the screening, a total of 32 articles were eventually selected for analysis. These included 15 scholarly publications, ten personal documents (opinion pieces, blogs, and newspapers), and seven policy documents. A total of 14 articles came from the Web of Science, 11 from Google Scholar, and seven from Researchgate. The key research questions to which the selected articles were subjected were (i) What are the implications

of the Russia–Ukraine war on SDG 1 in Africa? and (ii) What are the implications of the Russia–Ukraine war on SDG 2 in Africa? Thematic data analysis was used in the study. The two SDGs selected for the study were used to frame the themes of the study. The articles are summarised in Table 1, and their complete details are provided in the list of references.

Content analysis was used to study what is contained in the text. The texts were first coded into the three main themes based on the debates in the literature’s opening review and confirmed through conceptual abstraction by the authors. The key aspects raised in the review were then summarised into three themes which are structured as follows: Smart technologies usage to combat GHG emissions, efficient water usage using smart technologies, and food waste reduction using smart technologies. The presentation of findings and discussion are structured according to these themes. The main focus was on the hospitality industry’s impact on climate change and not on what climate change does to the industry. Semi-systematic review enabled the authors to infuse available facts and debates with sectorial expertise abstraction to construct an argument that was unclear in the available papers. The methodology process is summarised in Fig. 1.

5 Results and Discussion

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine significantly affects all 17 SDGs, notably in Africa. However, For this study, only the first two goals were chosen as examples.

Table 1 List of selected papers

Russo-Ukrainin war and SDG	Russo-Ukrainin war and SDG 2
Sen (2022)	Duho et al., (2022)
Lusigi (2022)	Berahab (2022)
Ben Hassen & El Bilali (2022)	Mlaba (2022)
One Africa (2022)	Walker (2022)
Balbaa et al., (2022)	Pinto (2022)
Ehsas (2022)	Ozili (2022)
Abu Hatab (2022)	Jagtap et al. (2022)
Kagan et al. (2022)	Turiel (2022)
Abend (2022)	Behnassi & El Haiba (2022a, b)
Bond (2022)	Budjeryn (2022)
Esfandabadi et al. (2022)	Kirby (2022)
Uwa et al. (2022)	Wax (2022)
UNCTAD. (2022)	Ripley (2022)
UN DESA (2022)	IMF (2022)
Villarreal (2022)	Aguilera (2022)
Ozili (2022b)	Reiley (2022)

