



# The Repercussions of the Ukrainian Crisis on the Arab World and the Palestine Issue



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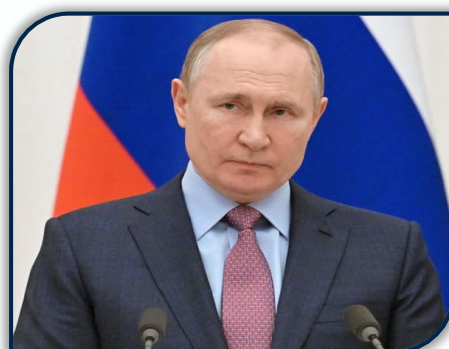
## The Repercussions of the Ukrainian Crisis on the Arab World and the Palestine Issue

Walid ‘Abd al-Hay<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The Ukrainian crisis may be surprising to a large segment of international public opinion, but it is not so for specialists in international affairs and for countries that have serious think tanks or official advisory bodies for decision-makers. It is sufficient to consider two closely related issues to confirm the idea that the crisis is not surprising for these international segments:

**First:** What is called the Russian Federation Presidential Edict signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin from 2002 to 2015, where a 41-page document issued on 31/12/2015 reveals the following: <sup>2</sup>



Vladimir Putin

- 1. The buildup of the military potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the endowment of it with global functions pursued in violation of the norms of international law, the galvanization of the bloc countries' military activity, the further expansion of the alliance, and the location of its military infrastructure closer to Russian borders are creating a threat to national security. The opportunities for maintaining global and regional stability are shrinking significantly with the siting in Europe, the Asia-Pacific region, and the Near East of components of the US missile defense system in the conditions of the practical implementation of the “global strike” concept and the deployment of strategic nonnuclear precision weapon systems and also in the event that weapons are deployed in space.
- 2. The West's stance aimed at countering integration processes and creating seats of tension in the Eurasian region is exerting a negative influence on the realization of Russian national interests. The support of the United States and the European Union for the anti-constitutional coup d'état in Ukraine led to a deep split in Ukrainian society and the emergence of an armed conflict. The strengthening of far right nationalist ideology, the deliberate shaping in the



Ukrainian population of an image of Russia as an enemy, the undisguised gamble on the forcible resolution of intrastate contradictions, and the deep socioeconomic crisis are turning Ukraine into a chronic seat of instability in Europe and in the immediate vicinity of Russia's borders.



- ▶ 3. There is a continuing risk of an increase in the number of countries possessing nuclear weapons and of the proliferation and utilization of chemical weapons, and also uncertainty about instances of foreign states' possession of biological weapons and their potential for developing and producing them. The network of US military-biological laboratories on the territory of states adjacent to Russia is being expanded.



- ▶ 4. In the sphere of international security Russia remains committed to the utilization of primarily political and legal instruments and diplomatic and peacekeeping mechanisms. **The utilization of military force to protect national interests is possible only if all adopted measures of a nonviolent nature have proved ineffective**

**Second:** The political literature of the Russian intellectual elites, in particular those having impact on Russian decision-making bodies. Here, it is sufficient to point out that the most important contemporary Russian thinker, Aleksandr Dugin, whom the West calls “Putin Brain,”<sup>3</sup> addressed the issue and defined its course in detail in his book “Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia” published in 1999, and Dugin says the following:<sup>4</sup>



**Aleksandr Dugin**



- ▶ 1. Ukraine's independence tendency will provoke an assured armed conflict with Russia.
- ▶ 2. NATO's control of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles Straits makes Russian control of the Black Sea useless to achieve access to warm waters.
- ▶ 3. Ukraine's attempt to join NATO represents an "absolute anomaly carried out through irresponsible steps."
- ▶ 4. Ukraine's independence tendency represents a serious threat to the Eurasian project which is the central objective of Russia's strategy.
- ▶ 5. Russian control over the northern shores of the Black Sea must be absolute, extending from the lands of Ukraine to Abkhazia.
- ▶ 6. The necessity of completely removing Western influence from this region and from the entire Russian proximity.

