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# Between strategic neglect and geopolitical realities: Ukraine and North Africa in Light of Russian Aggression

Madalina Dobrescu

Department of Historical and Classical Studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim, Norway

## ABSTRACT

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has moved the latter and its foreign policy into the limelight. Since Ukraine's independence in 1991, the scholarly literature has focused overwhelmingly on its path towards European integration and its relationship with NATO and Russia respectively. Systematic accounts of Ukrainian foreign policy and Ukraine's relations with actors outside the post-Soviet, European and transatlantic context are, however, largely missing. This applies also to Ukraine's relations with countries in North Africa, notably Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Geographically and culturally distant, and in the absence of reverberating historical legacies, successive Ukrainian governments have neglected the region while passively observing how Russia, particularly in recent years, has widened its regional influence. This profile sheds light on Ukraine's relations with North Africa and offers an empirical contribution to the analysis of Ukraine's evolving foreign policy in light of Russian military aggression since 2014. It argues that Ukraine needs to develop a more complex foreign policy that goes beyond EU and NATO membership. To gain full ownership over bilateral developments, in times of conflict and crisis, Ukraine has to adapt to geopolitical realities and attend to a wider range of countries, such as the ones in North Africa.

**KEYWORDS** Ukraine; north africa; foreign policy; Russia-Ukraine war; bilateral relations

## Introduction

Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine which began on 24 February 2022 has inevitably moved Ukraine and its foreign policy into the international limelight. Since Ukraine became independent in 1991, the academic and policy-oriented bodies of literature have focused overwhelmingly on the country's path towards European integration, Ukraine's relationship with NATO and Russia respectively, and its efforts to balance between Russia and the West. As a result, systematic scholarly accounts of Ukrainian foreign

**CONTACT** Madalina Dobrescu  [Madalina.dobrescu@ntnu.no](mailto:Madalina.dobrescu@ntnu.no)

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policy and the country's individual relations with actors outside the post-Soviet, European and transatlantic context continue to be in short supply. This applies also to Ukraine's relations with countries in North Africa, such as Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Geographically and culturally distant, and in the absence of reverberating historical legacies, the region has been neglected by successive Ukrainian governments while passively observing from the sidelines how Russia, particularly over the last 16 years, has widened its regional influence. This profile article aims at shedding light on Ukraine's relations with North Africa and offers an empirical contribution to the analysis of Ukraine's evolving foreign policy, in particular in light of Russian military aggression since 2014. The five North African countries have been selected not just because of their important geostrategic location in the Western Mediterranean and positioning as gateways to the African continent, but also because none of them has joined the international sanctions regime against Russia. The article's primary focus is on the recent evolution of relations between Ukraine and North Africa in spite of the absence of a consistent Ukrainian foreign policy strategy towards the region. It advances the argument that Ukraine needs to develop a more complex foreign policy whose priorities go beyond EU and NATO membership. With a view to gaining full ownership over bilateral relationships, in particular in times of conflict and crisis, Ukraine has to adapt to new geopolitical realities and pay significantly greater attention to a wider range of countries, such as the ones in North Africa.

### Ukraine and North Africa prior to 2014

Except for periods between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, during which Ukraine's southern regions and large parts of North Africa were part of the Ottoman Empire, linkages between Ukraine and the five countries of North Africa lacked closeness, depth and structure. During the Cold War, relations, limited predominantly to trade and cultural exchanges, were a function of Soviet aspirations to foster an anti-imperialistic narrative and counter US-American influence. The region emerged on Ukraine's foreign policy agenda only in the early 1990s mainly as a result of Ukraine's independence, declared on 24 August 1991. Surely, region-specific considerations did play a role as the newly independent country was about to find its place in the emergent post-Cold war order. For example, the *Verkhovna Rada*, i.e., the Ukrainian parliament, on 2 July 1993, in a resolution on the main directions of Ukraine's foreign policy, suggested that Ukraine should look 'for ways to establish contacts with the countries of the Near and Middle East, in particular the members of OPEC'<sup>1</sup>, mainly in the hope that this would facilitate Ukraine's envisaged diversification of energy supplies. In the same vein, some Ukrainian state officials argued that the region should be targeted as a lucrative market

for the sale of arms and weaponry spare parts of Soviet production, given that after the Soviet Union had collapsed, approximately one third of the Soviet military and defence complex remained on Ukraine's territory. In spite of the relatively swift establishment of diplomatic relations and dialogue channels with Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, these formats did, however, neither lead to a deepening of relations and the preferential provision of oil and gas, nor to any systematic attempt to position Ukraine as a relevant and influential arms supplier in the region. This was mainly due to a lack of a clear-cut foreign policy strategy in general and towards the region in particular and, secondly, because of a lack of financial resources to exert tangible influence.