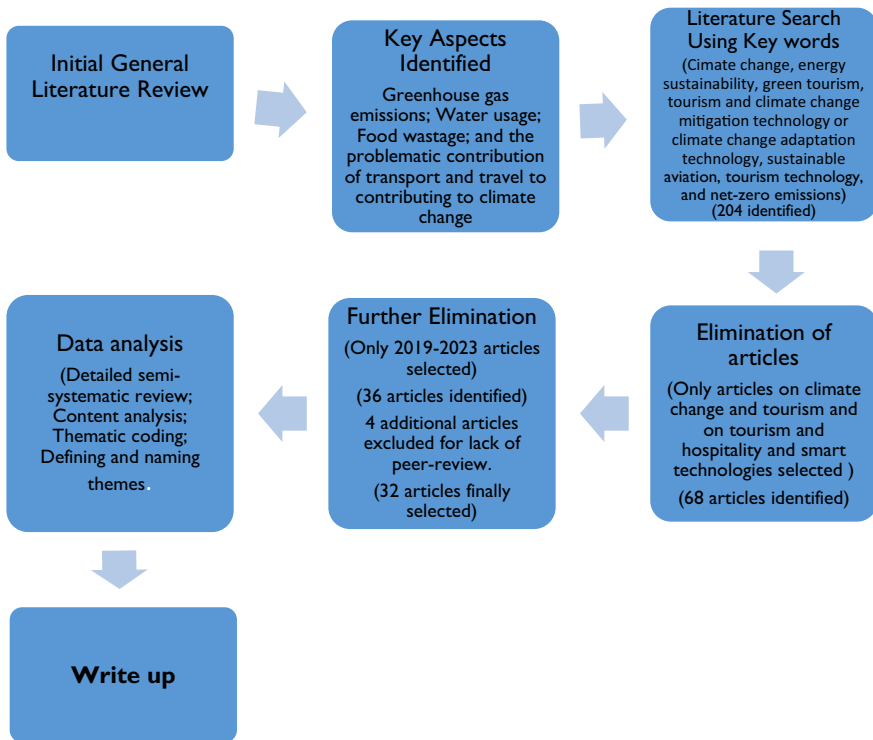


Fig. 1 Research methodology flowchart. *Source:* Authors

5.1 Russia–Ukraine War and Prospects for Poverty Elimination in Africa

Africa's promising recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has been disrupted as a result of Russia's war in Ukraine, which has led to an increase in the price of food and fuel, disruptions in the trade of goods and services, a tightening of fiscal space, constraints on green transitions, and a reduction in the flow of development finance around the world, all of which have dire consequences for the African continent (Abend 2022; Sen 2022; Lusigi 2022). The fact that some African countries rely on Russia and Ukraine to import essential goods, mainly wheat, fertilisers, and steel, is an issue. A disturbance in the flow of these products hurts the countries of Africa, for example. Luigi (2022) asserts that the actual impact on any economy is proportional to the degree to which it depends on "oil and gas exports or imports, tourism, imported grain and fertiliser", among other essential imports. There are several clear long-term ramifications, some of which include the possibility of a realignment in geopolitical power, social and economic instability, and unsustainable levels of debt, all of which are likely to result in increased inequality and a deeper level of poverty in Africa (Esfandabadi et al. 2022; Turiel 2022). The most apparent effects of the war on Africa are the recent spikes in inflation and costs of fuel and food, as well as the financial system's instability (Bond 2022; Budjeryn 2022).

Those countries with the lowest incomes are the ones which are going to suffer the most because a significant amount of their spending goes toward food and transportation. There is a high probability that food insecurity will continue, which will hurt many facets of human development, including “income, health, and education” (Kagan et al. 2022). A global crisis in the cost of living is forecast by “the United Nations Global Crisis Response Group on food, energy, and finance. This crisis will be caused by rising food costs, rising energy prices, and tightening financial conditions” (Lusigi 2022). A reaction on a global scale is required to stabilise commodity markets, address the rising cost of debt, and simultaneously increase the capacity of individuals and countries to cope with the situation. According to Sen (2022), Kenya purchased over 30 per cent of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine in 2021; for instance, the manufacture of bread in Kenya, which is the third most-eaten food item in that country, would be impacted if there was a disruption in the supply chain. In the year 2021, Russia accounted for 44 per cent of Cameroon’s total imports of fertilisers (Behnassi and El Haiba 2022a, b; Sen 2022). It is believed that the war would devastate crop production in West Africa and jeopardise the region’s ability to provide food for its people. In a similar vein, Ukraine is the source of 60 per cent of Ghana’s imports of iron ore and steel (Duho et al. 2022). The building industry in Ghana is already experiencing substantial difficulties because of the war (Kirby 2022; Uwa et al. 2022).

Ben Hassen and El Bilali (2022) argued that because the conflict between Russia and Ukraine involves two major agricultural powers, it has various negative socio-economic implications that are now being felt internationally and could get significantly worse, particularly for global food security. The conflict occurred at the wrong moment for global food markets because of disruptions in the supply chain brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic, strong global demand, and poor harvests in some countries. This is because food prices were already high due to these factors. Ben Hassen and El Bilali (2022) also argued that it is essential to understand the overall impact on global food security to comprehend how disruptions in global food and fertiliser markets brought on by war or other forms of armed conflict might influence the price and availability of these commodities. According to Berahab (2022), the war has resulted in immediate and far-reaching consequences on global food security. As a result of the war, exports from Ukraine have been halted, labour shortages have been caused because of conscription and population displacement, access to fertilisers has been restricted, and the prospects for future harvests are uncertain (Mlaba 2022; Wax 2022). Ben Hassen and El Bilali (2022) came to the same conclusion, namely that the export capability of Ukraine has been reduced. Second, shortages of workers were brought on by mandatory military service and forced population relocation. Thirdly, getting access to essential agricultural items like fertilisers might be difficult. This is a problem (One Africa 2022; Walker 2022).

