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# Jeddah Summit

Navigating the Intersection of Food Security and Geopolitics

Prepared by

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## Executive Summary

### Saudi Arabia's Shift from Aggression to Peace

#### Diplomatic Evolution

Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS), has actively been attempting to transition from an aggressive stance in regional affairs to a more peace-centric / peace-brokering approach. This is evident in:

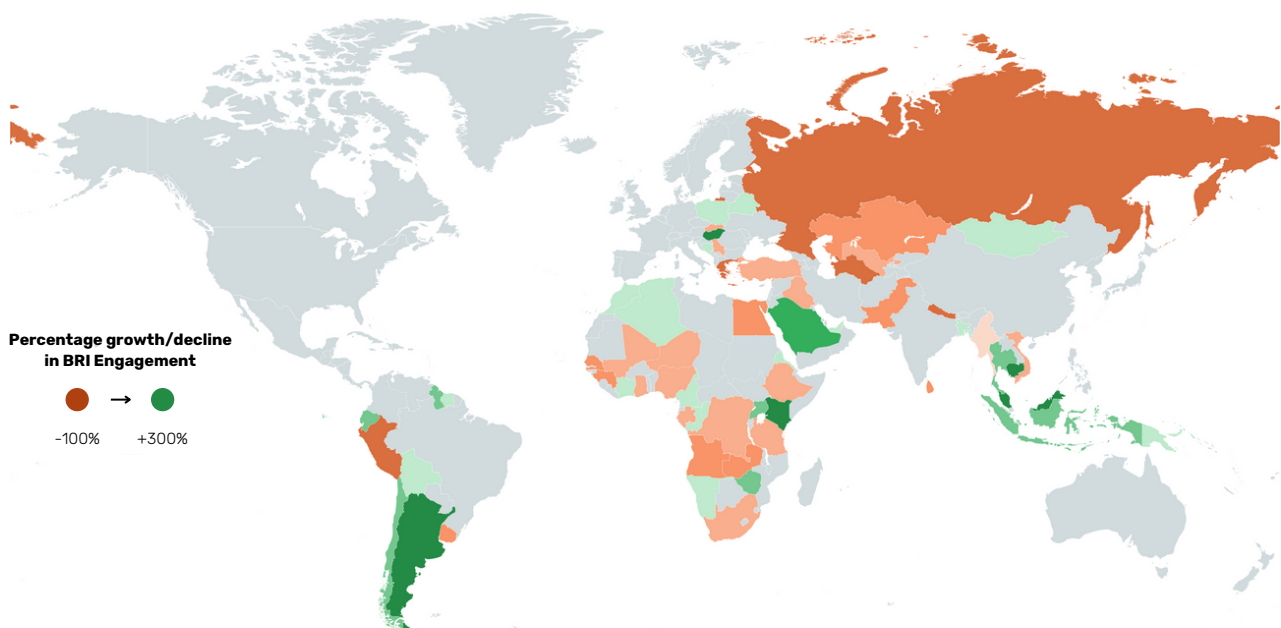
- Neutral Stance: The Kingdom's neutral position towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict, emphasizing mediation and providing substantial humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees.
- Regional Diplomacy: Renewed ties with neighbors like Qatar and Iran, facilitated by Chinese diplomacy, and mediation efforts in Yemen showcase Saudi's commitment to fostering stability in the region.
- Global Diplomatic Ambitions: Hosting events like the G20 Summit in 2020 and the Jeddah meeting underlines Saudi's ambition to play a pivotal role in global diplomacy.

### Saudi Vision 2030 and Partnership with China's BRI

#### Economic and Diplomatic Synergy

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, architected by MBS, has plans to diversify the Kingdom's economy beyond oil. To this extent, the alignment with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) could be of interest.

- Foreign Investments: The China-Saudi investment accord, currently valued at \$65 billion, is an example of the deepening economic ties between the two nations.
- Infrastructure and Development: Projects like the NEOM city highlight Saudi's intent to leverage Chinese expertise and investment for transformative infrastructural projects.
- Diversified Diplomatic Partnerships: Saudi's growing relations with China, as part of the BRI, indicate its intent to diversify diplomatic partnerships beyond traditional Western counterparts.