Ukraine's establishment of bilateral relations with the five North African countries should be regarded in the context of the widespread elite consensus, generated by President Kravchuk – in power between December 1991 and July 1994 – to utilize diplomacy as a means to strengthen and assert Ukraine's sovereignty. Whilst Egypt recognized Ukraine already on 25 January 1992, followed by Libya on 17 March 1992, it took Ukraine until late June 1992 and August 1992 respectively to establish diplomatic relations with Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. Out of the five countries, and inspired by past memories when, between the mid-1950s and early 1970s, Egypt was the Soviet Union's main ally in the entire Middle East and North Africa, Cairo was singled out as particularly important. The Ukrainian Parliament's foreign policy resolution of July 1993 put it explicitly on par with countries such as India, China and Israel as far as Ukraine's 'geostrategic and geoeconomic interests'<sup>2</sup> were concerned, a fact that was also symbolically accentuated by the visits of President Kravchuk in December 1992, Prime Minister Lazarenko in March 1997, President Yushchenko in April 2008 and Prime Minister Azarov in November 2010.

Though Kravchuk's successors continued to regard the preservation of Ukraine's independence as the country's overarching foreign policy objective, as stipulated in the Law of Ukraine on the principles of domestic and foreign policy, in the second half of the 1990s the actual focus of Ukrainian foreign policy shifted away from diversification and globality towards putting Ukraine on a path towards Euro-Atlantic integration and the consolidation of good relations with Russia. Whereas the latter goal, particularly accentuated by the multi-vector foreign policy of President Kuchma and President Yanukovich respectively, has undoubtedly changed with the outbreak of Russia-sponsored hostilities in Eastern Ukraine and Russia's annexation of Crimea in early 2014, the former, together with Ukrainian accession to NATO, has become a constitutionally enshrined foreign policy objective in 2018/2019. As far as relations with North Africa are concerned, throughout these years, Ukraine has become an increasingly important wheat supplier to Egypt and Tunisia and has attracted students particularly – though not exclusively – from

Morocco, Egypt, and Tunisia, utilizing higher education as a major source of state revenue.

## Ukraine and North Africa between 2014 and 2022

### *Ukraine-Egypt relations: Too little, too late?*

Over the years, Ukraine has concluded 31 conventions with Egypt, thus formalizing relations to a larger degree than with any of the other four countries. At the same time, though, none of these agreements are of a political nature, let alone address issues related to defence and security. The only ones that have been concluded since Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity (Euromaidan) in 2013/2014 are two memoranda of understanding between the administration of the seaport of Odessa and the administration of the seaport of Alexandria and Dumietta respectively on 2 November 2018, demonstrating the extent to which cooperation has been characterized predominantly by its focus on technical and trade matters. The absence of a more ambitious and encompassing cooperation agreement can be explained by the relatively unimportant role occupied by North African countries in Ukrainian foreign policy. Particularly after 2014, the country's foreign policy capacity has been absorbed by its efforts to resolve the conflict with Russia in the framework of the Normandy Format – a grouping composed of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France, leading to the September 2014 Minsk I and the February 2015 Minsk II Protocol – and by the objective of integrating Ukraine into Euro-Atlantic structures, including through the implementation of the 2014 EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. It is against this background that the low frequency of governmental exchanges between the two sides between 2014 and the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 should be regarded. During this time, delegations from both sides met only fourteen times, addressing mainly trade and economic development, agricultural cooperation, and tourism.

