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AN ANALYSIS OF ECOWAS INFLUENCE ON THE ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT ON NIGERIA'S TRADE (2022-2025): DISRUPTIONS IN FOOD AND ENERGY SUPPLY CHAINS

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Abstract
This research examines ECOWAS' influence on the economic implications of the Russia–Ukraine conflict on Nigeria's trade (2022–2025). Its objectives are to examine the economic impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on Nigeria's trade in food and energy between 2022 and 2025; to analyze the role and influence of ECOWAS in responding to trade disruptions in Nigeria caused by the conflict; to assess the effectiveness of ECOWAS mechanisms in enhancing regional trade resilience in the face of global supply chain shocks. The study employs Dependency Theory to illustrate how Nigeria's reliance on foreign markets has influenced its susceptibility and strategic responses. The study adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing secondary data from the FAO, IMF, World Bank, and Nigerian government sources to evaluate both national and regional responses. Findings reveal that over 60% of Nigeria's wheat imports originated from Russia and Ukraine before the war, and the subsequent supply shock triggered food inflation, increased Nigeria's import bill by over ₦700 billion in 2023, and worsened food insecurity. Despite being an oil-producing country, Nigeria experienced severe energy price hikes due to dependence on imported refined fuel. During the Russia–Ukraine conflict, ECOWAS lacked a coordinated regional mechanism for food security and trade resilience, prompting member states, including Nigeria, to adopt unilateral measures to mitigate the impact of supply chain disruptions. Key frameworks such as the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) were disrupted due to border closures and political instability, particularly following the 2024 withdrawals of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. The study concludes that Nigeria's heavy dependence on external supply chains, combined with ECOWAS's institutional limitations, heightened the country's vulnerability to global shocks. Strengthening regional cooperation and reducing external dependence are therefore essential. The study recommends scaling up domestic food and energy production, investing in regional infrastructure, establishing strategic reserves, and harmonizing trade and energy policies to improve ECOWAS's capacity to withstand future global shocks.

Keywords: ECOWAS, Nigeria, Russia-Ukraine conflict, Trade Resilience, Food Security

Introduction

Nigeria, as the most populous country in Africa and the largest economy on the continent, remains heavily dependent on international trade for crucial commodities, especially in the food and energy sectors. Despite a variety of national development programs, the nation still grapples with considerable obstacles in achieving self-sufficiency for foundational goods like wheat, sugar, and vegetable oil. Wheat is notably a key part of the Nigerian diet, and by 2021, over 60% of its wheat imports were sourced from Russia and Ukraine, two top grain-producing nations (Patriot Nigeria, 2024). At the same time, a contradiction exists in the energy sector: although Nigeria ranks among Africa's largest crude oil producers, it still relies on imported refined petroleum products due to a lack of sufficient domestic refining capacity. The onset of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February 2022 caused serious disruptions in global commodity markets. What started as a geopolitical issue quickly transformed into a profound trade and supply chain crisis. Grain exports through the Black Sea were hindered; sanctions, embargoes, and shipping delays disrupted trade routes, while global energy markets experienced significant alterations. For economies like Nigeria, which are dependent on imports, the repercussions were immediate and extensive, marked by soaring food prices, a worsening trade balance, increased transportation costs, and growing macroeconomic vulnerabilities.

These developments highlighted Nigeria’s inherent trade weaknesses. For instance, the worldwide increase in wheat prices resulted in a significant rise in the costs of bread and other staple foods, hitting low-income families the hardest. According to Balogun (2022), Nigeria’s wheat import expenses surged by over 50% in 2022 alone, triggering urgent responses and policy shifts aimed at diversifying supply sources and enhancing local production. In the energy sector, diesel and aviation fuel prices escalated, leading to inflation and slowing down economic recovery post-COVID. While Nigeria’s crude oil exports temporarily thrived due to heightened European demand for alternatives to Russian supply, persistent issues such as oil theft, pipeline vandalism, and inadequate investment in refining and LNG infrastructure hindered the country's ability to take advantage of these opportunities (Ojo, 2025).

In this scenario, regional responses gained greater importance. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), of which Nigeria is a prominent member, plays a crucial role in facilitating trade coordination, fostering economic integration, and aligning regional policies. In reaction to the crisis, ECOWAS launched policy discussions, reinforced intra-regional trade systems, and advocated for diminished dependency on external food and energy supplies. Initiatives like the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) enabled collaborative action, facilitated trade, and harmonized policies among member countries.