Another issue that was brought to light by Ben Hassen and El Bilali (2022) was that the conflict produced a panic buying movement on both the national and individual levels. This was an issue that was brought to light by both of these authors. This movement has the potential to put the execution of the SDGs in peril, particularly SDG 1, which aims to eliminate poverty; SDG 2, which aims to eliminate hunger; and SDG 12, which aims to promote responsible consumption and production.

According to Balbaa et al. (2022), the consequences of conflict on food security are worsened by various underlying rigidities, vulnerabilities, and inefficiencies in the global food systems. This is making the situation even more precarious for people around the world. Because of this, Ben Hassen and El Bilali (2022) believe that the transition toward food systems that are healthy, egalitarian, and ecologically sustainable must be bolstered by the adoption of reforms and policies that are both immediate and long-term in nature. They believe this is necessary to ensure that the transition is successful.

5.2 Russia–Ukraine War and Prospects for Hunger Reduction in Africa

Pinto (2022) avers that Africa is a net food importer due to the war. This rise in food insecurity reflects poverty, warfare, displacement, and poor mobility in many states. This is placing a lot of strain on different nations, which now struggle to meet their efforts to alleviate hunger (Berahab 2022). The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has made the continent more vulnerable to fluctuations in the price of grain and fertiliser (Ehsas 2022). The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that between 2018 and 2020, Russia accounted for 32 per cent of the total wheat imports into Africa, while Ukraine accounted for 12 per cent of those imports. Countries in North Africa, such as Tunisia and Egypt, are dependent; nevertheless, the economic precariousness of countries in sub-Saharan Africa enhances their level of vulnerability (Pinto 2022). It is widely held that East Africa is more dependent on grain imports from Russia and Ukraine than other regions. According to the UNCTAD, the countries of Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Somalia are the sources of more than fifty per cent of the wheat imported into those countries (UNCTAD 2022).

In addition, food insecurity was already on the rise throughout the region because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the civil war in Ethiopia, below-average rainfall, and locusts. Several African countries, including Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique, and Cameroon, have reported significant price rises for wheat (Mlaba 2022). Since February 2022, as was previously mentioned, extensive complaints about rising food prices have been heard in Kenya, a country in which more than forty per cent of the wheat that is consumed originates from the region surrounding the Black Sea (Reiley 2022; UN DESA 2022). Cassava, a crop grown locally, has been recommended to Cameroonian inhabitants by their government as a suitable substitute for wheat due to the country's ongoing food problems. Food prices have increased by a whopping fifty per cent in Nigeria (Duho et al. 2022). Those living in urban poverty who are more prone to consume imported grains already feel these effects. Nevertheless, in contrast to the pandemic, when the urban poor were the most vulnerable to the effects of inflation on food prices, rural people are now also being adversely affected. They are compelled to cut back on their usage of fertilisers or completely stop using them, which lowers the productivity of the land.

In addition, rising oil prices drive up the cost of transportation, which is an essential factor in determining food security (Ehsas 2022; Ozili 2022a). Even oil-exporting nations such as Nigeria and Angola struggle to mitigate the immediate effects