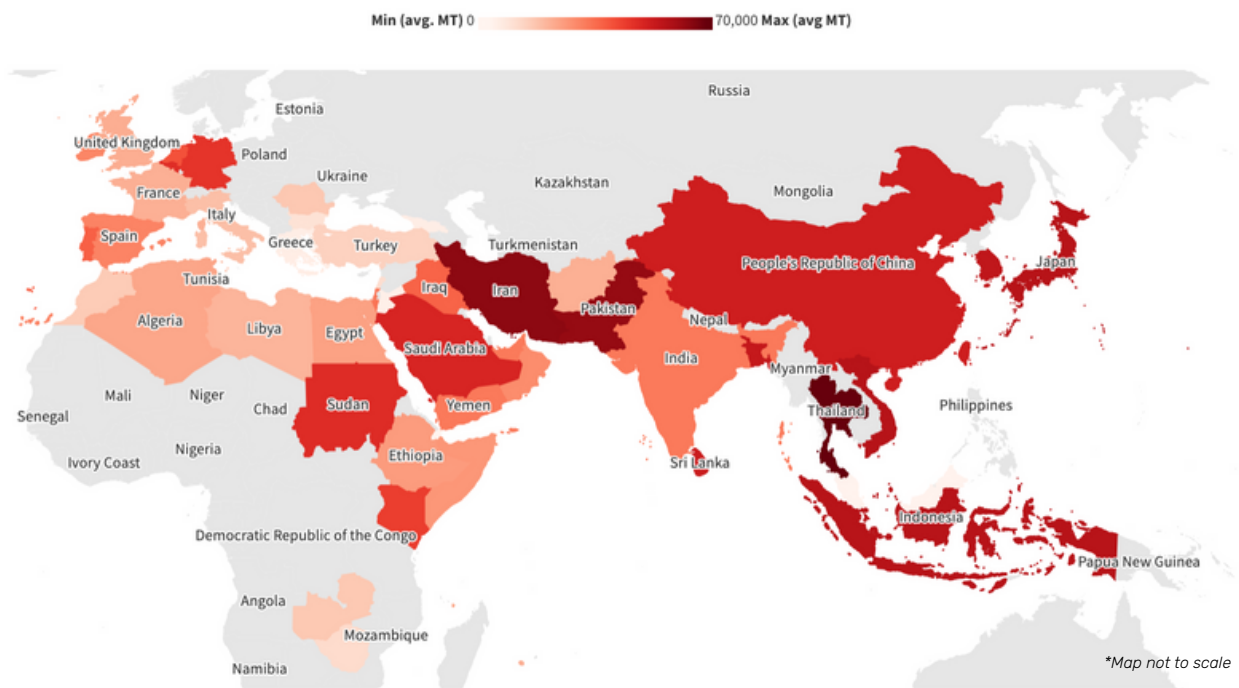
Growth/Decline in Chinese BRI Engagement (2021-22) | GFDC, AEI

## China's Reliance on the Black Sea Grain Deal

### Food Security and Diplomatic Implications

China's rapid economic growth and its vast population have made it heavily reliant on grain imports, with the Black Sea Grain Deal playing a crucial role.

- Economic Reliance: Since the inception of the deal, China emerged as the primary beneficiary of Ukrainian agricultural exports, emphasizing its significance for China's food security.
- Diplomatic Challenges: Russia's suspension from the deal poses challenges for China, necessitating a recalibration of its diplomatic strategies to ensure food security and maintain its influence in the Global South.



Average Exports from Black Sea: Destination-wise | Aug 2022 - Jul 2023 | UN

## Background

### National Security Advisors' Meeting

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosted a pivotal diplomatic exercise between 05-06 Aug, termed the National Security Advisors' Meeting in Jeddah, concerning the Russia - Ukraine conflict. Over 40 countries and international organizations gathered to discuss Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's 10-point peace plan. This meeting had a much more expansive representation than the earlier Copenhagen session. Ultimately, the Jeddah meeting showcased the growing global interest in the Ukraine issue, however, with the absence of Russia.