For Nigeria, ECOWAS acted as both a platform for collaboration and a catalyst for policy regarding trade resilience. Regional cooperation allowed Nigeria to integrate into shared value chains, enhance food security strategies, and synchronize national actions with broader regional goals. Nonetheless, the conflict also revealed weaknesses in ECOWAS’s institutional coordination, particularly concerning infrastructure, logistics, and implementation capacity, which hampered the effectiveness of regional initiatives.

This study investigates how ECOWAS influenced the economic consequences of the Russia–Ukraine conflict on Nigeria’s trade from 2022 to 2025. Its objectives are to evaluate the economic effects of the Russia–Ukraine conflict on Nigeria's food and energy trade between 2022 and 2025; analyze the role and impact of ECOWAS in addressing trade disruptions in Nigeria due to the conflict; and assess the effectiveness of ECOWAS mechanisms in bolstering regional trade resilience amid global supply chain shocks.

To examine these dynamics, this study adopts a qualitative case study approach, which allows for a focused exploration of the economic, policy, and institutional responses to

food and energy supply chain disruptions between 2022 and 2025. Nigeria is selected as the central case given its economic weight in ECOWAS. The analysis relies primarily on secondary data, including publications from ECOWAS, the Nigerian Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), UNCTAD, and the World Bank, peer-reviewed journals, policy briefs from institutions such as Chatham House, Brookings, as well as reputable media outlets like BusinessDay Nigeria. Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns across four key areas: global food price shocks, wheat and grain import disruptions, petroleum and refined fuel crises, and regional trade and food security responses. Triangulation of multiple sources enhanced credibility, while peer-reviewed literature ensured analytical consistency.

Concept of Conflict

Conflict can generally be characterized as a scenario where two or more parties perceive their goals, interests, or actions as conflicting, leading to tensions, opposition, or even confrontations. It can manifest in various ways, ranging from personal disagreements and local disputes to complex international crises involving several nations and organizations. In international relations, conflict often emerges when the interests or values of sovereign states collide, particularly regarding issues such as territory, resources, ideologies, or geopolitical influence. These conflicts can be either violent or peaceful, overt or hidden, yet they often have significant effects on political stability, economic performance, and social unity.

As Lewis Coser (1956) observed, conflict is "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the adversaries seek to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their opponents." This definition underscores the competitive and frequently harmful nature of conflict, especially when power dynamics and resource control are crucial. Johan Galtung (1969) expands this conceptual framework by introducing the idea of "structural violence," where systemic inequalities, institutional barriers, or power disparities cause indirect harm to populations, often without explicit physical aggression. In the global economic context, these structural aspects of conflict can be seen in trade imbalances, access to markets, and unequal exposure to external shocks.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict, which began in February 2022, exemplifies a situation with both geopolitical and economic ramifications. While it initially started as a territorial and military issue, it rapidly caused disruptions in global food and energy supply chains. The conflict hindered the export of wheat, maize, fertilizers, and petroleum products, particularly through the Black Sea, affecting countries worldwide. For nations like Nigeria, which relies on imports, this war is not just a remote geopolitical concern but a conflict with direct economic consequences. It has led to food inflation, energy insecurity, and increased fiscal pressure, primarily due to Nigeria's reliance on wheat from Russia and Ukraine and global petroleum imports.

From the conflict theory perspective, the Russia–Ukraine war can be examined through various dimensions: political (sovereignty, international alliances), economic (trade sanctions, export limitations, inflation), military (armed aggression, security adjustments), and structural (dependency patterns, disparities between the global North and South). These interconnected aspects highlight that modern conflicts are not isolated incidents, but rather intertwined events that alter global systems. In this analysis, conflict includes more than just military aggression; it also encompasses the broader disruptions, both direct and structural, that affect Nigeria's economic stability and trade dynamics. By studying the nature of this conflict, we can better understand how external crises can destabilize national economies and the crucial role that regional institutions such as ECOWAS can play in mitigating their effects.

Concept of Trade

The concept of trade entails the exchange of goods and services between individuals, businesses, or nations. On a macroeconomic level, trade encompasses imports (goods brought into a country) and exports (goods sent to other countries), functioning as a fundamental mechanism for economic globalization and interdependence. As Krugman and Obstfeld (2009) note, trade is "the voluntary exchange of goods and services across borders, where the flow of trade relies on comparative advantage, supply chain efficiency, and international demand." Various factors, including tariffs, exchange rates, infrastructure, regional trade agreements, and geopolitical stability, greatly influence trade.