of rising food prices. Grain prices have reached an all-time high, as recorded by the Food Price Index maintained by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Over the period spanning from 2019 to March 2022, the prices of cereal and fertiliser increased by 48 and 35 per cent, respectively. The current trajectory of events indicates that commodities conflicts will play a significant role in the not-too-distant future. This potential is especially detrimental to sub-Saharan Africa, which already contends with enormous demographic issues, excessive dependence on imports, economic precariousness, and political unpredictability. More than 1.1 billion people live in 46 different nations in Sub-Saharan Africa, which accounts for most of the continent (Lusigi 2022; Pinto 2022). Several variables, including a worldwide health crisis and the economic measures needed to address it, volatility in the energy market, and inflation, all of which were compounded by the consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, are to blame for the recent surge in the price of grain and fertiliser (Pinto 2022). Rising costs of grains have been the primary contributor to inflation in a region where food costs make up an estimated forty per cent of the total consumption cost. Food is an inelastic good, indicating that a price rise does not cause a corresponding decrease in demand.

To survive, people need food. In this context, the consequences may be particularly detrimental in urban areas home to many low-income households. These households have a low level of savings and are reliant on uncertain sources of income; as a result, they are highly susceptible to price swings (Sen 2022, Pinto 2022). Following the beginning of the conflict, the price of certain types of fertiliser more than doubled, eventually hitting an all-time high. This occurred in conjunction with an increase in the cost of natural gas and fears of disruptions in production, transportation, and sanctions. Before they invaded Ukraine in February, the Russian government had already restricted the ammonium nitrate export. In addition, the Chinese government plans to prohibit all fertiliser exports beginning in the summer of 2021 to ensure adequate supplies are maintained within the country (Abu Hatab 2022; Pinto 2022). Luigi (2022) proposed that supply restrictions were the root cause of food and fuel insecurity. This increase in food and fuel insecurity is being caused by supply restrictions that extend beyond the crisis that is currently unfolding. There was a crisis that occurred before this crisis in terms of the availability of food (Ripley 2022).

Variability in the climate, insufficient recovery of global and regional supply systems, and low productivity are the fundamental causes of the problem. In 2022, a significant portion of the Horn of Africa was subjected to below-average rainfall, while several regions in West Africa and Southern Africa were hit with high precipitation levels and flooding. The other difficulty is that inadequate infrastructure means that food that is available in one region of a country or continent cannot reach other regions of the same country or continent where it is required the most. A significant portion of Africa's agricultural sector is performing below its potential due to low productivity from insufficient input and technology utilisation. In addition, a low degree of agro-processing and insufficient storage and strategic reserves result in significant post-harvest loss and waste.

Sen (2022) also stated that the war in Ukraine is a "clear and present risk to multilateralism" since development projects in Africa are being delayed or

cancelled due to the conflict. After all, the increased costs of projects discourage some development partners, while other partners consider redirecting cash to address the humanitarian catastrophe produced by the war in Europe. Sen suggested that major projects in Africa are either delayed or scrapped altogether because certain development partners are discouraged by the increased price of the projects. Evidence suggests that financial support for the improvement of Africa may be declining. Abu Hatab (2022) also stated that the Russian war on Ukraine in February 2022 has appeared as an economic shock to worldwide supply chains that also prefigures worrisome effects on Africa's dietary and nutritional security and continues to threaten to sidetrack national and international attempts to stop poverty and hunger and accomplish long-term SD objectives on the continent.

An early estimate of the ramifications the invasion would have for Africa's food supply systems and the continent's overall level of food security was provided by Abu Hatab (2022). Abu Hatab (2022) argued that "the timing of the invasion and the two parties involved in the conflict are two particularly aggravating factors, which explain the current and likely future impact of the invasion on Africa's food security". Both factors explain why the invasion is having such a negative impact. According to Abu Hatab (2022), the invasion causes disruptions in African food supply chains through four major channels, "the availability and prices of agricultural production inputs; domestic food price inflation; trade sanctions and other financial measures; and energy markets and shipping routes". In addition, the essay discusses the potential for social and political unrest to be stoked because of disruptions to food supply chains and increases in the prices of domestically produced foods. Behnassi and El Haiba (2022a, b) stated that there is a favourable link between food security and stability. They based their argument on several studies.