Among these dialogues, the visit of Foreign Minister Klimkin to Egypt in April 2018 – the first of a Ukrainian foreign minister since December 2005 – stood out. It marked the resumption of direct flights between the two countries since Ukraine had imposed a ban on direct flights following the deadly bombing of a Russian charter jet in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula in 2015. Also, due to agreed visa cooperation, Ukraine gradually became the second most important tourism source market for Egypt after Germany.<sup>3</sup> Klimkin's visit helped to further transform the bilateral trade portfolio. While in the past, trade between the two parties had heavily relied on the export of Ukrainian iron, steel and mineral products – goods that are predominantly produced in Ukraine's embattled Donbas region – following Klimkin's visit, cereals have become the most important trade commodity, accounting for 76.9 per cent

of all Ukrainian exports to Egypt in 2021.<sup>4</sup> Considering Egypt's position as the world's largest wheat importer and Ukraine's status as one of the ten biggest wheat producers, this shift has not just helped Ukraine to consolidate its significant bilateral trade surplus but also establish itself as Egypt's second most important wheat supplier after Russia. Predictably, however, this has not led Egypt to adopt a definitive pro-Ukrainian stance towards Russia's unlawful actions both before and after February 2022. The Egyptian regime has not joined the international sanctions regime against Russia, adopted first in 2014 and then in 2022, nor has it consistently voted in favour of the various resolutions adopted to condemn Russia in the UN General Assembly. At first, successive Ukrainian governments in the immediate aftermath of the events in 2014 made no effort to rally for Egypt's support and weaken the latter's strategic partnership with Russia. Hence, Egypt, balancing between Russia and the United States, on 27 March 2014 abstained when the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Later, on 2 March 2022, when the UN General Assembly adopted resolution ES-11/1,<sup>5</sup> deploring 'in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine', Egypt initially tried to remain neutral again but did eventually, to the surprise of most observers, vote in favour of the resolution. This, though, was due to significant pressure by the G7 ambassadors in Cairo who, on 1 March 2022, issued a strong joint statement, urging Egypt to condemn the Russian invasion,<sup>6</sup> as well as by EU member states and the United States, the latter of which had allegedly promised Egypt the delivery of F-15 fighter aircrafts. As it became clear that only a few weeks later the UN General Assembly would vote on a motion to remove Russia from the UN Human Rights Council, the Ukrainian government started to proactively lobby for Egyptian support. On 24 and 30 March, Ukrainian President Zelenskiy held telephone conversations with Egyptian President el-Sisi, and on 5 April Foreign Minister Kuleba, on the sidelines of a meeting with the League of Arab States Contact Group in Warsaw, met with Egyptian Foreign Minister Shoukry, in an attempt to convince Egypt to vote in favour of Russia's proposed removal. These efforts were preceded by the issuing of a memorandum by the Ukrainian government a few weeks earlier, requesting the League of Arab Nations to condemn Russia. These initiatives turned out to be unsuccessful as Egypt abstained when the vote was eventually held on 7 April 2022. Later, relations even became strained in the wake of the Russia-orchestrated illegal referenda, held in the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Cherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia in late September 2022, when rumours surfaced that Egypt had sent observers who confirmed the compliance of the referenda with international standards. Though the Egyptian foreign ministry was quick in denying these claims, Egypt's former deputy foreign minister Haridy launched a scathing attack, arguing that Ukraine, whilst pursuing a 'policy of blackmailing Europe with US help, [...] is also seeking to extort

other countries that refuse to side with either Ukraine or Russia, including Egypt'.<sup>7</sup> The fact that Egypt did vote in favour of the UN General Assembly's resolution A/RES/ES-11/4, condemning Russia's illegal so-called referenda in the four abovementioned regions, should not be interpreted as a sign of Egypt's support for Ukraine but rather as a result of external, read: US, pressure, as was the case in March 2022. Egypt's inconsistent voting behaviour, together with the country's General Authority for Supply Commodities' decision of late July 2022 to cancel contracts for 240.000 tons of Ukrainian wheat stuck at the Ukrainian port of Chornomorsk, clearly have the potential to undermine an already weakly developed relationship even further.