In Nigeria, trade plays a crucial role in national development, particularly given the country's reliance on imported goods such as wheat, refined petroleum products, fertilizers, and machinery, as well as its export commodities like crude oil, LNG, agricultural products, and solid minerals.

Multilateral trade, involving several countries and often taking place within trade blocs such as ECOWAS and WTO, encompasses intra-industry trade, which refers to the exchange of similar products like different types of crude oil or fuel, as well as strategic trade that relates to critical sectors such as food, fuel, and defense commodities. The principle of trade is essential to this analysis since the Russia–Ukraine conflict has disrupted vital trade routes, significantly affecting Nigeria's imports of wheat and fuel alongside its crude oil exports, leading to ramifications for economic stability, inflation, and strategic planning. A comprehension of trading mechanisms is crucial for understanding the extent and characteristics of these disruptions. A review of empirical evidence indicates that the Russia-Ukraine conflict has drawn considerable interest from numerous scholars and policy analysts who have explored its worldwide economic implications and its particular influence on Nigeria. This section highlights key empirical investigations that demonstrate how the ongoing war has influenced trade patterns, food and energy security, price inflation, and governmental reactions in Nigeria and other developing nations. Patriot Nigeria (2024) undertook a content analysis of Nigeria's wheat import data from 2021 through 2023, disclosing that the conflict led to an 18% decline in total wheat imports and a surge in wheat prices exceeding 40% in 2022 alone. This situation has directly contributed to rising inflationary pressures on items such as bread and flour, especially in urban regions. In a related analysis, Donley (2022) found that Nigerian flour mills, which relied on over 60% of their wheat from Russia and Ukraine, encountered operational disruptions due to shipping delays and escalating freight charges. In a quantitative study, Ajayi (2024) established a correlation between the increase in wheat import costs and general food inflation by utilizing time-series data from the Central Bank of Nigeria and the National Bureau of Statistics. This research uncovered a statistically significant connection between the duration of the conflict and heightened consumer price index (CPI) levels, especially within the cereal and flour categories. Balogun (2022) explored the impacts of the Russia–Ukraine conflict on Nigeria's domestic energy market, with an emphasis on diesel and aviation fuel prices. The study, which drew on data from the Nigerian Midstream Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority, revealed that diesel prices skyrocketed from an average of ₦288 per litre in 2021 to over ₦800 by the close of 2023. Aviation fuel (Jet A1) saw a comparable surge in prices, resulting in reduced flight operations and inflated ticket prices. Opanuga (2023), examining data from the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC), observed a shift in Nigeria's crude oil exports. While India's share declined by 22%, Europe's imports rose by nearly 10% from 2022 to 2023. This transition was attributed to sanctions on Russian oil, making Nigerian crude more attractive. Nevertheless, insights from Reuters (2025) and Ojo (2025) indicated that Nigeria could not significantly enhance its liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments to Europe due to pipeline sabotage, low capacity utilization, and ongoing underinvestment in gas infrastructure. According to Agbakwuru (2022), in response to the

Russia–Ukraine situation, the Nigerian government enacted a 24-hour port operation policy and adjusted its trade strategies to seek alternative routes for wheat and energy supplies. Although these initiatives acted as temporary measures, an assessment by Edesiri and Orhero (2024) found that structural issues such as insufficient intermodal transport systems and port congestion diminished their effectiveness. Aro (2022) noted that Afreximbank launched the Ukraine Crisis Adjustment Trade Financing Programme for Africa (UKAFPA), committing $4 billion to help nations like Nigeria sustain their food and energy imports. Their performance report for 2023 indicated that this initiative allowed Nigeria to stabilize its wheat imports from alternative suppliers such as the U.S., Poland, and Canada, albeit at higher costs.