On the issue of Ukraine, Dugin says:

- ▶ 1. The Ukrainian geopolitical and ethnic reality only allows it to be "neutral," neither Western nor Eastern.
- ▶ 2. Ukraine with its current borders and sovereign orientations is a severe blow to the geopolitical security of Russia and is equivalent to penetrating its territory.
- ▶ 3. Ukraine should be divided into several belts:
  - a. Eastern Ukraine (from east of the Dnieper River to as far as the Sea of Azov), with a predominance of Great Russian ethnos and an Orthodox Little Russian population.
  - b. Crimea: It is an ethnically diverse region and some of its groups have anti-Russian geopolitical links (such as the Tatars). Therefore, Crimea must be controlled and brought under direct strategic control of Moscow.
  - c. The central part of Ukraine from Chernigov to Odessa, culturally related to Eastern Ukraine, and unconditionally included in the Eurasian geopolitical system.
  - d. Western Ukrainian, the most hostile to Russia: its dependence on NATO should be eradicated. It should be established there instead a Eurasian continental defense complex in which the Eurasian core (Russia) cooperates with the European core (Germany), to complete the disengagement between Europe and the US in the long run, because an independent Ukraine is a declaration of a geopolitical war on Russia.





- 4. Russia's avoidance of a NATO strike requires immediate Russian action with Ukraine.



The above clearly indicates that the Ukrainian issue is a continuation of the Russian policy to strip all countries of the vital area directly adjacent to Russia from any links with Western security arrangements of all kinds, in addition to the clear assertion that if this goal is not achieved by peaceful means, it must be achieved by force.

#### **First: Repercussions of the Crisis on the Arab World**

The strategic analysis of the background of this crisis indicates that it is a competition between two empires, the first is the Soviet Union, which has disintegrated and fears that the disintegration will reach the core state, i.e., Russia, and the second is a declining empire, which is the US, in a clear number of soft and hard power indicators.<sup>5</sup> The disintegration of the Soviet Union continued with its dangerous repercussions on the Russian state, as we indicated in the vision of Putin and Aleksandr Dugin. The US decline is a phenomenon dealt with by many American studies, starting with Paul Kennedy who saw that the US imperial overstretch is the precursor of strategic decline, then the study of Richard Barnett,



who estimated in the 1980s that the US would know the manifestations of decline clearly within a quarter of a century. A study by Flora Lewis, a year after Paul Kennedy's study, supported the idea of burdens befalling the US and imposing its decline. Also, James Schlesinger believed that the decline of the US in terms of economic and military power and political influence is a given. As for Peter Passell, he analyzed the reasons of US loss of leadership in its economic and scientific competition with Japan, while Tom Wicker asserted that the dependence of US on external sources for raw materials and energy weakens its ability to maintain its advanced position as a great power. The literature on US declinism has increased since 2004, with the study of Niall Ferguson, who saw that the US aspires to globalize free markets, the rule of law and representative government, but shies away from the long-term commitments of manpower and money that are indispensable in taking a more active role in resolving conflict arising from the failure of states. He believes that the US is an empire in denial of its decline, especially due to its internal weakness, particularly regarding the financial deficit and the weakness of human power, and by not acknowledging the scale of global responsibilities. He believes that the US is in the process of decline, and while none of the major powers will replace it, "terrorist" organizations and organized crime gangs will fill the void. This, in Ferguson's view, justifies the return of US-China-European cooperation. Ferguson is one of the American thinkers most hostile to the EU, and has called on President Donald Trump for non-confrontation with China, besides the need to deal with Russia as a great power and recognize a vital scope for it in Eurasia.<sup>6</sup>



The study of the US National Intelligence Council, issued in 2008, was one of the predictions that reinforced the idea of the transition of the international system to multipolarity, as it talks about the emergence of new major powers, the continuation of economic globalization, the transfer of international wealth from the West to the East and the growth of sub-state and supra-state entities. The study asserted that by 2025, the world would move towards a smaller gap between regions and states in the next international system.<sup>7</sup>

It seems that each of the two empires (the one which has disintegrated and the other which is declining) seeks from time to time to employ geostrategic regions



in its favor to prevent the continuation of disintegration within the Russian interior and prevent limiting the expansion of its vital space. The other empire (the US) seeks to prevent the acceleration of its decline and restore some of its relations with Europe, especially in the context of laxity of the NATO structure. Doubtless, all of the above extends its effects once again to the Middle East, especially the Arab parts.