### *Ukraine and Morocco: From negligence to strategic partnership?*

Unlike Egypt, Ukrainian authorities have never singled out Morocco as a country of particular relevance that might merit closer attention. Morocco, a staunch military ally of the United States and, at the same time, Russia's most important trading partner in Africa, chose to not take a decisive stance vis-à-vis Russia's violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and did not participate in the vote of the United Nations General Assembly on 27 March 2014 with respect to resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Moreover, Morocco, like Egypt, has refused to join any of the restrictive measures imposed on Russia in 2014 and 2022 by the EU, the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, and Australia. In spite of this, neither President Poroshenko, in power between 2014 and 2019, nor his successor, President Zelenskiy, considered it relevant to adjust Ukrainian foreign policy and bestow greater strategic relevance on Morocco, potentially leading to more aligned cooperation in international organizations, particularly the United Nations. Also, neither of them regarded Ukraine-Morocco trade, which as of 2011 has seen a considerable upswing when compared to the previous two decades – widening Ukraine's bilateral trade surplus – as a vehicle to strengthen political ties. In 2020, President Zelenskiy tried to instil some momentum into the relationship by appointing a new ambassador to Rabat, and Foreign Minister Kuleba – in the context of a telephone conversation with Moroccan Foreign Minister Bourita in mid-September – suggested to revive the dysfunctional Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation.<sup>8</sup> This was complemented by public announcements of the Deputy Minister of Economic Development Taras Kachka in early December that Ukraine was developing plans to initiate talks on the conclusion of a bilateral free trade agreement. That these plans, however, never materialized attests to their ad-hoc character and lack of embedment in a broader strategic vision for North Africa.

It is in this light that the phone conversation, held between Kuleba and Bourita in late March and early April 2022 respectively, i.e., just a few weeks

after Russia had launched its full-blown attack on Ukraine, must be seen. While it could have been assumed that the Ukrainian leadership would adopt the same approach that it pursued towards Egypt, namely lobby Morocco to openly support Ukraine and vote for Russia's expulsion from the UN Human Rights Council, this did not happen. In fact, the conversation of 22 March was initiated by the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and did not serve the purpose of assuring Ukraine of Morocco's explicit support. Instead, it was a pre-emptive attempt on the part of Bourita to inform Kuleba that a phone talk he had incidentally held with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov on the same day was not supposed to be interpreted as an indication that Morocco was about to give up its position of presumptive neutrality towards the conflict. Still under the impression of Morocco's absence at the United Nation's General Assembly's vote on resolution ES-11/1 on 2 March 2022, Zelenskiy, when receiving the information about Bourita's talks with Lavrov, held Ukrainian ambassador Oksana Vasylieva personally responsible for not having prevented either of the two developments and dismissed her on 31 March. Resorting to a public video address, which, at the same time, also served as a disguised warning to Ukrainian diplomats elsewhere, he declared that '[there] are those who work together with everyone for the defense of the country, so that Ukraine wins its future. We appreciate the work of each of these people. There are those who waste their time just to stay in office. Today I have signed a decree for the dismissal of the Ukrainian ambassador to Morocco [...] There will be no weapons, there will be no sanctions, there will be no obstacles for Russian companies? With all due respect, find another job'.<sup>9</sup> The public and rather undiplomatic character of this message forced Kuleba just one day later to reach out to Bourita again, this time to assure the Moroccan authorities, almost in a reversal of roles, that Zelenskiy did not mean to publicly blame the Kingdom for its inaction.

At that point, the Ukrainian authorities could not anticipate that up until the end of 2022, Ukraine-Morocco relations were indeed about to witness a new momentum. Morocco continued to be absent at successive Ukraine-Russia-war-related UN General Assembly votes, except for the one on 12 October 2022, when, for once, it voted in favour of resolution ES-11/L.5, rejecting Russia's annexation claims and demanding the immediate reversal of its annexation declaration. But it participated in all seven meetings of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group (the so-called Ramstein Group) which coordinates international weapons supplies to Ukraine. What is more, in December 2022, Morocco announced the departure from its past position of non-involvement and agreed to provide the Ukrainian military with spare parts for its T-72 tanks and it even approved of the diversion of Moroccan T-72B battle tanks – after modernization by a Czech enterprise – to Ukraine as part of a multi-million arrangement supported by the United States and the Netherlands. As noteworthy as this decision is from a Moroccan foreign policy perspective, it had



rather little, if anything, to do with Ukrainian foreign policy entrepreneurship. In effect, the deal was the result of intense pressure by the United States and a growing wariness of the Moroccan regime of the deepening relations between its regional rival Algeria and Russia and the potential implications for Morocco's claims over Western Sahara. Thus, as far as the latter are concerned, it seems only too obvious that Ukraine, normally a supporter of the UN-led settlement process and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), will be expected rather sooner than later to return Morocco's favour and, following the United States, potentially recognize Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara territory.