### Nations Participated\*

*\*non-exhaustive*

Bulgaria, UK, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Germany, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, France, Czechia, Sweden, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Bahrain, India, Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, the Union of Comoros Islands, China, South Korea, Türkiye, Japan, Egypt, South Africa, Canada, US, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, EU (as union), and UN (as organisation).

## Key Outcomes & Discussions

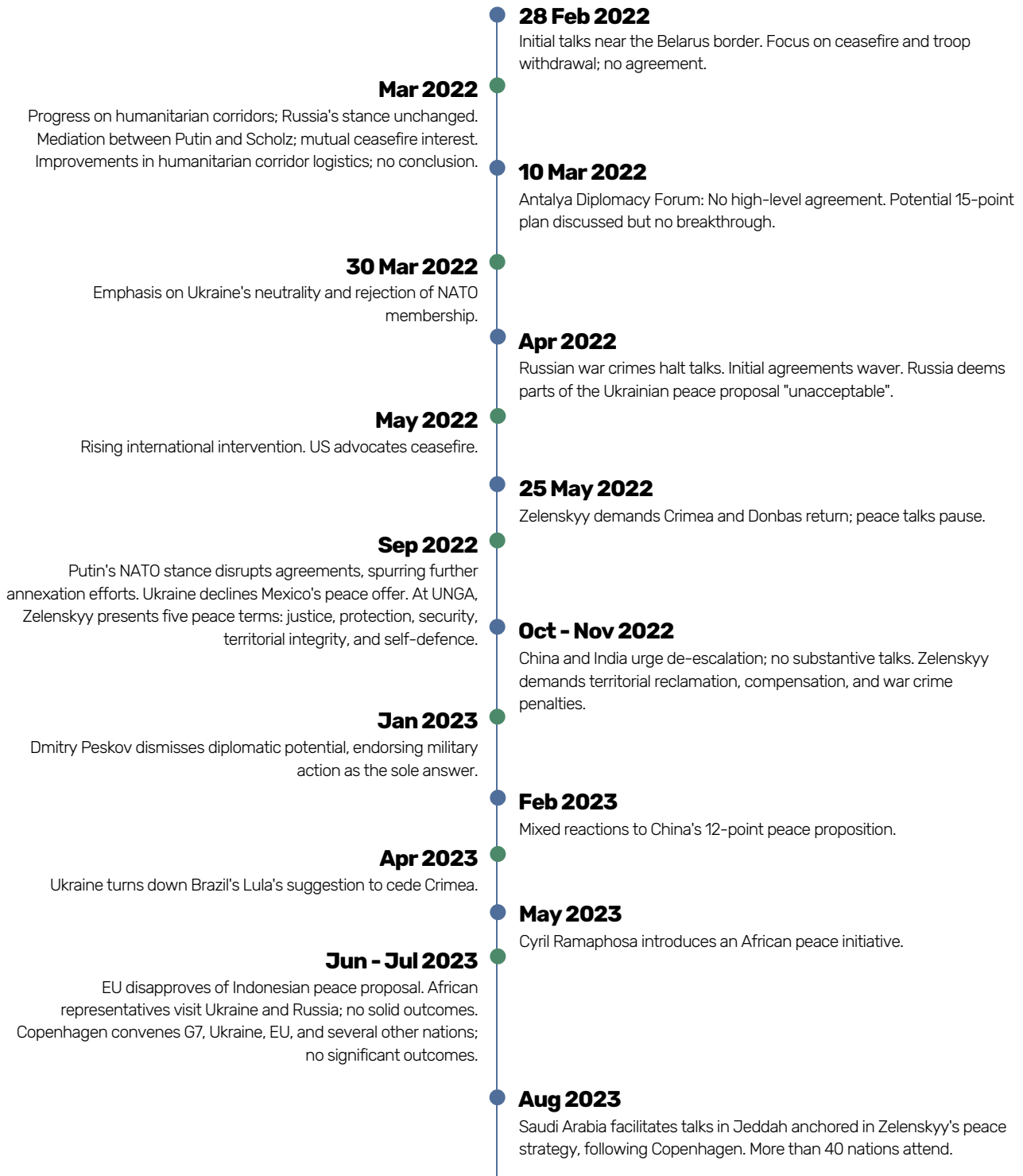
- **Diversified Engagement:** The Jeddah meeting witnessed a more expansive representation of nations and their representatives, compared to the Copenhagen Session, bringing together countries of the Global South, notably China, a crucial ally to Russia, at international forums. This diversification showcases possible shifts in diplomatic alignments and influences.
- **Ukraine's Diplomatic Positioning:** While not staged as a "peace summit", the Jeddah meeting strategically placed Ukraine to set the backdrop for future peace dialogues and to realign key international parties towards Kyiv's objectives.
- **Global Governance and Territorial Integrity:** The meeting emphasized Ukraine's territorial integrity and showcased its joint obligation to the United Nations (UN) Charter for genuine conflict resolution discussions, indicating a shared diplomatic perspective.
- **China's Evolving Diplomatic Posture:** China's proactive participation signalled a potential recalibration or diversification in its diplomatic approach, which could influence future diplomatic efforts, especially considering its increasing dependence on the success of the Black Sea Grain Deal.
- **Prospective Diplomacy:** The appeal of nations to reconvene and the formation of working groups to address crucial aspects of the Ukrainian peace plan, such as nuclear security and Moscow's accountability, demonstrate a structured approach to conflict resolution.
- **Saudi Arabia and MBS's Evolving Political Capital:** The Kingdom as the host boosted its diplomatic prominence, setting Crown Prince MBS as an emerging mediator in global conflicts, which could influence regional risk dynamics.

