"Ukraine: the price of the American-European deception," “A lesson for the Ukrainian people in the school of the West.” These and similar headlines have flooded the Middle Eastern media and social media in the wake of the Russian military operation in Ukraine. One of the main topics is the reasons and background for this move and its perception in the Arab region at various levels.

Most Arab countries have taken a low-key stance on the crisis in Ukraine, objecting in principle to military solutions, according to the influential pan-Arab website Elaf. At the same time, they called for dialogue, diplomacy and negotiation to prevail among all parties to reach a settlement.

There is now a debate about the motives behind Moscow’s moves in Ukraine. A number of Arab analysts are sympathetic to Russia’s circumstances, its sensitivities and psychological mindset in the name of defending its vital interests.

They also cite the history of Moscow’s relations with the West. The anti-Russian phobia it now fosters reminds Russia of the bitter experiences of the past, of invasions from its west by Napoleon and later Hitler. Western Europe’s enmity towards Russia is nothing new; it is primarily linked to historical, strategic, civilizational factors rather than political ones, including a belief in its superiority. This forces the Kremlin to act to shield itself from any surprises.
By supporting and facilitating the rise to power of loyalists in Ukraine in 2014, the West has built a fence in front of Russia. It encouraged and pushed the Ukrainian leadership to a conflict with Russia. In the Soviet era, the US sent Stingers to Afghanistan to fight Soviet troops, the same is happening now with supplies of Javelin anti-tank systems to Ukraine.

“Ukraine has shown that it is not acting as a sovereign state. If it were, it would not have joined a foreign party that is supplying it with weapons and targeting it against its huge neighbor, Russia,” concludes the Algerian publication. “On the contrary, it would become a strategic ally of Moscow and would greatly benefit from its vast natural resources and technology for its development.”

A number of Arab authors agree that Volodymyr Zelenski, a man far removed from the great corridors of power and from world politics with all its subtleties, was deceived. He has apparently not realized that the Western powers traditionally do not present anything for free to their clients. His country, seduced by the call to take a stand against Russia, has become a pawn in the West’s machinations.

“It is clear,” stresses the London-based newspaper al-Arab, “that Ukraine has become a victim of its president’s policies. Ukraine is a small country and is not capable of playing the game in the great power club. It is doomed by terms of history and geography to be closer to Russia than to the West. Of course, it is correct to say that it is an independent and sovereign state, but within those two conditions outlined above. There is no need to squeeze it into Moscow’s orbit, but it must not become a tool that would damage Russia”.

According to some commentators, the Americans are well aware that Kiev’s accession to NATO would do great damage to Russia in moral, psychological, military and other respects. In military respect, this entails the deployment of state-of-the-art air defense and medium-range missiles, including nuclear and other equipment close to Russia’s borders.

Such a scenario, according to local observers, is unacceptable not only for Russia but also for any other sovereign country. Saudi newspaper Okaz believes that the logic of the Russian leadership and its concerns about its national security “do not appear to be something exceptional, but are legitimate and recognized by international and diplomatic law”.

According to a Libyan author, basic common sense and a sense of self-preservation demand action in opposition to Ukraine joining NATO, plans to place military bases under Russia’s nose.

Many commentators these days recall the twists and turns of the Cuban crisis, when the US, fearing the deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba, close to its borders, brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. Today, few authors do not mention the well-known facts of US military intervention in faraway sovereign countries, especially Iraq and Libya.

The Arabs recall that back in the day Ukraine took part in the occupation of Iraq after 2003, its takeover by the US, and was involved in military operations that resulted in the deaths of Iraqi civilians.

Regarding the Russian operation and developments in Ukraine, an Emirati author states that the limits of Washington’s power and might are looming around the world. Washington’s hegemony faces various challenges and crises on the world stage. In addition, the rapid growth of China and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic must be borne in mind. There is a feverish race to rivalry in global society to fill the vacuum that is created by the US role reversal.

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