Behnassi and El Haiba (2022a, b) claimed that armed conflicts might be a primary source of food scarcity that affects places beyond the battlefield in a globalised society. Their argument was based on the fact that armed conflicts are becoming more frequent. The food crises of the last decade have brought to light the systemic problems that exist in the fight against food insecurity in environments where there is conflict. In a globalised period, Behnassi and El Haiba (2022a, b) stated that armed conflicts might be a primary source of food shortages affecting territories beyond those directly involved. According to Behnassi and El Haiba (2022a, b), the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine has highlighted preexisting systemic flaws in international food security while contributing to new instances of food insecurity. Conflicts make it more difficult for nations, households, and individuals to meet dietary requirements. These disputes can potentially disrupt actions that try to cultivate and harvest food, process and transport it, supply and market it, and so on. The effects of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine on the efficiency and adaptability of the global food supply chains were studied by Jagtap et al. (2022). Food is one of the most traded items, according to Jagtap et al. (2022), and the crisis in Ukraine, which is one of the European breadbaskets, has generated a substantial extra disruption in the global food supply chains after the impact of COVID-19. The disruption to food production, supply chains, availability, and price may have an effect that lasts for a long time.

Because of the war, Jagtap et al. (2022) feel that the availability and supply of a wide variety of raw materials and finished food items are in jeopardy. In addition, recent spikes in food prices have been observed throughout worldwide markets. In addition, Jagtap et al. (2022) argued that “the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has hurt food supply chains, having significant effects on production, sourcing, manufacturing, processing, and logistics, as well as significant shifts in demand among countries that are dependent on imports from Ukraine”. As a result of the war and the international sanctions imposed on Russia, the global supply chain has been disrupted, and as a result, Africa is currently experiencing shortages of food commodities and energy, as well as soaring inflation and increases in commodity prices, all of which threaten to make poverty and hunger in the region even worse (IMF 2022).

6 Potential Policies which Can Help in Shielding Sustainable Development Goals

Although the war is causing great harm, particularly in the potential to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty levels, several strategies can be taken to ensure that the African continent is on track toward meeting the SDGs. Figure 1 highlights some of the possible strategies.

Although the war is causing damage, especially to the ability to end hunger and reduce poverty levels, Fig. 1 shows that several strategies can be followed to ensure the continent is on track to achieving the SDGs. Some potential strategies include prioritising structural change and regional cooperation, reconsidering the global financial system and how development finance is structured, and maintaining a steady commitment to building resilience (Fig. 2).

6.1 Give Structural Change and Regional Cooperation Top Priority

Enhancing long-term resilience is needed by addressing the fundamental structural causes. Africa needs to take advantage of digital technologies and advocate for free and fair competition on a global scale. Additionally, the continent should ramp up its “support for regional integration and economic diversification and mobilise resources to fill critical gaps in technology, skills, and infrastructure” (Lusigi 2022). Concentrating on finding answers in the short term is not an appropriate reaction. The current response to inflation caused by increases in the cost of food and gasoline has not been sufficient to prevent longer-term repercussions. Several nations with excess capacity are preparing to increase their oil and gas output to make up for shortages in the market.

On the other hand, thinking focused on the short term is prevalent, and there is an excessive reliance on monetary policy instruments such as increases in interest rates. The temporary relief that will result from the decision made by numerous nations to halt food exports will only be temporary. It does not consider the interdependent relationship between our economy and our shared future. It punishes producers who cannot obtain the total value of their productivity and discourages investments



Fig. 2 Potential strategies for shielding sustainable development goals. *Source:* Authors

in production in the future, both of which are unintended consequences. As a result of the skyrocketing cost of imports, consumers and businesses that produce goods will be unable to get their hands on any goods or inputs from other countries (Lusigi 2022; Sen 2022). By prioritising structural transformation that is green, inclusive, and resilient, we can ensure that no one is left behind and that Africa is better prepared for the next crisis. This can be accomplished by tackling the structural causes at the root of these crises, which can provide an opportunity to move forward.