**Lack of Immediate Resolutions:** The meeting ended without immediate, tangible results during the main discussions, with Zelenskyy's 10-point peace plan not being the focal point, implying a wary and phased approach to conflict resolution—all the more tricky, considering the absence of Moscow.



## Timeline

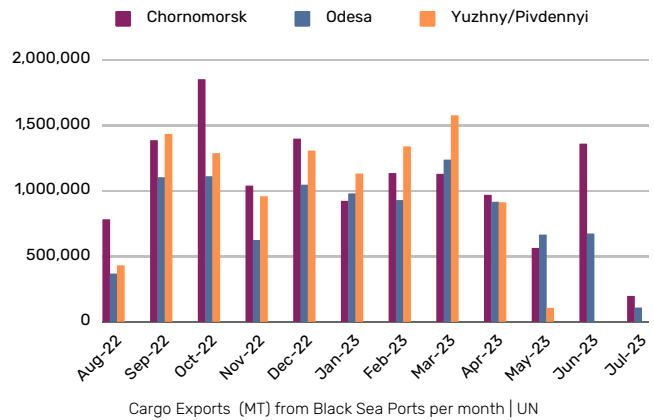
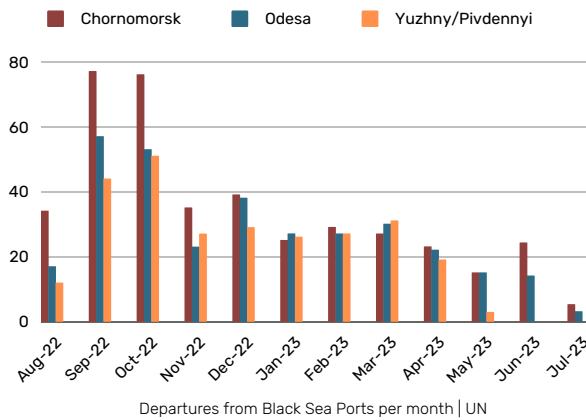
### Negotiation attempts following Russia - Ukraine conflict since Feb 2022