### *Ukraine and Algeria relations: The long shadow of Russia's influence*

At no point has the Ukrainian foreign policy establishment, neither in the wake of the outbreak of the Donbas war in 2014 and Russia's annexation of Crimea nor after the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, regarded Algeria as a strategic target or invested in a concerted effort to rally for its political and/or military support. Considering that Algeria is the largest country in Africa, a regional power in the Maghreb, one of the most active Arab states in the United Nations system, and for decades has been a leader in the framework of the Non-Alignment Movement, this seems rather counterintuitive. On one hand, this can be explained by Ukraine's decades-old policy of strategic neglect towards North Africa. On the other hand, passivity on the part of Ukraine has been a function of three factors. First, since its independence in 1962, Algeria has pursued a strict sovereigntist and non-interventionist foreign policy and adopted a policy of neutrality and a role of conflict mediator. This stance is reflected by the fact that Algeria has systematically abstained from all votes at the United Nations concerning Russian aggression towards Ukraine between early 2014 and 2022, except for the vote on Russia's exclusion from the UN Human Rights Council on 7 April 2022 which it vetoed. Secondly, Algeria draws on decades of close relations with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and subsequently with Russia. For years, the latter has been Algeria's main arms supplier and since 2001 it is a strategic partner who Algeria occasionally even engages with in joint military exercises such as, for example, in the autumn of 2022. Moreover, Russia is seen by Algeria as an important partner in the context of the Western Saharan conflict. Thirdly, considering the centrality of the latter in Algerian foreign policy, and taking into account growing support among EU and NATO member states for Morocco's policy towards that conflict, Algeria keeps holding on to a pragmatic policy that does not antagonize Russia even though this is largely at odds with its strong post-colonial attitudes. That Ukraine can increasingly draw on Rabat's support in the Ramstein Group and will benefit from Moroccan lethal supplies in 2023 is poised to further

strengthen rather than loosen Russia-Algeria ties. All in all, these are dynamics past and current Ukrainian governments have been well aware of for years. Against this backdrop, Foreign Minister Kuleba's participation in mediation talks on 5 April 2022 in Warsaw with the League of Arab Nations Contact Group, led by Algerian Foreign Minister Lamamra, Kuleba's phone conversation with Lamamra on 7 May, or President Zelenskiy's letter to Algerian President Tebboune on 20 June 2022, must not be overestimated and are certainly no harbinger of an imminent foreign policy change towards Algeria. The conversations came strictly in response to the group's meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov in Moscow on 4 April and Lavrov's Algiers visit in May respectively, whilst Zelenskiy's letter revolved exclusively around congratulating the Algerian president on the country's 60<sup>th</sup> Independence Day.

### *Ukraine and Tunisia and Libya: The role of local factors*

As with Algeria, Ukraine's relations with both Tunisia and Libya have been suffering from a lack of mutual interest and a low degree of institutionalized cooperation beyond the existence of a limited agreement on agriculture, health, industry and transport (Libya) and an Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic and Technical Cooperation (Tunisia). In the case of Tunisia, this can be explained, on one hand, by the country's democratization process between 2011 and 2019 and its strong focus on domestic political and macro-economic development whilst concentrating predominantly on ensuring the continuous flow of financial assistance from its main partners, the EU and the United States. Moreover, Tunisia over the past decade has been viewed by Ukrainian foreign policy makers as comparatively insignificant, not least due to its small market size and its sandwiched position between Algeria and conflict-torn Libya. Similarly, Libya's successive internationally recognized governments, having been exposed to two civil wars between 2011 and 2022, a sizable military presence of foreign state- and non-state actors, as well as a year-long political stalemate over the country's executive branch, have been preoccupied with preventing Libya from becoming a full-fledged failed state.

In spite of these distinct domestic dynamics, Tunisia, which is also a member of the Ramstein Group, and Libya, have both in 2014 and 2022 repeatedly voted in favour of the various Ukraine-related resolutions at the United Nations, explicitly condemning Russia's aggression and violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity. Furthermore, both Libya in the summer of 2009 and Tunisia in November 2021 expressed their readiness to initiate bilateral talks over free trade agreements which, however, never materialized. These dynamics, though, cannot be said to have come in response to active Ukrainian soliciting. Instead, they must be understood against the backdrop

of Tunisia's and Libya's political and economic needs. As far as the latter are concerned, both countries' food security has in recent years become increasingly dependent on Ukrainian cereals imports – Libya is nowadays among the top-10 purchasers of Ukrainian wheat – which has made them extremely vulnerable to Russia's 2022 blockade of Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. With respect to the former, i.e., both countries' diplomatic support for Ukraine, it is likely a function of their western orientation, their political, financial and security reliance on the United States and EU member states and, by extension, the external legitimacy these have bestowed on their respective regimes. This applies most certainly to Libya's weak and domestically contested Tripoli-based governments as well as to the regime of Tunisian president Saïed, who came to power in 2019 and has increasingly centralized powers in his hands.