In regional comparative analyses, Krugman and Obstfeld (2009) observed that worldwide disturbances, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, often increase trade vulnerabilities in economies that depend significantly on imports. Research conducted by the African Development Bank (2023) showed that inflation rates in numerous African countries reached approximately 15.1% in 2023, compounded by increasing fiscal challenges, escalating food prices, and rising public debt. Nigeria, being the largest economy on the continent, was notably affected.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical basis for this research is rooted in Dependency Theory, which provides a critical perspective for examining the structural imbalances in global trade relations, especially between developed (core) and developing (peripheral) countries. First introduced by Raúl Prebisch in the 1950s and later expanded upon by Andre Gunder Frank (1967), the theory suggests that the global capitalist framework is designed to perpetuate economic dependence by assigning peripheral countries the role of raw material suppliers while they consume processed goods from industrialized core nations. This structural dynamic fosters long-term underdevelopment, stifles industrial growth, and exacerbates economic vulnerability in peripheral nations.

The Relevance of the Theory to the Study

The relevance of Dependency Theory to this research is evident in its ability to frame Nigeria's trade vulnerabilities and economic instability during the Russia–Ukraine conflict (2022–2025). As a typical peripheral economy, Nigeria has a significant reliance on imports for essential goods. Prior to the conflict, more than 60% of Nigeria's wheat imports came from Russia and Ukraine, both key players in the global grain market. The onset of the war caused immediate disruptions in supply chains, leading to severe inflation in food prices, shortages of wheat, and broader economic instability (Donley, 2023). This scenario highlights how Nigeria's position within the global trade hierarchy makes it susceptible to external shocks, particularly in the food sector.

In terms of the energy sector, Dependency Theory further clarifies Nigeria's paradoxical situation. Even though Nigeria is a leading exporter of crude oil, it remains heavily dependent on imported refined petroleum products because of inadequate domestic refining capabilities. Although the conflict and subsequent sanctions on Russian oil temporarily increased European demand for Nigerian crude, Nigeria was unable to take advantage of this opportunity due to internal inefficiencies, vandalism, and poor infrastructure (Aro, 2022). As a result, Nigeria continued to import refined fuels at elevated prices, thus reinforcing its dependency issues.

By utilizing Dependency Theory, this study interprets these vulnerabilities not only as failures in domestic policy but also as reflections of deeply entrenched structural imbalances within the global trade framework. Importantly, the theory provides a basis for assessing the role of ECOWAS in addressing these vulnerabilities. Through regional initiatives, ECOWAS

has the potential to lessen Nigeria's dependency by encouraging trade diversification, infrastructure development, strategies for food and energy security, and regional trade integration. Therefore, Dependency Theory is essential for investigating how ECOWAS has influenced Nigeria's trade actions and economic resilience during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, particularly concerning the disruptions in food and energy supply chains from 2022 to 2025.

Analysis: Global Supply Disruptions in Food and Energy

The Russia-Ukraine war added a dramatic external shock to an already fragile global environment. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that the Global Food Price Index, which tracks international prices of a basket of food commodities, rose from 135.6 in January 2022 (the highest in more than a decade) to a record-breaking 159.3 in March 2022, shortly after the conflict began. This trend is illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Global Food Price Shocks

Month/Year	Global Food Price Index
Jan 2022	135.6 (pre-war level)
Mar 2022	159.3 (record high)

Source: FAO, 2022.

This increase reflected the heavy global dependence on agricultural exports from the Black Sea region. Russia and Ukraine collectively accounted for over 30% of global wheat exports and were also major suppliers of maize, barley, and sunflower oil. Consequently, ECOWAS countries, including Nigeria, which rely heavily on wheat imports for their food processing sectors and staples like bread and pasta, were directly impacted. Weekly Wheat Prices ($/Bushel) from October 2021 to April 2022 are illustrated below:

