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# LEVERAGING THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT FOR AFRICA'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMAT

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## ABSTRACT
While the world was recovering from the socio-economic consequences of the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, it was confronted by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Incidentally, the conflict is not just an ordinary regional conflict, but a conflict with severe global implications because of the threat it poses to the global food and energy supply. The United Nations Global Crisis Response Group (UNGCRG) 2022 report identifies Africa as one of the regions that will be severely affected because of their heavy reliance on food imports like wheat, maize, and sunflower; agrochemicals like fertilizers including gas. Incidentally, many African countries are already experiencing price shocks and disruptions in the supply chain of food commodities, petroleum and gas resources from Europe. This therefore implies a danger ahead if drastic measures are not taken to avert the situation. Dwelling largely on secondary sources of data and the use of content analysis, the study found that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict poses great danger to world economy with African being the worst hit. With the use of SWOT analysis, the paper draws an evaluation of the African economy with a view to leverage the potential of the region to covert the misfortune into an economic fortune for the continent. These include the abundant arable land and human resources, the huge gas reserve, and the already existing policy structures amongst others, which can make the continent a major big player in the global economy. The study therefore recommended amongst others, investment in farming across the African farming communities, investment in fertilizer production and de-emphasizing reliance on importation of food commodities and energy products.

***Keywords:*** Conflict, Food Security, SWOT Analysis, War, COVID-19 Pandemic, Price Shocks, Energy Crisis

## Introduction
In the early months of 2022, while the globe struggled to recover from the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was confronted with a serious conflict of international dimension between Russia and its former ally, Ukraine. The conflict though may be regional in outlook has serious global implications because of the significant roles Russia and Ukraine play in the international economic system. For instance, Russiais the world's largest exporter of fertilizers, valued at approximately USD 18.7 billion followed by Canada (USD14.5B), China (USD12.7B), United States of America (USD8.17B), and Morocco (USD7.92B) (UNCTAD, 2022; OEC, 2022). It is also reported to be the largest wheat exporter in the world with almost 20 per cent of global trade and the world's third-largest producer of oil behind the United States of America and Saudi Arabia, the second natural gas producer, and also among the top five producers of steel, nickel and aluminium (World Bank Report, 2022; Co-Face Country Assessment Report, 2022). Likewise, Ukraine is ranked as the 1st largest producer of sunflowers, the 6th largest producer of corn, and the 7th largest producer of wheat. Ukraine also ranks among the top ten producers of sugar beet, barley, soya, and rapeseed in the world (Co-face Country Assessment Report, 2022). As a

result, the conflict would automatically have a knock-on effect on the global and financial markets with the worst hit being countries that directly rely on them for their food, agricultural chemicals for food production and energy imports for survival.

The United Nations Global Crisis Response Group (UNGCRG), a special response group established by the United Nations in March 2022 to respond to the war in Ukraine in the areas of food, energy and finance observed that many countries of the world including countries of Europe would be affected by the war. However, it specifically identified African countries such as North African countries and sub-Saharan African countries as the regions that would be the worst hit by the effects of the war. According to the report, North Africa has over 50 per cent reliance on Russia and Ukraine for their food commodities imports and fertilizers while the sub-Saharan African countries ravaged by the impact of climate change and violent conflicts with the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) in the Global Human Development Index (GHDI) needs food imports from these countries to support the rising food insecurity bedevilling the region. These regions therefore are among the areas that would experience the three-dimensional effects of the crisis, which are hunger and poverty, energy crisis and inflation (UNGCRG, 2022).

In response to the UN Global Crisis Response, other international and regional economic monitors in Africa such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), African Union Commission (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) reiterated the likely implications of the conflict to the socioeconomic well-being of the African continent and called for the intervention of the African Union in concert with the regional economic groupings to come up with a strategic economic plan that will bring about economically resilient and inclusive food systems to mitigate the impending danger in Africa. It is in this light that the paper interrogates the implications of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict alongside the continent's potential with a view towards leveraging the conflict for the socioeconomic transformation of the region.

The paper, therefore, explores the analytical prowess of Strength Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the conflict and how Africa can utilize its potential to leverage the opportunities to build a strong and resilient economy that would ensure socioeconomic progress. The paper is divided into five rubrics; the first is the introductory remark followed by an overview of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on the global economy. The third is the assessment of the impacts of the conflict on Africa using SWOT analysis, while the fourth draws out the strategies for building a strong and resilient economy in Africa for socio-economic progress, and finally the conclusion of the paper which is the fifth.