There is an impression in the Middle East that the importance of the region to US policy has declined, as evident in the strategic plan published by US President Joe Biden.<sup>8</sup> This has prompted some countries in the region to try to compensate for the US decline by rapprochement with Israel, so as to confront the internal opponents of each country, not to mention to consolidate the alliance against Iran.<sup>9</sup> It seems that the Ukrainian crisis will further reduce US follow-up on the Middle East in the coming period, which will affect Arab relations with Israel, Iran and Turkey. In fact, the degree of Middle Eastern response to US demands regarding the Ukrainian crisis (the blockade of Russia, support for Ukraine militarily or increased production of gas and oil, etc.) indicates a degree of unresponsiveness that reflects a sense of “relative” change in the position of the Middle East in US strategy.<sup>10</sup>



**Joe Biden**

On the Russian side, among the challenges that Russian policy faces concerning the Arab region is its inability to reconcile the contradictions of regional powers, which is evident in the following aspects:

- ▶ 1. The problem of reconciling Russian interests, and Iranian and Israeli contradictions.
- ▶ 2. The problem of reconciling the contradictions between the Gulf states in particular and a large percentage of Arab countries, on one hand, and Iran, on the other hand.
- ▶ 3. The problem of reconciliation between the Israeli security requirements in Syria and the security requirements of Syria.
- ▶ 4. The problem of reconciling Russian commitments towards Palestinian rights on the one hand, and Israeli requirements on the other hand.





The complexities of reconciliation in these political aspects are increased by adding the problem of discrepancy in the trade volume between Russia and the Arab region as follows: <sup>11</sup>

- 1. The annual rate of the volume of Russian trade exchange with the Arab region during the past three years is approximately \$18 billion. However, Arab countries are divided into two groups: a group mostly importing Russian civilian goods (especially wheat and iron), and another group mostly importing Russian military goods. For example, Egypt, Morocco, UAE, KSA, Tunisia, Jordan and Qatar stand in order at the top of the group of Arab countries mostly importing civilian goods from Russia. On the military side, we find that during the period 2017–2021, Syria tops the list of countries importing Russian major arms at 95% of its weapons, followed by Algeria 81%, Iraq 44%, Egypt 41% and the UAE 5.3%,<sup>12</sup> taking into account that the volume of Russian arms sales to Arab countries during the period 2017–2021 constitutes 21% of its total sales, which is equivalent to about 5 billion annually. <sup>13</sup>



Concerning the repercussions of the Ukrainian crisis on Arab-Russian relations, it is worth mentioning that Arab countries importing Russian civil goods and those importing Russian military goods have often had conflicting relations. This is considered a problem for Russia, in the sense of how to curb the impact of Arab disputes on its relationship with all Arab countries, particularly in the coming period (next five years) in which it seems that the international economic blockade of Russia will include civilian goods more than military goods. This means that the Russian need for the Arab countries importing civilian goods will be greater than its direct need for Arab countries importing military goods, which may affect some of its orientations in the region, especially concerning the Palestine issue. It is



noted that the Palestinian–Russian trade volume does not exceed \$5 million, according to 2020 figures,<sup>14</sup> out of a total of \$18 billion the volume of Arab–Russian trade in 2021.<sup>15</sup> Hence, the Arab–Russian relations are subject in the near future to fluctuation, which may be sharp at times.



- 2. The same problem is faced when comparing the trade volume of Russia's relations with Israel which exceeds \$3.5 billion—of which \$828 million are Russian imports from Israel—and its relations with Iran, whose total trade with Russia amounts to \$797 million. This means that developing relations with either side (Iran and Israel) will be a problem for Russia, especially in light of the blockade on Russia and the extent of adherence to it.

**Table 1: Arab Imports of Civilian Goods from Russia in 2020 (\$ million)**

Country	Egypt	Morocco	UAE	KSA	Tunisia	Jordan	Qatar	Lebanon	Algeria	Syria	Oman	Other Arab countries
Imports from Russia	516	393	346	219	125	83	37	12	9	8	2	1

## **Second: The Palestinian and Israeli Dimensions in the Ukrainian Crisis**

We infer from the above that the international tension concerning Ukraine was unequivocally indicating an accelerating pace of events and an imminent confrontation. We think that Israel, due to its infiltration into most decision-making bodies in major countries, was expecting such a development.