## Black Sea Grain Initiative

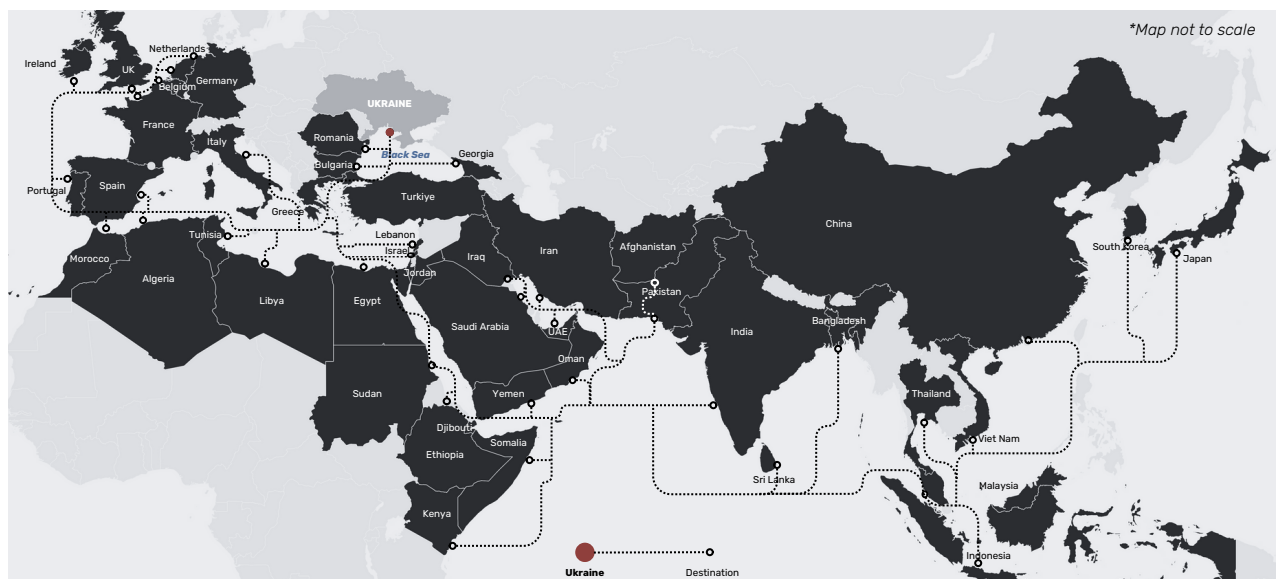
The Black Sea Grain Initiative, an instrumental agreement among Russia, Ukraine, Türkiye, and the UN, that ensured the safe export of Ukrainian grain by sea, witnessed Russia's suspension in late Jul 2023. This initiative, while significant, has direct implications to ensure global food security.

- **Key Provisions:** It provided Ukrainian vessels the security to ferry grain from ports like Yuzhny, Odesa, and Chornomorsk via the Bosphorus without any threats.
- **Current Status:** Russia has opted out, marking the expiration of the deal (post-May 2023), and cites Western sanctions hindering its own export capabilities as the reason.



## Black Sea Grain Initiative

Movement of Vessels | UN



## Global Ramifications Due To Russia's Suspension

Focus on Food Security

- **Immediate Effects:** Grain prices have surged in response, with wheat prices witnessing a 9% hike within days of Russia's announcement.
- **Historical Context:** This deal initially led to a 35% decline in wheat prices due to resumed supplies.
- **Affected Regions:** The Middle East, Africa, and Asia, particularly China (close to 8MMT of imports), significant grain importers, stand to be the most affected.
- **Humanitarian Initiatives:** Under the "Grain from Ukraine" program, African nations received over 140,000 tons of wheat between Nov 2022 and Mar 2023, a gesture funded by several European nations.
- **Alternative Routes:** In response to potential threats from Russia, Ukraine is exploring alternative grain transport routes, such as the Danube River.
- **Strategic Diplomacy:** Both Russia and Ukraine vie for influence in the Middle East, with Ukraine seeking stronger ties with the Arab world. This gives Saudi Arabia an avenue to play a more critical role in the conflict, a case in point, is the Jeddah Summit.