*Methodology*

The study relied largely on the use of documented evidences from secondary sources such as extant literature and studies, newspapers, magazines, social media news outlets as well as reports from global economic and financial monitors such as African Development Bank (ADB), New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), the World Bank, and the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organizations (UN-FAO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and many others. It also involves the use of trend analysis from international and national conflict monitor. These were analysed using content analysis technique. The need for this methodology is borne out of the desire to provide a comprehensive understanding of the conflict especially as it is still ongoing with severe implications on the global economic system.

*Overview of Russian-Ukrainian Conflict on the Global Economy*

The evolution of the Russian-Ukrainian war could be traced to the 2014 Russian federation's annexation of Crimea in Ukraine, as a result of the war in Donbas between a Russian-backed separatist group and Ukraine in its territory. Therefore, the war that erupted between Russia and its former ally, Ukraine on the 24 of February 2022 is a continuation of a prolonged altercation between the two countries (Grunau et al 2022). The war started on the call of the Russian President Vladimir Putin for the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation military in what was termed "a special military operation to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine" (Granau et al 2022; Waximan, 2022). The call was followed shortly by the launching of missile attacks and airstrikes across Ukraine, including Kyiv, the state capital. Shortly after the bombings, a large grand invasion was deployed along multiple fronts to seize the entire country (Cable Network News (CNN), 2022; Kirby, 2022).

In response to the invasion, the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for a martial law and a general mobilization of all male Ukrainian citizens between the ages of 18 and 60 years for the war. He further banned all Ukrainian male in the country from leaving (Reuters, 2022). Subsequently, the war which started as a military offensive by the Russian Military Forces escalated into a full-fledged war with heavy fatalities and humanitarian consequences for Ukraine. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) as of 23 March 2022 (a month in to the war) observed that more than 3.6 million people had been forced to abandon their homes and flee across neighbouring border communities for safety while millions more are internally displaced (FAO, 2022). This implies that majority of the population of Ukraine has been displaced and livelihood disrupted with a knock-on effect on agricultural production and food security. Incidentally, the war started in an agricultural growing season in Ukraine, which makes it more severe for both the Ukrainian economy and the global economy at large.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) food Price Index 2022 indicated a historical record high, up 12.6 per cent from February, 33.6 per cent from its level a year earlier, and 15.8 per cent higher than the peak reached in February 2011 (FAO, 2022). Though the price increase may not be solely attributed to the conflict, due to other forces like the market conditions that resulted from high energy prices before the conflict, it however exacerbated it (FAO, 2022). For instance, Russia and Ukraine are major players in the global food commodities trade and agrochemical products. They account for about 78 per cent of the total global food supply with nearly 50 countries depending on these countries for at least 30 per cent of their wheat import needs. Out of these countries, 26 among them source over 50 per cent of their staple food from wheat (FAO-Food Commodity Index, 2022). Therefore, any disruptions in the production of these commodities and products, particularly in the magnitude of the ongoing war between the two countries will have a direct effect on the global market. Besides, Russia is also a key exporter of fertilizers and other agrochemical products used in growing agricultural produce (FAO, 2022), which makes it a critical player in the global economic system.

Similarly, the global financial market is not spared in this conflict effects. It has been thrown into severe turmoil with recession taking its toll on Europe as prices of gas critical for households and industry soar, due to the fears that Russia will cut off its supplies, possibly leading to energy crisis in some countries (Jones, 2022). Unfortunately, the world is still struggling with the socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic that crippled the globe throughout the year 2020 and halfway into 2021. Thus, making it extremely difficult for countries to cope with the devastating effects of the conflict. For instance, apart

from the unprecedented increase in the prices of food and agrochemical products like fertilizers, products like gas energy, metals and steel have increased tremendously, due to the significant roles these countries play in the global economic system. The Co-Face Assessment Report (2022) noted that Brent Oil prices have breached US$100 per barrel for the first time since 2014 at more than US$125/B, while the European Title Transfer Facility (TTF) gas prices (a virtual network point in the Dutch gas transport network that allows market parties to transfer gas ownership) surged to a record high of EUR 192 in March 2022. Meanwhile, the prices of food commodities like wheat, sunflower, and corn have increased tremendously including agricultural chemicals like fertilizers, due to sanctions imposed on Russia by Western European countries. This trend has continued to soar thereby significantly and pervasively affecting the financial markets around the world (Co-Face Assessment Report, 2022). Although a more recent report by the FAO in January 2024 showed a fall in global food prices compared to the pre-invasion period, receding global food prices mask an ongoing global food security crisis, which Russia continues to manipulate through its own agricultural exports (Centre for Strategic and International Studies-CSIS, 2024).