As known, Israel has strong relations with the US and close relations with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky—due to his Jewish heritage and his support of Israeli policy and, as well as the fact that his Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal.<sup>16</sup> Also, Israel has no desire not to provoke the Russian leadership. Therefore, the Israeli government has sought to balance its position in a way that would not result in a strategic loss, which is in line with the orientations of Israeli public opinion whose orientations regarding the Ukrainian crisis were as follows:<sup>17</sup>



**Volodymyr Zelensky**



**Table 2: Israeli Public Opinion Regarding the Ukrainian-Russian War**

Stance	Percentage (%)
Supporting Ukraine	76
Supporting Russia	10
Acceptance of the government's policy of neutrality	
Supporters	51
Opponents	34

The previous table reveals that the bias towards Ukraine is predominant in terms of the “political orientation” of society and the ruling authority, while the adoption of the official policy of “neutrality” was supported by nearly half of the Israeli society.

There is no doubt that the content of Ukrainian President Zelensky's address to the Israeli Knesset indicates the depth of the relationship between Israel and Ukraine, especially with the Ukrainian president's awareness of the Israeli popular sympathy with his country. In his address, he referred to the following points of clear significance:<sup>18</sup>



- ▶ 1. Comparing between the Arab “threat” to the existence of Israel and the Russian threat to the existence of Ukraine.
- ▶ 2. His demand for Israel to provide his country with weapons, especially missile defense systems.
- ▶ 3. His demand for Israel to implement sanctions against Russia and put pressure on Russian business.
- ▶ 4. His implicit criticism of the Israeli effort to mediate in the conflict by saying that mediation is between states and not between good and evil.

This means that there is a clear Israeli embarrassment, whether by declaring neutrality or mediating between the two parties of the conflict, for any position of



the Israeli government will have consequences, and that's what the Israeli diplomacy is trying to avoid.

However, this does not negate that there are aspects of the crisis that are subject to Israeli government investment as follows:

- 1. Displacement of Ukrainian Jews of: As soon as the military confrontations began, the Israeli Minister of Immigration Pnina Tamano-Shata announced that Israel was ready to receive thousands of “Jewish” immigrants from Ukraine.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Israeli authorities indicated that Israel had notified Ukraine's Jews in advance to prepare for migration in the event of an armed conflict.<sup>20</sup> Some of them have already started arriving in Israel, whether from Ukraine or Russia.<sup>21</sup> The Institute for Jewish Policy Research estimates that the number of Jews in Ukraine who could benefit from the Israeli Law of Return and immigrate to Israel from Ukraine is approximately 200 thousand,<sup>22</sup> concentrated in Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkov and Odessa, noting that these cities are the site of fierce fighting, which increases pressure on the Jews of these cities to emigrate. However, a report by Israeli Channel 13 indicated that the picture of general turmoil in the Middle East and the effects of the battle of the “Sword of Jerusalem” would prompt the majority of Ukraine's Jews to hesitate about immigration or to choose countries other than Israel.<sup>23</sup> Israeli media have indicated that only about 50% of Ukrainian Jews seeking to leave Ukraine wanted to go to Israel,<sup>24</sup> noting that Ukraine prohibits migration for males between the ages of 18 and 60 years.<sup>25</sup> The Israeli Minister of Interior Ayelet Shaked, who expects the arrival of tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews, is facilitating Jewish emigration from Ukraine and she demanded to exempt Ukrainian Jews from some security restrictions upon their arrival to Israel, with the possibility of congregating them temporarily in camps in the Negev.<sup>26</sup> Notably, the Jewish Immigration Department indicated that until the beginning of March (the fifth day of the war), 303 immigrants arrived, but 50 of them were denied entry.<sup>27</sup>

However, some concerns began to appear within the Israeli society between Jews of “Russian origin” and Jews of Ukrainian origin, and the war began to leave its impact on the subordinate loyalties (Russian Jew/Ukrainian Jew) within the Israeli society.<sup>28</sup> The debate even returned to the Israeli society regarding who is a Jew, and who should be allowed to hold Israeli citizenship. Is the Law of Return issued in 1950 applied to Ukrainian immigrants or not, in light of the objections of some rabbis to the “identity” of migrants from Ukraine or Russia in particular? Especially when emphasizing the distinction between an Israeli who is the grandson of four grandparents (the parents of his mother and father) or two grandparents (one of his parents is not Jewish).<sup>29</sup>



Also, many of Russia's economic elites are of dual Russian and Israeli citizenship, such as Roman Abramovich, Mikhail Fridman, Petr Aven and Viktor Vekselberg.<sup>30</sup>