This can be accomplished by promoting environmentally friendly structural transformation, which will need strategic investments in long-term finance for improved economic and digital infrastructure and services, particularly in underserved and marginalised areas. This is necessary to fuel productivity growth in fundamental and developing industries, which is frequently ignored (Villarreal 2022). For instance, to address the underlying causes of poverty and inequality, we need to make investments in clean, affordable energy as well as technology and financing that are specifically geared toward micro, small, and medium enterprises that are engaged in fisheries, agriculture, small-scale mining, nature-based products, and services such as tourism (Ozili 2022b). Utilising digital transformation to address the logistical constraints that keep many groups and geographical areas behind can help inclusive structural transformation move forward. This can be accomplished by putting this transformation to use. Innovating businesspeople all over Africa are already exhibiting the ability of digital to connect firms, customers, and producers both inside and between nations. Reducing susceptibility and the impact of foreign price shocks on domestic economies can be

accomplished through resilient structural change, dependent on regional integration and collaboration across international borders. For example, regional strategic grain stockpiles and improved trade across Africa's borders can help reduce the likelihood of hungry people.

It will make groceries and other commodities more readily available and reasonably priced. It is imperative that non-tariff barriers to food commerce, such as high transportation costs, documentation, certification, and standards, be eliminated as quickly as possible. The use of African currencies in commercial transactions is made possible by payment networks such as the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System. To prevent an unhealthy level of dependency on goods imported from other countries, Africa must achieve independence and sovereignty.

6.2 Reconsideration of the Global Financial System and the Way That Development Finance is Structured

For Africa to retain a more significant part of the real worth of its strategic mineral deposits, agricultural resources, and human resources, the very first step should be to enhance the region's ability to mobilise its resources better. Africa ought to increase its investments in value addition. Benefits linked with using value-added foods include better nutrition for children and mothers, higher income for manufacturers, access to new markets, and the development of innovative methods to enhance packing and storage to reduce waste and increase food safety (Aguilera 2022). The other strategy is accomplished by improving Africa's ability to improve its ability to better mobilise its resources by increasing Africa's overall tax effort, increasing the average tax-to-GDP ratio from its current level of 17.5 per cent to 24 per cent, and doing away with tax exemptions that aren't necessary for large enterprises. When taken together, these actions will reduce the number of illegal funds flowing off the continent by roughly \$90 billion (Sen 2022).

6.3 Maintain A Steady Commitment to Building Resilience

Africa should prioritise consistently investing in resilience to develop democracy and infrastructure that is more resistant to shock because growth without resilience is not sustainable. This should be done because the development process is not linear, and various shocks can reverse advances made. Africa can become more climate-resilient through the implementation of initiatives that, among other things, make it possible for the continent to make full use of its natural resources, benefit from financial structures that are kind to the planet, and place emphasis on investing in ways that are sensitive to climate risk (Sen 2022). Africa and its development partners must invest in maintaining a steady supply of food and fuel, enhancing their productive capacity, and increasing the value-added content of their manufactured goods and exports.

7 Concluding Remarks

The current narratives on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine concentrate their attention, for the most part, on the humanitarian catastrophe in Ukraine and the repercussions for the economy of the entire world. There has not been enough attention paid, either by policymakers or academics, to how the war poses a risk to the achievement of SDGs. The article investigates various global challenges that have arisen as a direct result of the crisis, focusing on Africa. Using the first two SDGs as an example, the study discovered that because of the disruption of the global supply chain caused by the war and the international sanctions imposed on Russia, Africa is currently experiencing food commodity and energy shortages, as well as soaring inflation and price hikes for commodities, all of which threaten to make poverty and hunger more severe. The article suggests that Africa should make a structural change and regional cooperation its top priority, rethink the global financial system and how development finance is structured, and maintain a steady commitment to building resilience. These are just some of the recommendations made in the article. Possible future investigation topics include the efficacy of dispute resolution strategies that do not rely on punishments.

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