

Perceptions of Russia's war in the Global South

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The View from the South: Latin American Perspectives on Russia's War of Aggression against Ukraine

Jochen Kleinschmidt (TU Dresden)

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Abstract

The positioning of some Latin American presidents on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has raised serious questions about their foreign policy orientation. This article aims to show that the sources of this attitude can mostly be found in Latin American countries' domestic situations.

Concerns about the foreign policy orientation of Latin American countries have intensified in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Some of the region's heads of state have expressed themselves in bizarre ways that have seemed designed to provoke controversy and discord with Western countries. This was generally expected from the region's authoritarian countries, such as Nicaragua or Venezuela—some of which have voted with Russia at the UN General Assembly. What has come as a surprise to many observers, however, has been the vehemence with which democratic politicians such as Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Colombian President Gustavo Petro appear to have adopted some aspects of Russian rhetoric. Something similar has been true of Mexican head of state Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

While their official representatives in the UN General Assembly, like the overwhelming majority of its members, have typically condemned the invasion in the essential resolutions on the matter, some of these presidents' statements have suggested that they side—at least rhetorically—with Russia. Lula's comments about Western countries' alleged lack of interest in a peaceful solution and his cynical call for Ukraine to seek a negotiated end to the war received applause from the Russian Foreign Minister and harsh criticism from the United States. Even more ignorant—or at least bizarre—were the comments of Lula's advisor Celso Amorim, who described the West's efforts to weaken Russia as reminiscent of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles that followed the First World War, which he went on to blame for Nazi Germany's aggression in the Second World War.

Attempted Explanations

Academic experts on Latin American politics have made numerous attempts to explain these developments, most of which have not been particularly helpful. Counter to what is often claimed (cf. Fuentes 2022), most Latin American countries do not have a long tradition of neutrality—on the contrary, the military security of the

majority of the region's states is guaranteed by the United States under the Rio Pact—nor are their economic ties with Russia of extraordinary importance. The frequently mentioned importance of Russian fertilizer exports to the agricultural states of the Southern Cone (Sugarman 2023) is only a superficially plausible reason—after all, given its dire economic situation, Russia could hardly afford to simply stop these exports. They would also not be affected by current sanctions, as these expressly exclude the food sector. Other economic motives are not apparent, especially since it is not clear how scandalous statements by Latin American politicians could contribute to bringing an end to the sanctions. Indeed, the increased raw material prices caused by the war may actually prove economically beneficial for at least some countries in the region.

The argument that Latin American leaders understood Russia's sensitivity to violations of its supposedly legitimate "sphere of influence" in Ukraine appears brutally paradoxical (Mijares 2022). Ultimately, Latin American dislike of, and at least rhetorical resistance to, the United States' past claims to hegemony and geopolitical control in the Monroe Doctrine's Roosevelt Corollary—as well as to similar claims by other historical great powers—is, to a certain extent, the normative basis of the autonomist intellectual traditions with which Latin American foreign policy decision-makers, especially those with a progressive orientation, continue to identify.

However, it should be noted that right-wing and right-wing extremist presidents, such as Lula's predecessor Jair Bolsonaro and Salvadoran strongman Nayib Bukele, have also openly sympathized with the Russian position. An ideological motivation arising from the left-right spectrum—perhaps stemming from Cold War-era sympathies—can therefore be ruled out, especially since one of the few Latin American heads of state to take a clear stand in favor of Ukraine was the Chilean socialist Gabriel Boric. This is in contrast to Latin American positions regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, which are clearly structured by the left-right distinction.

Russian Disinformation and Public Opinion

In contrast, Russian information warfare cannot be ruled out as an influencing factor. In contrast to its European counterparts, the Latin American version of the television channel RT, for example, is not identifiable from the outset as a crude product of right-wing extremist conspiracy theorists. Rather, it mostly offers plausible information on the problems of democratic practice in the region, which politically or commercially influenced national or regional broadcasters in Latin America are often sorely lacking. It is staffed by seasoned journalists and features frequent appearances by prominent media personalities (Rouvinski 2022). This regionalized content could of course create an opening for strategic propaganda messages about the Russian wars in Ukraine and elsewhere. In terms of reach, RT and Sputnik clearly outperform their Spanish-language competitors from CNN or Voice of America, at least on platforms such as YouTube or Facebook.

However, the fact that public opinion in Latin American countries—contrary to many clichés—is by no means particularly critical of the United States, nor particularly friendly to Russia, speaks against such a causal role of Russian information warfare. In fact, various opinion polls in recent months show a fairly clear trend in this regard: Russia is one of the most unpopular countries in Latin America, and it has become far less popular as a result of its war against Ukraine. In fact, according to a Gallup poll from April 2023, Russia's post-invasion loss of prestige in Latin America was the most significant of all world regions—Russia had previously enjoyed slightly more positive than negative assessments, in line with perceptions elsewhere in the Global South (Ritter and Crabtree 2023). According to a survey by Latinobarómetro (Infobae 2022), Russia was less popular than the three other options—China, Germany, and the US—in all ten regional countries surveyed. In Brazil, only four percent of respondents sympathized with Russia.