► 2. Pushing the Palestine issue more into the shadow: Given the extreme weakness of the Palestinian leadership and the fragility of Palestinian diplomacy, Israel will exploit this to push the Palestine issue to the backburner on the international stage. But the Palestinians should capitalize on the potential outcomes of the Russo-Ukrainian war by:<sup>31</sup>

- a. The consolidation of the independence of the two Ukrainian republics in eastern Ukraine (Donbass region) will strengthen the idea of the right to self-determination, which is in its general connotations in favor of the Palestinians in terms of the right to establish a Palestinian state like what happened in eastern Ukraine.
- b. Russia's success in imposing its conditions on the international community and the forced acceptance of the results of its strategy towards Ukraine would reinforce the idea of multipolarity at the expense of unipolarity, which is in the interest of the Palestinian side.<sup>32</sup> The West's strengthening of the idea of resistance to the Russian occupation of Ukraine enhances the Palestinians' right to resistance, just like the Ukrainians. Something that several Western voices have begun to talk about, criticizing Western double standards in dealing with the Palestinian resistance regarding describing it as "terrorism," despite being supported by the majority of international resolutions.<sup>33</sup> In addition, they criticized the Western rush to impose sanctions on Russia from the first days of the Russian military action, while not imposing any meaningful sanctions on Israel despite the passage of 55 years since its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, not to mention a longer period of occupation of the 1948 occupied territories. Although Amnesty International last month called for the imposition of economic sanctions on Israel for its "racist" policies, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in the same speech in which he called for sanctions against Russia, described the call of the United Nations Human Rights Council to investigate Israel's violations in the occupied territories as "a stain on the council's credibility" and called for them to be halted. Yet, European parliamentarians and media professionals raised this Western duality on several occasions since the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis.<sup>34</sup>





The Israeli side believes that the global preoccupation with the Ukrainian crisis diverted attention from its practices in the occupied Palestinian territories (settlement, harassment of prisoners, increased killings of Palestinian civilians, continued restrictions on the residents of Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem, an increase in the number of civilian detainees, house demolitions...etc).<sup>35</sup> It is noted that the recurrence of air and missile strikes on Syrian targets at a higher rate than in previous periods; as from the beginning of 2022 to February 24 (the start of the Russian attack on Ukraine), there were five Israeli attacks on Syria, which means an average of one attack every 11 days, while Israel attacked Syria during the period from 24/2 to 8/3, three times, an average of one attack every 4 days.<sup>36</sup>

- 3. Attempting to mediate the conflict with the aim of promoting the idea of an “Israeli contribution to world peace” and improving Israel’s diplomatic image. Although Ukrainian officials expressed “disappointment” at the weak Israeli position on their issue,<sup>37</sup> Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett was trying to prepare for direct negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, and he claimed that Israel played a role in arranging the negotiations between the two sides of the conflict on the Belarusian border.<sup>38</sup> To ensure its acceptance as a mediator, Israel “condemned the Russian military operation” on the one hand, but refused to provide military aid to Ukraine on the other hand, and the aid was limited to humanitarian purposes.<sup>39</sup> In addition, the US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield “expressed her displeasure when Israel refused to be among the sponsors of a draft resolution condemning Russia in the General Assembly.”<sup>40</sup>



Some US experts believe that the success in getting Ukraine and Russia to compromise “would elevate Bennett to an international statesman and boost Israel’s standing after decades of global criticism over its lengthy, open-ended military rule over the Palestinians,” and make it a powerful factor in sparing the

world a potentially catastrophic confrontation.<sup>41</sup> However, observers believe that the Israeli role has declined due to the complexities of the crisis, and the Western resentment of the Israeli position that lacks clear condemnation of the Russian military operation in Ukraine. In addition, the lackluster results of the Turkish and French attempts to mediate do not tempt to expect important Israeli achievement in the same field, which may have negative consequences for Israeli diplomacy as an Israeli expert also saw that the “prime minister has waded into the Ukrainian mud without knowing entirely just how deep it is.”<sup>42</sup>