It is remarkable to note that one of the major forces that have compounded the high cost of living and global prices of food products, fertilizers and energy is the sanction imposed on Russia by the United States of America, Europe and Canada, which forbids them to grant access or passage to her through their countries to convey their products/produce. This sanction separately compounded the increasing high cost of energy, fuelling it further with higher interest rates have been squeezing households and companies with rising costs, despite efforts by the European Central Banks, the Bank of England and other Central Banks to crush inflation (UNGCRG, 2022). The overall implication is the global hunger and destitution that have befallen many countries across the world, especially the most vulnerable countries of the world with low Human Development Index (HDI), of which majority of them are in Africa.

The UNGCRG Report (2022) noted that an estimated 1.6 billion people in 94 countries are exposed to at least one dimension of the crisis, and about 1.2 billion of them live in “perfect storm” countries, which means countries that are vulnerable to the three-dimensional crisis (food, energy and finance-of-the-cost-of-living). This implies that about 2.6 billion of the over 7 billion population of the world would be affected by the conflict. Therefore, no country or community would be left untouched by the cost-of-living crisis because of the unprecedented wave of global hunger the war threatened to unleash with dire economic consequences. Incidentally, some of the countries identified by the UNGCRG as the most vulnerable that would likely be worst hit by the effects of the war include countries in the Sub-Saharan and North Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, South and Central Asia, and the Middle East (UNGCRG, 2022). Unequivocally, the report stated that sub-Saharan African countries remain significantly vulnerable, for one out of every two Africans in the region is exposed to the three-dimensions of the crisis. While Latin America and the Caribbean will be the second largest group to face the cost-of-living crisis after sub-Saharan Africa with at least 20 countries deeply affected. Likewise, the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia are listed as severely exposed to the energy and finance dimension due to poor remittance on imports from Russia, while South Asia is already experiencing crippling levels of heatwaves with over 500 million people severely exposed to the food and financial crises (UNGCRG, 2022). Meanwhile, in the Middle East and North Africa, extreme poverty could threaten the lives and livelihoods of 2.8 million people. This therefore represents an overall of the likely implications of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the world, if it is not quickly abated.

Other areas that are already experiencing the effects of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict are the automotive sector in Europe and the building materials sector. This is as a result of shortages and high prices of raw materials such as metals, semiconductors, cobalt, lithium, magnesium and many others that imported from Russia and Ukraine that are used in the production of car (Co-face Assessment, 2022). For instance, Ukrainian automotive factories are major suppliers of the aforementioned raw materials to car makers in Western Europe. Therefore, the ongoing war has affected the majority of car-making factories in Western Europe that rely on supplies from Ukraine. The majority of these car companies in 2022 announced the stoppage of production, while other plants around the world have planned their outages, due to supply chain of chips blockages and semiconductor shortages (Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG) International, 2022). Other sectors such as building materials, airlines and maritime freight companies were bid to suffer from the higher cost of steel, nickels, and metals including higher cost of fuel prices due to the sanctions imposed on Russia (Co-Face Assessment, 2022). Incidentally, the reality is down on the globe as cost of energy and cost of living have created a new global recession and global inflation estimated at 6.9 per cent in 2023 (Statista, 2024).

*Impacts of Russian-Ukrainian Conflict on Africa*

Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, African economies were grappling with the COVID-19 recovery efforts and other challenges such as climate change, armed conflict, terrorism and violent extremism that are inhibiting the continent's efforts towards economic progress. A few months into the invasion the economic situation aggravated further, due to the continent's heavy reliance on food commodities import and fertilizers from Russia and Ukraine. The implications have been the rising food insecurity and increasing cost of living and agricultural production, which is pushing Africa towards the edge of poverty, hunger, and stagflation. (USIP, 14 April 2022; UN GCRG, 2022).