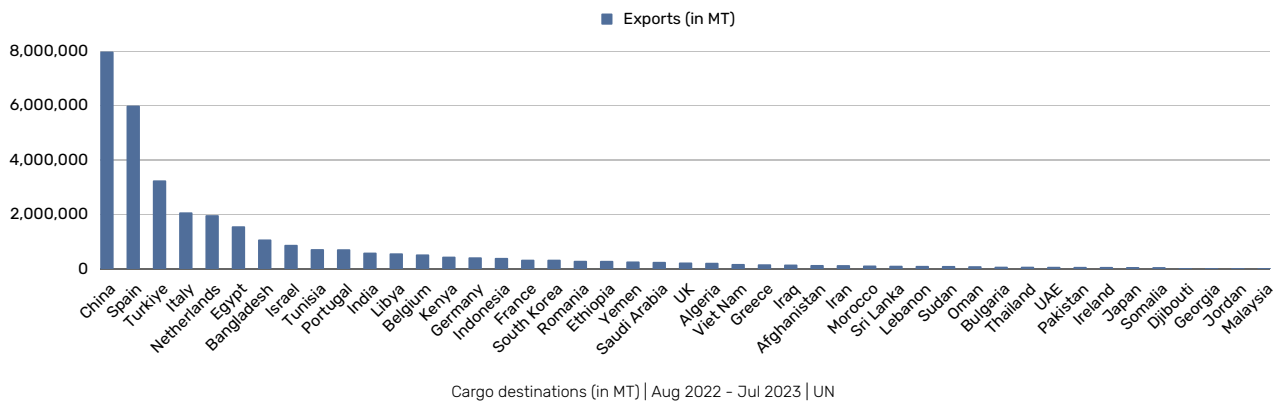
## International Responses to the Fallout of the Ukraine Grain Deal

### Saudi Arabia and Türkiye: Diplomatic Mediators

- **Role in Resolving the Deal's Setback:** Both Saudi Arabia and Türkiye have actively engaged in negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, addressing issues ranging from prisoner swaps and maritime safety agreements to the grain deal itself.
- **Reasons for Involvement:** Saudi Arabia and Türkiye's involvement stems from their aspirations to amplify their political influence on the global stage. Türkiye's strategic position, controlling the passage from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean, grants it significant diplomatic leverage in these negotiations. They have also been attempting to gain hold over regional and global supply chains. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's actions to reshape its global image have led it to take a proactive presence in resolving global crises.
- **International Perceptions:** The active involvement of both nations underscores the ascent of mid-level regional powers in global diplomacy. Their unique positions, maintaining amicable relationships with both the West and Russia, position them as neutral and effective mediators in this crisis.

### China: Economic Stakeholder and Diplomatic Balancer

- **Economic Reliance on the Deal:** China rapidly became the primary beneficiary of Ukrainian agricultural exports under this deal. Since the deal's inception, Beijing has imported substantial quantities of Ukrainian produce, including corn, sunflower seed meal, sunflower oil, and barley.
- **Concerns over Food Security and Inflation:** Beijing faces looming concerns over escalating food prices. While temporary stockpiling might offer a brief respite, the urgency to reinstate the deal is palpable. Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the UN, highlighted the deal's significance, emphasizing its pivotal role in ensuring global food stability.
- **Diversification Strategy:** In light of the current crisis, China is exploring alternative grain suppliers, with Brazil emerging as a potential key partner.
- **China's Diplomatic Balancing Act:** Navigating its intricate relationship with Moscow, Beijing has advocated for a "balanced solution" to the grain deal crisis. This stance reflects China's efforts to maintain equilibrium in its diplomatic relations, ensuring its interests are safeguarded while fostering global partnerships.



## Africa: Facing the Direct Repercussions

- **Immediate Impact on Food Security:** East African nations, historically dependent on Ukrainian grain exports, are now confronted with potential food shortages and rising consumer prices. The termination of the grain deal threatens to exacerbate an already precarious situation, especially in countries grappling with challenges ranging from conflict to drought.
- **Diplomatic Efforts and Calls for Action:** The African Union (AU) has urgently called for the reinstatement of the United Nations-brokered grain deal, emphasizing the collective concern over grains and fertilizers. The AU's proactive stance showcases the continent's determination to address the crisis head-on.
- **Emphasis on Local Solutions:** In light of the grain deal's disruption, there's a renewed focus on bolstering local agriculture and reducing dependency on imports. African activists and economists are advocating for climate-smart solutions and investments in local agricultural infrastructure.
- **International Support:** The US and UN have made attempts to resume the grain deal urging Moscow to rejoin the initiative, emphasizing the direct impact on food security for African nations.