- 4. The possibility of obtaining a bargain with the Russians on the Middle East in exchange for some Israeli positions towards Russia. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert expressed this by saying, “The situation is delicate for Israel. On the one hand, Israel is an ally of the United States and a part of the West, and there can be no doubt about it.” He added, “On the other hand, the Russians are present in Syria, we have delicate military and security problems in Syria — and that requires a certain freedom for the Israeli military to act in Syria.” Thus, this is not possible without considering Russian orientations.<sup>43</sup> Israel wants to continue the Russian restriction on Syria’s use of the S-300 missile system, and to ensure that Syria will not be supplied with the Russian S-400 defense system, which the Russians have installed near their positions in Syria. Israel is also working to avoid any confrontation with the Russian aviation in the Syrian airspace, not to mention the Israelis’ realization that Russians are sitting at the negotiating table in Vienna regarding the Iranian nuclear program; a very important issue to Israel. Here two possibilities emerge:<sup>44</sup>



- a. Either the US tries to lure Iran and make concessions concerning the nuclear issue in return for an Iranian position that is somehow farther away from Russia, especially with the pressures of the US crisis and Russia’s desire to curb the Russian position .



- b. Or the US gets tough with Iran, so that Iran will turn to not participating in any sanctions against Russia because of the Ukrainian crisis, and this option is certainly the best for Israel.

In addition to all of the above, there is the Israeli desire to maintain contact with some Russian-Jewish elites (especially the wealthy among them and those related to President Putin, such as the oil and aluminum tycoon and the Russian-Jewish steelman Roman Abramovich, known for his ties to Israel and who holds an Israeli citizenship since 2018), to the point of seeking that they are not subject to Western sanctions.<sup>45</sup> However, the US treasury has expressed its concerns that not subjecting them to sanctions may make them a link with Israeli banks to transfer or “launder” money for the benefit of Russia.<sup>46</sup> To this is added the Israeli desire to continue its relations with the Jews who remained in Russia, especially with the possibility of their immigration to Israel.<sup>47</sup>

- 5. The possibility of Israel replacing Russian gas in European markets: Before the Ukrainian crisis, specifically in April 2017, a meeting was held between the energy ministers of Israel, Italy, Cyprus and Greece to discuss the possibility of reducing European dependence on Russian gas through a pipeline extending under the Mediterranean Sea, from the coasts of occupied Palestine to the European coasts, and it was agreed that this project would be completed in 2025. However, the US expressed its opposition to the project in January 2022 due to feasibility concerns in addition to environmental and geopolitical considerations,”<sup>48</sup> noting that Europe imports “155 billion cubic meters” of Russian gas, according to 2021 figures.<sup>49</sup> The issue has come back again through news about US request from Israel to contribute, with other countries, to compensating Europe with an alternative to Russian gas despite the realization that the Israeli production is not enough.<sup>50</sup>

Nearly two weeks after the outbreak of the Ukrainian war, the Turkish role emerged in the offer to Israel, and before to Azerbaijan, to pass their gas to Europe through Turkish facilities, in addition to Egypt’s cooperation. The issue was clearly raised, in March 2022, during the meeting of Israeli President Yitzhak Herzog with Turkish President Erdoğan in Turkey. Israel took advantage of the Ukrainian crisis to repair some of the cracks in its relations with Turkey,<sup>51</sup> although the latter’s trade relations with Israel have seen a rise, bringing their volume to \$8.4 billion in 2021, according to Turkish sources, with an increase of 35% compared to 2020. Reports even talked about “Israel’s request from Turkey”



**Yitzhak Herzog**

to control Hamas's activity in Turkish territory by preventing it from carrying out any operations against Israeli interests.<sup>52</sup>

► 6. Israeli internal considerations: There are three segments which Israel takes into account in the Ukrainian crisis:

- a. The Russian society.
- b. Russia's Jews in Israel.
- c. Ukraine's Jews in Israel.

Different reports indicate there are differences between the Israeli Jews of Russian origins and those of Ukrainian origins regarding the position toward the current Ukrainian crisis.<sup>53</sup> Despite the lack of information about the stance of Israel's Jews of Russian or Ukrainian background toward the current Ukrainian crisis, an academic study of the position of Jewish minorities in Russia and Ukraine during the 2014 Crimean crisis pointed to two phenomena:<sup>54</sup>



- a. The positions of the Jews in Russia during the crisis were clearly different from the positions of the Jews of Ukraine, as each minority was closer to position of their host country.
- b. The neutrality of Israel is partly based on the unwillingness to influence the Jewish minority in their relationship with their host countries (Russia or Ukraine).