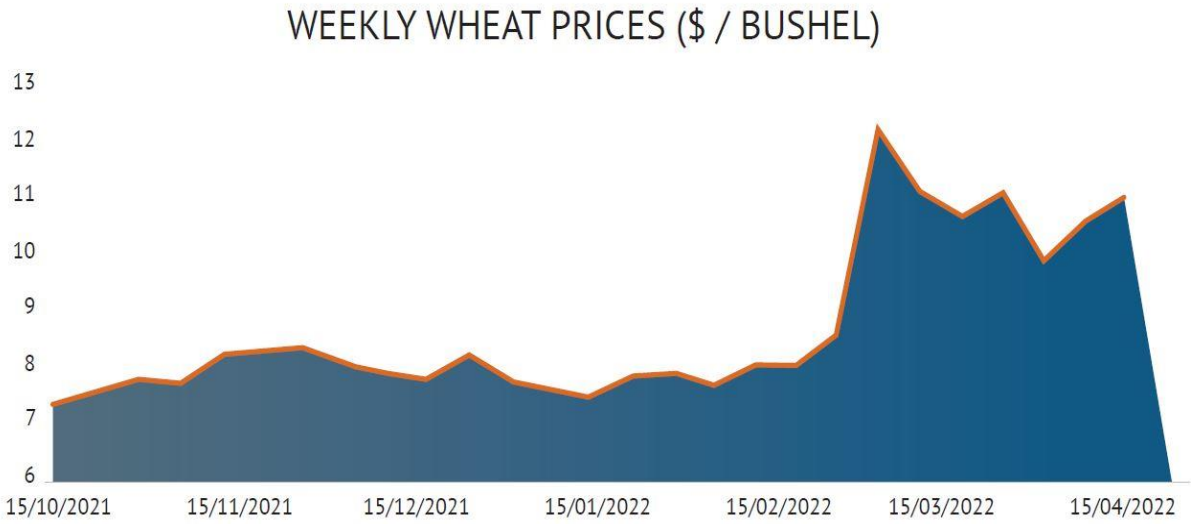


Figure 1: Weekly Wheat Prices ($/Bushel) from October 2021 to April 2022
Source: FAO, 2022

Figure 1 shows a steep price surge within two months of the conflict's outbreak.

The graph visually illustrates a rapid escalation in wheat prices, underlining the volatility introduced by the war and how quickly it cascaded into developing economies' food supply chains. For Nigeria, this meant higher consumer prices, increased import bills, and mounting pressure on food security. This is corroborated by Table 2 below:

Table 2: Wheat and Grain Import Disruptions in ECOWAS

Indicator	Pre-War Situation	Post-War Impact (2022–2025)
Share of wheat imports from Russia/Ukraine	60–80% (Nigeria)	Dropped significantly due to Black Sea blockade
Import volume	4.4–5.5 million tonnes annually (Nigeria)	Imports fell by 16–20%; diversification to US, Canada
Import bill	₦560 billion (2021)	₦700+ billion (2023); cost inflation
Intra-ECOWAS trade	Moderate	Disrupted by ETLS breakdown and Sahel political tensions

Sources: Patriot Nigeria (2024); Donley (2023); Ajayi (2024); Nwangwu (2024).

Prior to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, these two countries were responsible for 60–80% of Nigeria's wheat imports, which were estimated to be between 4.4 and 5.5 million tonnes each year (Patriot Nigeria, 2024; Donley, 2023). The war drastically decreased shipments from the Black Sea area, resulting in a 20–50% increase in global wheat prices throughout 2022-2023 (Ajayi, 2024). Consequently, Nigeria's wheat imports expenses exceeded ₦700 billion in 2023. Trade within ECOWAS was negatively impacted, especially for landlocked nations reliant on coastal ports, as the Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) was hindered by border conflicts and political strife (Nwangwu, 2024). In response, Nigeria began to diversify its wheat suppliers, incorporating the U.S., Canada, and Poland, while also encouraging local wheat production through the Anchor Borrowers' Programme and enhancing mechanization alongside subsidies (Donley, 2023).

The disruption in wheat imports highlighted ECOWAS's reliance on food sources from beyond the region, particularly from areas with political instability. Although Nigeria implemented national measures to diversify and boost domestic wheat production, ECOWAS itself lacked a unified grain security strategy. The absence of strategic food reserves or collaborative procurement efforts worsened food insecurity, especially in vulnerable countries like Mali and Burkina Faso. Furthermore, the fragmentation of regional integration, exacerbated by the 2024 exit of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, weakened both regional trade routes and food logistics.

Petroleum Import Dependence

Despite being oil-rich, most ECOWAS member states-including Nigeria and Angola-remain heavily dependent on imported refined petroleum products. This dependence became more evident during the Russia-Ukraine war, which exposed the region's energy insecurity and infrastructural shortcomings. The trends are summarized in Table 3:

Table 3: Petroleum and Refined Fuel Import Crisis

Metric	Pre-War	2022–2025 Post-War Trend
Diesel price in Nigeria	₦288/litre	Rose to over ₦800/litre
Jet-A1 (aviation fuel)	₦300–₦350/litre	Doubled; caused spike in air transport fares
LNG exports to Europe	Low capacity	Marginal gains (~4%) due to pipeline issues

Currency depreciation	-	Average 15% across ECOWAS
Regional fuel import bills	~$20B annually	Nearly tripled in some countries