The AU Development Agency and NEPAD (2022) joint report on the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war observed that some African countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia in North Africa; Nigeria in West Africa; Ethiopia and Sudan in East Africa; and South Africa in the southern African region would be severely affected by the effects of the war because of their over-reliance on the two countries for their wheat imports and fertilizers for agriculture. These countries account for 80 per cent of wheat imports in the continent with a projected volume of wheat consumption in Africa to reach 76.5 million tonnes by 2025, out of which 48.3 million tonnes or 63.4 per cent is projected to be imported from outside the continent (AUDA-NEPAD, 2022).

Statistics from the International Trade Centre (ITC) (2022) noted that African countries in 2020 alone imported US$4 billion and US$2.9 billion worth of agricultural products from Russia and Ukraine respectively. However, 90 per cent of the imports from Russia were wheat and sunflower oil, while 6 per cent were for agricultural chemicals. Similarly, out of the US$2.9 billion exports from Ukraine, about 48 per cent were wheat, 31 per cent corn, and the rest were sunflower oil, barley, and soybean (Ecofin Agency, 2022).

With the ongoing war in Ukraine, the prices of food commodities such as corn, wheat, and soya beans have surged, and about 20 million people in the Sahel and West Africa do not have access to sufficient food, thus spelling doom for the region in terms of food security (Abay et al 2022). Abay et al. (2022) noted that in Egypt, wheat is the main food item, representing about 39 per cent of the caloric intake per person. In addition, the Egyptian government imports about 50 to 60 per cent of its cereals from Russia and Ukraine despite

the government's effort to diversify imports following the global food crisis of 2008. Therefore, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has significant effect in the country. Egypt therefore needs an urgent policy option to cut down dependence on Russian and Ukrainian wheat, at least for the short term. Moreover, with the war still ongoing, the surge in the prices of wheat, the pressure on the price to go even higher, the estimated high cost of living, and the continuous reliant on Russia and Ukraine will not only impose serious pressure on the country's budget but will also pose a severe threat to food security in the country.

In the areas of housing and infrastructural development, countries such as Kenya and Sudan with heavy reliance on Russia and Ukraine for their building materials are seriously feeling the impact. This is a burden that homeowners and estate developers as well as the government are likely to share if infrastructural developmental projects are to be provided. For instance, it was reported that the price of steel in Kenya has significantly shot up over the few months of the war in Ukraine, with prices of steel bars and nails rising between 80 – 90 per cent and 13 per cent to 43 per cent respectively (African News Agency, 2022). In addition, the rising fertilizer cost as a result of the shortage in exports from Russia has further worsened the high cost of living challenge in many African countries including Kenya and Sudan. Incidentally, Russia is the highest exporter of nitrogen fertilizer and the second-highest exporter of phosphorous and potassium fertilizer globally and several African countries across the different sub-regions rely heavily on fertilizers from Russia for their agricultural products (Venditti and Parker, 2022).

Another major area of challenge in Africa is the energy price increase. African countries particularly countries in the Gulf of Guinea such as Cameroon, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Equatorial Guinea that are dependent on Russia for their petroleum and gas as well as crude oil refining will be most affected if the war becomes protracted as it will become difficult to export crude for refining as well as bringing in the refined oil and gas for use in these countries. In addition, the already-initiated oil and gas exploration contract by key Russian oil companies; Lukoil and Tatneft in the Ghadames Basin, encompassing parts of eastern Algeria, Southern Tunisia and Western Libya would suffer setbacks (Kolly, 2022). This is likely to happen because there are fears that drilling operations may be halted due to financial challenges resulting from the war. For instance, it was reported that Lukoil has already withdrawn from exploration in the giant and deep-water Fortuna's underdeveloped gas project, even as the contract remains valid (Kolly, 2022). It is expected that Libya, Congo, and Egypt will experience a similar challenge if the war persists due to the sanctions imposed on Russia. Given the impacts and the likely impacts of the war in Ukraine on Africa, it is envisaged that Africa is likely to be one of the continents that will be severely affected by the conflict in the 3-dimensional crisis of hunger, energy crisis and cost of lining financing, if drastic measures are not taken to avert the crisis and reposition the continent's developmental drive. As a matter of fact, Africa can leverage the conflict to push the continent up as major players in the international economic system, given the situation around the world and the potential in their advantage.