► 7. Economic reverberations of the crisis:

The direct consequences of the crisis on the Palestinian economy are manifested in two aspects:

- a. The rise in fuel and wheat prices will increase the burdens on the Palestinian budget in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where 70% of commodities are imported from abroad. The prices of iron, an important commodity for the largest sector in the Gaza Strip, have increased 30%, and cement 24%, not to





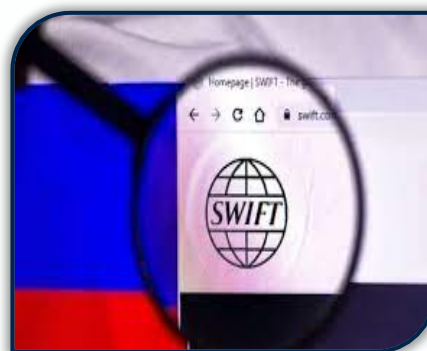
mention the rise of food prices, especially with the advent of the month of Ramadan in early April 2022, as the price of flour increased by nearly 30%, noting that 35% of needed flour is imported from Russia. Also, the prices of oils increased by 7%, and sugar 10%, and all of this will affect the operating rates in production facilities, and thus raise the unemployment rate, which is currently around 50%.<sup>55</sup>



- b. Following the EU decision in March 2022 to “delay” the delivery of its aid to the Palestinian Authority (worth \$235 million) due to what Hungary considered “anti-Semitism in the Palestinian education curricula,”<sup>56</sup> the EU, after facing the burdens of the Ukrainian crisis and the consequences of the blockade on Russia, might reduce its aid, whether to the Palestinian Authority or to Palestinian civil society organizations. Some sources have estimated that the reduction in aid may reach about 10%.<sup>57</sup>



As for the Israeli side, in light of the escalation of mutual economic sanctions between Western powers and Russia, the impact on the Israeli economy will be linked to Israeli policy. The trade volume between Russia and Israel is \$3.373 billion (\$2.415 billion Israeli imports from Russia and \$958 million Israeli exports to Russia), meaning that the volume of Israeli imports from Russia does not constitute more than 2%. The impact may be witnessed in the rise of prices of some materials (mainly oil, gas, coal and wheat), in addition to affecting some companies which have investments in Russia, especially with the depreciation of the ruble and the difficulty of meeting payments due to the removal of Russian banks from SWIFT system. These repercussions will have a more severe impact on the Israeli economy if the crisis extends, but they tend to be less important on the short term,<sup>58</sup> especially based on the Israeli commitment to the international economic sanctions on Russia.





## Conclusion

The most important features of the repercussions of the crisis on the Palestine issue can be summarized as follows:

- ▶ 1. The Israeli side is in a critical diplomatic position, especially if the crisis escalates, because the neutral stance will be costly to Israel, from one of the parties.
- ▶ 2. The priority for Israel is to bring the largest number of Jews from both sides of the crisis, especially the Ukrainians, to occupied Palestine.
- ▶ 3. The chances of Israel playing a mediating role seem very slim.
- ▶ 4. The rise of energy and wheat prices will have an immense impact on the Palestinian side more than on the Israeli one.
- ▶ 5. Consolidating the idea of double standards in Western positions towards international conflicts, which is clearly seen in the reactions of different European and US figures.
- ▶ 6. The Russian victory may entrench the idea of international multipolarity, which may have “some positive impact” on the bias against the Palestinians in international policies regarding the Palestine issue.
- ▶ 7. It is necessary for the axis of resistance to escalate resistance operations to make Palestine unattractive for the Jews of Ukraine or even the Jews of Russia, making them immigrate to other countries. The resistance operation on 22/3/2022 in the Negev, in which four Israelis were killed,<sup>59</sup> might be a response to this necessity given that the Negev region is one of the areas clearly designated for the settlement of Ukrainian immigrants, which reinforces their concerns and pushes them to search for immigration to a country other than Israel.
- ▶ 8. The need to strengthen media campaigns to expose double standards of the Western diplomacy and media concerning their dealing with the issues of Ukraine and Palestine.



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> An expert in futures studies, a former professor in the Department of Political Science at Yarmouk University in Jordan and a holder of Ph.D. in Political Science from Cairo University. He is also a former member of the Board of Trustees of Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan, Irbid National University, the National Center for Human Rights, the Board of Grievances and the Supreme Council of Media. He has authored 37 books, most of which are focused on future studies in both theoretical and practical terms, and published 120 research papers in peer-reviewed academic journals.
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