Sources: Balogun (2022); Opanuga (2023); IMF (2023)

Although Nigeria is one of Africa's leading crude oil producers, it imports the majority of its refined petroleum. During the conflict, diesel prices in Nigeria rose sharply from ₦288 to over ₦800 per litre. Aviation fuel (Jet-A1) also doubled in price, leading to a drastic surge in air transport costs (Balogun, 2022). Furthermore, while the war opened a temporary window for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) exports to Europe, Nigeria's gains were marginal, about 4% due to pipeline sabotage, oil theft, and long-standing infrastructure decay (Opanuga, 2023). Across the ECOWAS region, fuel import bills nearly tripled, and average currency depreciation of 15% further worsened inflationary pressures (International Monetary Fund, 2023).

The crisis revealed the critical absence of a coordinated ECOWAS energy strategy. There are currently no regional refining hubs, joint fuel reserves, or cross-border energy infrastructure initiatives capable of reducing collective import dependence. Landlocked countries such as Burkina Faso and Mali were particularly vulnerable due to transport bottlenecks and reliance on coastal neighbors for energy access. Ultimately, the Russia-Ukraine conflict underscored the urgent need for regional energy self-sufficiency, investment in refining capacity, and the development of cross-border energy trade mechanisms. Without such reforms, the region remains exposed to global fuel price shocks and logistical disruptions.

Regional Policy Responses to Global Shocks

In the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict 2022-2025, both Nigeria and the broader ECOWAS region implemented a variety of policy responses aimed at mitigating trade disruptions and ensuring food security. However, these interventions varied widely in coherence, scope, and effectiveness. While Nigeria undertook assertive national reforms, ECOWAS's regional response remained fragmented and reactive. Table 4.1 below compares national and regional responses across four key policy areas: trade policy, food security, trade facilitation, and access to external financial aid.

Table 4: Comparative Trade and Food Security Responses (Nigeria vs. ECOWAS).

Policy Area	Nigeria	ECOWAS
Trade policy	Revised in March 2022 to enhance port logistics (Agbakwuru, 2022)	No bloc-wide trade contingency framework
Food security	Expanded subsidies, local production focus	Fragmented; no joint reserves or distribution mechanism
Trade facilitation	Focused on port decongestion and forex access	ETLS disrupted; trade corridors weakened post-Sahel exits
External financial aid	Received UKAFPA from Afreximbank	Regional bloc lacked self-financing safety nets

Sources: Edesiri & Orhero (2024); Aro (2022); Okhawere & Esekumumu (2024).

National vs. Regional Response: An Unequal Burden

Nigeria's policy actions were swift and largely domestically focused. In March 2022, the government revised its trade policy to improve port logistics and reduce delays in import-

export operations (Agbakwuru, 2022). Food security measures included subsidy expansion, mechanization support, and promotion of local food production, especially rice and maize (Edesiri & Orhero, 2024). These strategies aimed to shield citizens from rising food costs and reduce dependency on imports, especially wheat, which had been severely affected due to the war.

In contrast, ECOWAS failed to implement a coordinated regional response. The lack of a centralized food reserve system meant member states were left to fend for themselves. ECOWAS's Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), a key instrument of regional integration, suffered major setbacks due to political instability particularly the exit of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in 2024.

Broader Economic Impacts of the Conflict

The Russia-Ukraine war exposed systemic vulnerabilities across West Africa's trade and energy sectors. These are summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 5: Summary of Key Trade and Food Security Impacts (2022-2025).

Trade Category	Key Trend (2022–2025)	Implication for ECOWAS
Wheat imports	Dropped by 16–20%; diversification to US, Canada, Poland	Exposed regional vulnerability to external disruptions
Crude exports	Shift from India to Europe	Showed market flexibility, but no ECOWAS synergy
Fuel import costs	Prices nearly tripled across region	Increased inflation and weakened currencies
LNG exports to Europe	Minimal gains (~4%) despite opportunity	Highlighted missed infrastructural leverage
Trade facilitation	ETLS disrupted; border control tightened	Weakened regional integration
Food policy responses	National efforts strong; regional action weak	Need for a joint food security strategy

Source: Compiled by the author from data and reports by ECOWAS Commission (2022–2024).

Aro (2022), FAO (2022–2024), Balogun Nigeria (2022), and Donley (2023).