## Black Sea: Military and Strategic Developments

**Ukraine's Military Mobilization:** Ukraine's 82nd Brigade, once held in reserve, has now actively joined the counteroffensive, following Russian attacks. This move showcases Ukraine's intent to bolster its defensive and offensive capabilities amidst the prevailing adversities.

**Russian Naval Offensive:** Russia has positioned 14 ships for combat duty, at the Black Sea. Moscow had announced its intention to view all vessels travelling to Ukrainian ports via the Black Sea as "potential military cargo carriers." Russia has also warned that nations whose ships are heading to Ukrainian ports will be seen as parties siding with Kyiv in the ongoing conflict

### NATO and US Naval Movements

- **USS Ford's Presence:** The USS Ford's strategic navigation through the Mediterranean, positioning itself within striking distance of Ukraine's Black Sea coast, acts as a significant deterrent against potential Russian aggression.
- **NATO's Warning:** Moscow's assertive actions in the Black Sea, particularly intercepting ships in international waters, have sounded alarms about a potential confrontation between NATO and Russia.

**Insurance for Grain Ships:** Kyiv is nearing the finalization of a deal with insurers to safeguard Black Sea grain ships, underscoring Ukraine's commitment to maintaining its grain trade continuity amidst the ongoing tensions.



## Moving Forward

### Diplomatic and Strategic Forays

- **Anticipated Chinese Summit:** In the aftermath of the Jeddah meeting, China, discerning a pivotal moment to augment its diplomatic and economic foothold, might contemplate orchestrating a summit in China. A summit in China would be directed to fortify Beijing's diplomatic stature, particularly among the Global South nations, in an attempt to combine the interests of other stakeholders, notably Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye, within the framework of the BRI.
- **The China-Saudi-Türkiye Coalition**
  - Emerging Dynamics: A prospective tripartite coalition encompassing China, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye could materialize, with Russia subtly maneuvering in the backdrop to safeguard its regional stakes.
  - Economic Convergence: The synergy between Saudi Vision 2030 and the BRI could catalyze expansive infrastructural projects, foster energy collaborations, and stimulate technological innovations.
  - Geopolitical Calculus: Türkiye's geographically strategic position could serve as a conduit linking Asia and Europe, amplifying its significance within the BRI framework. Concurrently, Saudi Arabia's abundant energy reservoirs and its pivotal Middle Eastern location would enhance this coalition's strategic depth.

### The Black Sea: A Looming Geopolitical Epicenter

- **Potential Naval Escalations:** The augmented naval deployments by both Russia and NATO in the Black Sea region could precipitate inadvertent skirmishes. An interception of a NATO-affiliated vessel by Russian forces, or the inverse, might catalyze intensifying hostilities.
- **Ukraine's Military Strategy:** The incorporation of the 82nd Brigade into active counteroffensive roles signifies Ukraine's intent. Strategically, Ukraine might contemplate bolstering its Black Sea coastline defenses, both as a deterrent against potential Russian naval incursions and to shield its crucial ports.
- **Russian Maritime Tactics:** Capitalizing on its bolstered naval presence, Russia might contemplate instituting a maritime blockade, either partial or comprehensive, targeting Ukrainian ports. This move would not only disrupt Ukraine's grain commerce but could also be wielded as a strategic tool in diplomatic negotiations.
- **NATO's Strategic Response:** Reacting to Russia's maritime assertiveness, NATO might consider amplifying its naval patrols within the Black Sea. This could aid in the movement of commercial vessels destined for Ukrainian ports.
- **Ukraine's Grain Commerce Dynamics:** The culmination of the insurance arrangement for grain vessels could potentially invigorate Ukraine's grain exports. However, this might inadvertently render these vessels susceptible to Russian interdiction, given their economic significance to Ukraine.
- **Cyber Warfare Landscape:** Recognizing the escalating stakes and the looming specter of a direct military face-off, both NATO and Russia might resort to cyber warfare. This could encompass operations aimed at disrupting communication infrastructures, intelligence acquisition, or even incapacitating naval assets.
- **Proxy Warfare Dynamics:** To circumvent a direct military confrontation, Russia might contemplate deploying proxy forces or commissioning mercenaries for clandestine operations.

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