*Leveraging the Russian-Ukraine War Using the SWOT Analysis*

Here, the Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threat analysis is employed to critically interrogate the negativities and opportunities of the war to African states and how the Continent can also convert the threats into opportunities in its drive towards resilient, inclusive food security and economic progress. However, efforts are laid here on the strength and opportunities in the war because the weaknesses and threats to the Continent have been discussed in the above subheading.

*Strength*

Although there are a lot of negativities associated with the Russian-Ukrainian war in Africa because of many factors that have come to pose severe challenge to Africa's economic progress. For instance, the economic state of the continent since the COVID-19 pandemic has been struggling, there have been heavy reliance on food commodities, agricultural, steel and energy products imports from Russia and Ukraine. Others include climate change and its contradictions on human security as well as the rising terrorism, violent extremism and armed banditry ravaging the forests of Africa with huge implications for food security. However, Africa possess the raw materials and resources needed to greatly expand agricultural production. Comparatively, it has an abundance of major natural inputs such as arable land and human resources necessary for agriculture.

**Abundant Arable Land:** Africa has vast amounts of arable land, nutritious indigenous crops and a booming agricultural sector that can feed the entire continent and even exported outside the continent for commercial purpose (Ghaedi, 2022). Therefore, the issue of hunger and cost of living including energy scarcity should not have been a challenge if the leadership of the continent is moving on the right pedestal in terms of economic growth and development of the region. The World Economic Forum in Davos (2016) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2022 confirmed that over 60 per cent of the global share of uncultivated arable land to grow more food for both domestic consumption and export to the global market is located in Africa. In addition, its vast savannas are identified as the world's largest agricultural frontier, estimated at 400 million ha (African Development Bank, 2018). This is an opportunity that the continent policymakers can leverage to transform the region from a food commodity import based region to a producer and supplier of food commodities in the global trade system. On the issue of scarcity or high cost of sunflower oil ad cereals, many African countries are growers of sunflowers, wheat and maize which are in high demand due to the war between the two major exporters of these commodities. For example, South Africa is reported to be the world's tenth-largest producer of sunflower, and the largest in Africa with an estimated production of over 700,000 tons annually (Agri-Business10 Report, 2020). Other countries in Africa that are known for growing sunflower in significant volumes are Tanzania, Uganda, Egypt, Morocco, Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Angola (International Trade Centre, 2022). On Wheat, about 17 countries in Africa (three in the North: Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and 14 in Sub-Saharan Africa) grow what in commercial quantity. Statista report (2022) shows that in the 2020/2021 trading year, African countries produced about 25.7 million metric tons of wheat out of which the North African countries accounted for over 60 per cent, while Sub-Saharan Africa contributed the remaining 40 per cent with Ethiopia and South Africa as lead and the 12 other countries which include Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Zambia follow in descending order. It also projected an increase of 30.5 million metric tons in the 2021/2022 trading year (Statista, 2022).

**Abundant Untapped Water and Good Climatic Conditions:** Reports from the African Development Bank Group in 2019 shows that Africa has an abundance of fresh water and about 300 days of sunshine each year (African Development Bank Group, 2019). Though some large areas of the region are arid or semi-arid, on the average, water resources are enormous in the region and also greatly under-utilized. Only 2-3 per cent of renewable water resources are being used in Africa, compared to the estimated 5 per cent worldwide (World Bank, 2013). Therefore if the underutilized water resources and reserves are put to use, the continent can leverage it for more agricultural purposes to improve production for both domestic consumption and exports.