Table 5 summarizes Trade and Food Security Impacts from 2022 to 2025. The Russia–Ukraine conflict acted as a litmus test for regional economic resilience. While Nigeria's proactive measures offered limited relief domestically, the broader ECOWAS response was marred by institutional inertia, political fragmentation, and an overreliance on external partners. The disrupted ETLS, underutilized LNG opportunity, and inflationary pressure from fuel imports highlight the need for a cohesive, proactive regional mechanism that can swiftly respond to global economic shocks.

Findings

i. The research indicates that Nigeria relied significantly on wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine, which represented over 60% of its total supply prior to 2022. The onset of the war resulted in a substantial supply disruption, leading to a sharp rise in food inflation and increasing Nigeria's import costs by over ₦700 billion in 2023, thereby exacerbating food insecurity, especially in landlocked ECOWAS member countries. In the energy sector, despite being an oil-producing nation, Nigeria faced a considerable spike in diesel and jet fuel prices due to its dependence on imported refined petroleum from Europe and

Asia. In some ECOWAS nations, refined fuel prices tripled from 2022 to 2023. Nigeria lost the chance to enhance LNG exports to Europe because of oil theft, pipeline damage, and inadequate infrastructure.

ii. The research reveals that ECOWAS lacked an organized grain security framework or a regional buffer stock system to alleviate the food supply disruptions. The regional organization was unable to mount a robust, unified reaction to the challenges created by the conflict. Responses from individual member states, including Nigeria, primarily took a unilateral approach, undermining the essence of regional collaboration and integration. Initiatives like the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) were disrupted due to border closures, political unrest, and the withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in 2024.

iii. The research shows that the disruptions highlighted vulnerabilities in ECOWAS mechanisms designed to ensure regional trade resilience. The limited refining capacity and insufficient investment in energy self-sufficiency weakened the region's capability to handle shocks. The infrastructure for intra-regional trade is still underdeveloped, with poor logistics, inadequate rail and port connections, and bureaucratic obstacles hindering an efficient supply chain response. The regional effort was further compromised by the absence of joint procurement strategies, regional food reserves, and coordinated contingency planning.

Discussion of Findings

This research aimed to examine how ECOWAS impacted Nigeria's trade amidst the economic consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, particularly regarding disruptions in food and energy between 2022 and 2025. The results indicate that Nigeria's trade vulnerabilities, especially concerning wheat and refined fuel, were significantly highlighted during the crisis. ECOWAS's inadequate institutional response intensified the repercussions of these disruptions. Utilizing Dependency Theory, the analysis points to how structural dependence and insufficient regional integration rendered Nigeria and its neighboring states highly vulnerable to shocks in the global supply chain.

The results demonstrate that the conflict drastically affected Nigeria's wheat imports, with more than 60% of its supply previously sourced from Russia and Ukraine. This steep decline led to food inflation, exacerbated food insecurity, and strained national budgets. Nigeria's reliance on these two nations serves as a prime example of the dependency model, wherein peripheral economies depend heavily on a limited array of external suppliers. In addition, in the energy sector, Nigeria's dependence on imported refined petroleum products despite being a crude oil exporter, illustrates a paradox of resource dependence. Although global sanctions on Russia resulted in increased demand for Nigerian crude, domestic challenges like pipeline vandalism, oil theft, and underperforming refineries hindered Nigeria from fully exploiting these opportunities. Fuel shortages and surging diesel prices spread throughout the ECOWAS region, particularly affecting landlocked nations. This underscores the interconnected nature of regional trade vulnerabilities and further illustrates how systemic dependence, combined with domestic inefficiencies, amplifies the impact of global disruptions.

The results emphasize that ECOWAS's response to trade shocks was predominantly reactive and disjointed. Contrary to other regional entities like the EU, which implemented joint procurement strategies and market stabilization mechanisms during the crisis, ECOWAS did not establish an integrated grain security framework or set up a regional food reserve system. Furthermore, the ECOWAS Commission and institutions such as the West African Monetary Institute (WAMI) did not provide substantial trade relief or coordinated policy responses. National actions, like Nigeria's initiatives for wheat production or temporary import diversification, were not synchronized with any comprehensive ECOWAS-

led strategy. The withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in 2024 further weakened ECOWAS unity, affecting the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and fragmenting intra-regional trade dynamics. These occurrences highlighted the bloc's institutional fragility and limited political cohesion, reinforcing Dependency Theory's critique of peripheral states' inability to collectively shield themselves from global shocks.