## Conclusions

This article has demonstrated the limited extent to which North Africa featured in Ukraine's foreign policy throughout the last thirty years in general and since Russia initiated its unprovoked attack, first in 2014 and most recently in February 2022. For a long time, the Ukrainian foreign policy establishment lacked a clear-cut foreign policy vision for the region, but present circumstances characterized by wide-spread support from western partners and their active lobbying on Ukraine's behalf present an important opportunity for potential policy changes. This is an important finding in its own right, given the region's important geopolitical positioning in the Western Mediterranean and as a gateway to Africa, as well as its status as a host of multiple territorial conflicts, Islamist insurgency, and migration-related challenges.

Ukraine's foreign policy elite has tended to turn a blind eye to North African countries' role as important veto-players and/or supporters in the framework of United Nations votes concerning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. That four out of the five North Africa countries did, however, on various occasions support pro-Ukraine UN resolutions, with Morocco in December 2022 even pledging substantial lethal support in the form of battle tanks, cannot be attributed to Ukrainian policy entrepreneurship or concerted lobbying efforts. Instead, these decisions were the result of a combination of external pressure, mainly by the United States and other western allies, and local regimes' specific cost-benefit considerations unrelated to the conflict in Ukraine.

This dependency on external actors, in particular in times of existential crisis such as the war with Russia, serves as an overdue reminder that Ukraine, while focusing on integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, cannot afford to continue pursuing a rather minimalist foreign policy that neglects important world regions and their inherent potential for significant collaboration in numerous policy fields, issue-areas, and international organizations. Though

Ukraine is inevitably forced to mobilize all resources at its disposal to restore its territorial integrity, the war with Russia and the political and material support that Ukraine has obtained from a large number of actors do in fact offer the country windows of opportunity to create new inroads, become more influential, and generate new and long-lasting loyalties across the globe. This potential is real, particularly as Russia, being increasingly absorbed – militarily, politically, financially, and economically – by the war and the impact of Western sanctions, is bound to pool resources if it wants to avoid overstretch. Thus, for Ukraine the war with Russia may, in hindsight be seen as a critical juncture that motivated it to transform its long-held, though geographically limited status-seeking external action into a robust, more global status-enhancing foreign policy.

## Notes

1. Parliament Decree No. 3360-XII, 'On the main directions of the foreign policy of Ukraine' (1993).
2. Ibid.
3. In 2019, approx. 1.5 million Ukrainians visited the country as opposed to ca. 2.4 million German tourists. In 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, Ukraine was the first country worldwide to resume tourism cooperation with Egypt, sending approx. 730.000 tourists to Egypt.
4. <https://Egypt.mfa.gov.ua/en/partnership/397-torgovelyno-jekonomichne-spiv-robitnictvo-mizh-ukrajinoju-ta-jegiptom/trade-and-economic-cooperation> (24 September 2022).
5. UN General Assembly Resolution Aggression against Ukraine, ES-11/1, 2 March 2022, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3965290?ln=en> (24 September 2022).
6. Joint Statement of the G7 Ambassadors: 'We must stand with Ukraine'. U.S. Embassy in Egypt. 1 March 2022, G7 Ambassadors: We Must Stand with Ukraine – U.S. Embassy in Egypt ([usembassy.gov](http://usembassy.gov)) (24 September 2022).
7. Quoted in Al-Monitor, 'Russian referendums strain Egypt-Ukraine ties', 20 October 2022, Russian referendums strain Egypt-Ukraine ties – Al-Monitor: Independent, trusted coverage of the Middle East (25 September 2022).
8. The *Intergovernmental Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation held its only meeting in 2009*.
9. Euroweekly, 'Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismisses the Ukrainian ambassador to Morocco', 1 April 2022, <https://euroweeklynews.com/2022/04/01/volodymyr-zelenskyy-dismisses-the-ukrainian-ambassador-to-morocco/>

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).