**Abundant Crude and Gas Resources:**It is a fact that Africa is richly endowed with natural resources with almost half of its countries known to have proven oil and natural gas reserves. Reports from Energy Capital and Power (2021) shows the continent a total of more than 800 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves spread across the continent. It observes that the British Multinational Oil and Gas Company predicted the production of natural gas in Africa to increase by 80 per cent by 2035, to contribute to the rising Gross Domestic Profit (GDP), the emergence of middle-class consumers and increased market value (Energy Capital & Power, 2021). The report further highlighted the list of countries with substantial energy deposits in Africa to include Nigeria (206.53 trillion cubic feet of natural gas located in the Gulf of Guinea), followed by Algeria (159.1 trillion cubic feet). Others include Senegal – 120 trillion cubic feet, Mozambique – 100 trillion cubic feet, Egypt – 77.2 trillion cubic feet. Tanzania – 57.54 trillion cubic feet, Libya- 53.1 trillion cubic feet, Angola – 13.5 trillion cubic feet, Congo Brazzaville – 10.1 trillion cubic feet, Equatorial Guinea – 5 trillion cubic feet, Cameroon – 4.8 trillion cubic feet, Sudan – 3 trillion cubic feet, and the MSGBC natural gas reserve estimated at over 100 trillion located at the offshore of Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau-Conakry where it derives its acronym. Meanwhile, by 2021, oil reserves in Africa stood at 125.3 billion barrels with Libya and Nigeria topping the list of the first ten with the largest oil and Gas reserves (Statista, 2022). Data from Statista (2022) shows that Libya is the richest country in oil in Africa as of 2021, accumulating 48.4 billion barrels of proved reserves followed by Nigeria with reserves of 36.9 billion barrels of crude oil. Algeria is the 3$^{rd}$ in line with summed reserves of up to 2.2 billion barrels (Statista, 2022). Others include Angola (7.8), Sudan (5), Egypt (3.3), Cong Brazzaville (2.9), Uganda (2.5), Gabon (2), Chad (1.5) and Equatorial Guinea (1.1) (Statista, 2022). These are potentials that Africa can leverage through collaboration with the developed countries of Europe and America to put the continent on the path economic progress in the near future, especially as the world is grappling with energy crisis because of the Russia-Ukraine war.

**Abundant Human Resources:**Unlike many other parts of the world, Africa is not in short supply of human resources due to its huge working population. Of the huge working population in Africa, more than 60 per cent of it is engaged in agriculture, and the soil across the continent is rich and fertile (AFDB, 2019). Thus, encouraging this working population will put a stop to the continuous loss of precious foreign exchange to food commodity imports, attracts more hands into farming and improve the agriculture value chain. When these are achieved food security will be ensured and hunger eradicated in Africa. Furthermore, in comparative terms, Africa has a vast pool of intellectuals and experts as well as genuine institutions that can convert the natural resources (arable land, good water and conditions and the huge youth population) to economic advantage in Africa.

**Standard Policy structures:**The continent of Africa over the past decade has developed policy structures and frameworks to prepare Africa for the future. The AUDA-NEPAD policy plan developed in 2021 to create a common African position ahead of the Food systems and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCTA) established in 2018 by the African Continental Fee Trade Agreement to create the largest free trade area in the world measured by a number of countries participating. The AFCTA alone connects 1.3 billion people across 55 countries with a combined gross domestic product valued at US$3.4 trillion and it has the potential to lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty, if its full potential will be harnessed (World Bank, 2020). These two policy structures if properly managed with the right leadership can surmount Africa's existential challenges and grab the opportunities provided by the Russian-Ukrainian war to stimulate its economy and become a major player in the global economic system.

*Opportunities*

While the socio-economic consequences associated with the Russian-Ukrainian war are becoming prevalent with the situation across regions highly predictably, there are also opportunities beneath the crisis, if only regions and countries with high economic potentials like Africa can leverage on the effects of the crisis to develop their potentials, to become a significant player in the global economic trade. Africa should see the current global challenges created by the war in Ukraine as an opportunity to make a significant impact on the global economy using its abundant natural and human resources potential and the strategies highlighted by its Agenda 2063 and UN Sustainable Development Goals that are already in existence.

First, with the price volatility, the sanctions on Russia by Western Europe on its territorial waters, and fears of energy crisis in the European and America, Africa with its enormous potentials in terms of energy reserves and arable land and huge human resources automatically becomes the future trade and business destination by Europe, America and China. However, how Africa utilizes this opportunity is determined by its leadership acumen, political will and policy structures to harness them. For instance, the recently proposed Trans-Saharan gas pipeline from African to Europe that stretches from Algeria, Nigeria, and Niger aimed at transmitting about 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas (per year) through the Mediterranean coast to Europe while also supplying inland stations is one of such opportunities that Africa has embraced. There is also, the MSGBC Natural Gas Reserves located at the off-shore in Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Conakry in West Africa with an estimated GTA gas field of more than 115 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (Energy Capital & Power, 2021), on which discussion is been staged between these countries foreign oil and gas companies. If properly utilized and managed, Africa stands a chance of changing its future to a positive one that will put the continent on the Map for global economic powers.