The findings illustrate the limited success of ECOWAS mechanisms in improving trade resilience. Essential regional tools such as the ETLS were compromised by border closures, political turmoil, and weak infrastructure. The absence of a regional emergency trade response strategy, a joint procurement system, or an integrated logistics network left member states to navigate challenges independently. Infrastructure shortcomings, such as inadequate port connectivity, deficient railway systems, and bureaucratic delays, further hindered regional supply chain adaptability. The lack of a coordinated energy strategy or a regional refining initiative contributed to extensive fuel shortages and rising energy prices. Additionally, ECOWAS's financial and fiscal constraints became apparent, as the bloc was largely excluded from significant continental interventions. Institutions like Afreximbank and the AfDB took the lead in financial responses, including the $4 billion UKAFPA package, further underscoring the bloc's limited fiscal autonomy and reinforcing the assertion that ECOWAS lacks the institutional robustness necessary to protect its members from global economic shocks. Unless ECOWAS evolves from a primarily nominal integration platform into a strong economic coordination mechanism, its member states will persistently face repeated vulnerabilities to global disruptions.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the economic impacts of the Russia–Ukraine war on Nigeria's food and energy trade from 2022 to 2025, with a particular emphasis on ECOWAS's role in mitigating these disruptions. Based on Dependency Theory, the research highlighted how dependence on foreign resources, especially wheat imports and refined petroleum, rendered Nigeria and other ECOWAS countries highly susceptible to global supply chain disturbances. Historically, over 60% of Nigeria's wheat supply was sourced from Russia and Ukraine, and the ensuing interruptions led to escalating food prices, increased import expenses, and heightened food insecurity, particularly in landlocked ECOWAS nations. Likewise, despite possessing substantial crude oil reserves, reliance on imported refined fuels led to surging domestic diesel and aviation fuel prices. These results exemplify Dependency Theory's premise that peripheral economies are particularly vulnerable to global shocks due to their dependence on foreign trade and limited domestic capabilities.

Although Nigeria implemented national strategies such as diversifying wheat sources, enhancing local production, and reforming port operations, these actions were executed independently. In contrast, ECOWAS did not deliver a prompt or coordinated response. Initiatives like the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) were undermined by political instability, border closures, and the withdrawal of significant member nations in 2024. The lack of a cohesive food security strategy, regional energy plan, or trade contingency framework revealed institutional and operational deficiencies.

The research further indicated that ECOWAS mechanisms proved largely ineffective. The organization struggled to facilitate trade coordination, establish strategic reserves, or encourage intra-regional procurement. Instead, financial assistance came from external entities such as Afreximbank, highlighting ECOWAS's structural and financial challenges. In this context, the Russia-Ukraine conflict served as a stress test for the bloc's capability to support member states during external crises. While Nigeria's domestic measures were praiseworthy, they were insufficient without unified regional policies.

The research concludes that Nigeria's significant dependence on external supply chains, in conjunction with institutional gaps within ECOWAS, amplified its vulnerability to

worldwide disruptions. The fragmented and reactive response of ECOWAS underscores an urgent necessity for institutional reform, enhanced financial mechanisms, and deeper regional integration. Without ambitious and coordinated reforms, the bloc risks continually failing to fulfill its mandate of promoting regional economic stability and self-sufficiency in an increasingly unpredictable global landscape.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance Nigeria's and ECOWAS's resilience to future global trade disruptions:

i. Nigeria and other ECOWAS member states should prioritize investments in local wheat cultivation, agro-processing, and refining capacity to reduce dependency on imports from volatile regions. Strategic support for farmers, subsidies, and public-private partnerships can play a critical role.
ii. Governments and ECOWAS institutions should jointly fund regional infrastructure, including rail networks, storage facilities, and energy pipelines. Improved logistics will facilitate intra-regional trade and reduce reliance on distant external markets.
iii. ECOWAS should set up regional grain and fuel buffer stocks, backed by a regional monitoring and early warning system to detect and respond swiftly to global supply chain shocks.
iv. A coordinated policy framework is essential for achieving a truly integrated regional market. ECOWAS should streamline tariffs, remove non-tariff barriers, and develop joint responses to crises to avoid fragmented national actions that undermine regional goals.

These actions will not only mitigate the immediate impacts of external shocks like the Russia-Ukraine conflict but also strengthen long-term regional trade resilience and food-energy security in West Africa.

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