In agriculture, the Africa Common Position on Food Policy championed by The African Union Commission (AUC) and African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD) in concert with member states of Africa provides a leeway way to achieve sustainable development of food and ensure food security (AUDA-NEPAD, 2022). For instance, the effective and efficient implementation of the African Common Position on Food and the adoption of the technology-driven agricultural system in lie with the policies and programmes of the AUDA-NEPAD, the continent has the potential to get to its desired destination; it has over 60 per cent global share of uncultivated arable land to grow more food for both domestic consumption and export to the global market, human population of working level, and abundant untapped water to tap into and can also boost good climate for farming. In addition, ACFTA also provides the required backup to its trading capacity by taking advantage of the world's largest free trade area.

Similarly, on agricultural chemicals like fertilizer which have become scarce and the prices highly increased as a result of the sanction by EU countries on Russia, the African business community can emulate what the Dangote Group (an indigenous Investment Group) is doing in Nigeria by leveraging the shortfall in Russian fertilizer exports by opening a USD 2.5 billion fertilizer plant in Nigerian's main economic hub, Lagos. The intent is to sell fertilizer to the continent as well as to the United States, Brazil and India (USIP, 2022). If they can boast of four such plants in about four different sub-regions in Africa the issue of fertilizer to drive agricultural growth would become a thing of the past while generating international revenue and creating jobs to stimulate economic progress for the continent.

*Conclusion*

Obviously, the Russian-Ukrainian war with its associated global socio-economic consequences has presented a lot of negativities to the struggling economies of Africa especially as it struggles with the COVID-19 recovery efforts, due to the heavy reliance on imported agricultural materials from both countries as well as the high demand for food commodities such as sunflower and wheat since the past decades. However, these are not all negatives as there as also opportunities laced with the war for Africa to transform its socio-economic challenges and play a significant role in the global economic system. The strength to achieve these feet is in the continent's abundant arable land, abundant untapped water and good climate factors, abundant crude oil and natural gas reserves, a working population, and standard policy frameworks and institutions to galvanize the efforts to create opportunities for socio-economic transformation in the region.

*Recommendations*

The paper, therefore, proffers the following suggestions as strategies for optimizing the opportunities.

1. Focused and Committed Leadership: To actualize the plan of leveraging the Russian-Ukraine conflict for Africa's economic growth and development, the leadership in Africa at the state, regional and continental level must be focused and committed towards Africa's growth and development. This is the first step towards achieving economic progress in the continent. Apart from its ability to muster the needed courage and political will to harness Africa's potentials for economic progress, it will ensure good governance, propel effective implementation of agreements and programmes that would propel economic transformation, reduce corruption and put the continent on the path of economic progress.
2. Investment in farming across the African farming communities: There should be a concerted effort towards farming across farming communities across Africa with a focus on sunflowers and wheat which are in high demand across the world. More so the 60 per cent uncultivated arable land should be utilized using advantage technology agriculture.
3. Investment in fertilizer: There should be an emphasis on fertilizer manufacturing plants in Africa to aid farming because of the scarcity of fertilizer, due to the Russia-Ukraine war. Such investments like the investment by the Dangote Group in the establishment of a fertilizer plant in Nigeria should be encouraged by the region to replicate it in the various economic zones in the Continent. This will reduce the reliance on fertilizer import, create jobs and enhance food security in the continent.
4. Partnership with foreign and indigenous industries: More emphasis should be on strengthening partnerships with foreign oil and gas firms as well as indigenous companies with the required expertise and fund to develop natural gas and establish refineries in Africa. Such partnership will attract more investments in the energy sector value chain, create jobs and generate more revenue for the continent.
5. De-emphasizing reliance on the importation of food commodities and energy products: The importation of food commodities like cereals that can be produced across the continent should be discouraged to strengthen local production. The same should be accorded to the energy sector, so as to be committed to the development of the sector by member states of the continent.

6. Revival of the continental and state policies on food commodity production: The AU Commission for Agriculture and African Union Development Agency-NEDPAD should start the implementation of the new policies on food security in Africa. It should also ensure that the regional economic blocs and state governments have a buy-in on the policies, so as to ensure reach and across the continent for improving production for both domestic consumption and commercial production for revenue.
7. Investment in human capital development: If Africa will adopt the above-mentioned strategies, the huge human capital transformed into a quality working population, it will significantly make an impact on the global economy.

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