When another survey asked about opinions regarding concrete support for Ukraine (GlobeScan 2023), the figures were lower in Latin America than in the other polls—but with the exception of Mexico, they were still characterized by majority support for Ukraine. Both fears about economic consequences and the lack of actual opportunities for effective military support by Latin American countries may have played a role here: Among Latin American countries, only the armed forces of Brazil, Chile and, to a lesser extent, Colombia possess equipment that could be usefully employed by Ukraine. In Brazil, however, the proportion of those in favor of supporting Ukraine was 67 percent. Thus, Lula and other leaders' pro-Russia positioning surprisingly occurred against the background of a public opinion

clearly skeptical of Russia, making these leaders' intentions even more mysterious.

International Order and the BRICS

There are also interpretations that see Russia-friendly rhetoric as the expression of a shift toward a “multipolar” world, which is supposedly in the process of emerging and is often imagined as being based on the BRICS grouping. First, it should be noted that this use of the word comes from Russian and Chinese government communication; in no way does it correspond to “multipolarity” as a concept in International Relations theory. Second, those interpretations can be relegated to the realm of fantasy just as easily as can Latin American publics' supposed friendliness toward Russia.

In fact, apart from the development bank associated with the group, run by Brazilian ex-president Dilma Rousseff, the BRICS have no independent institutionality—and the aforementioned bank actually implements the financial sanctions imposed on Russia. So far, it does not seem to be indicative of a structural shift in power. Insofar as a shift in weight can be observed in Latin America, it is a shift in trade flows (though not in investment capital or in military power) that is taking place in favor of China, and to the detriment of Russia (Kleinschmidt 2022). It therefore does not represent a plausible cause of pro-Russian rhetoric. At the same time, if there was a real power shift perceived to be underway, why would this not be accommodated by also shifting the votes in the UN General Assembly?

Considerations that point to status disputes that would be exacerbated by Russia's war might be more convincing. In fact, it is conceivable that the immense suffering of the Ukrainian population could cause other catastrophes—such as the mass exodus from autocratic Venezuela, the numerous deaths from gang wars caused by international drug prohibition (Kleinschmidt and Palma 2020), or the expected serious effects of climate change on the countries of Latin America—to move down the hierarchy of global political problems. Making matters worse, in Latin American expert discourse as well as in political and media debates, Russia's genocidal war of aggression (Etkind 2022) is often equated with conflicts in Latin America, such as the border wars between Ecuador and Peru. In some cases, recognized experts have suggested applying the intergovernmental consultation mechanisms established in Latin America to the war between Russia and Ukraine (Tokatlián 2023). This would be a drastically inadequate strategy considering that the drivers of the war are concentrated in domestic Russian politics—but against such an informational background, Lula's statements appear to be at least partially explicable.

Elites' Discourse and Soft Balancing

The fact that such deeply problematic equations do not cause major disagreements demonstrates an instinctive tendency among Latin American elites to distance themselves from the dominant position in Western countries. In the literature, this is sometimes interpreted as a mechanism for overcoming domestic legitimacy deficits (Baker and Cupery 2013). It could at least account for some of the divergence between public opinion and political rhetoric. Accordingly, marginal opinions that are widely criticized in the Western expert community, such as John J. Mearsheimer's statements on the war (Mearsheimer 2014), often find a grateful audience in Latin America. This effect might of course be reinforced by Russian media such as RT. The attractiveness of such rhetorical dissidence might therefore be traceable to Ukraine's originally subaltern international position, which was actually not too dissimilar to that of many Latin American countries.

Ukraine's subsequent performance—its successful military resistance against a country generally viewed as a great power, but also its rapid formation of political agreements with the United States, NATO, and the EU, including the acquisition of candidate status in the latter, as well as achieving centrality in media reporting and intellectual debates—is overwhelming in comparison (Korablyova 2022). In the context of Latin America, it can be seen as an indictment of the inability of Latin American elites to achieve similar political weight and discursive centrality for their own countries—as already mentioned, autonomy is a central concept in Latin America's foreign policy discourse—or at least to demand it with similar resonance, and thus break out of their subaltern status. As with so many foreign policy maneuvers by Latin American countries, “soft balancing”—that is, the attempt to achieve one's own policy goals by rhetorically delegitimizing the strategies of other, more powerful actors—is likely to play a role here (Flemes and Castro 2016). In this case, the elites of Latin America, regardless of the ideology to which

they may adhere, seem to be particularly concerned with their own legitimacy.

Outlook

How should Western countries (and Ukraine itself!) deal with these rhetorical attacks by Latin American presidents? Overreactions are certainly undesirable—when it comes to the question of UN votes on the war, for example, almost all Latin American countries have proven to be responsible, and structural factors such as the end of rapid growth in China will in any case prevent a truly militant anti-Western foreign policy.

On the other hand, the rhetoric should definitely be countered, due not least to the imperative of maintaining a coherent narrative regarding the need to support Ukraine. In particular, such voices should come from Ukraine itself. In addition, greater efforts should be made to communicate the importance of the Ukrainian defensive struggle through new channels. This could be done in various ways: Kateryna Vakarchuk (2022), for example, describes a possible role for the Ukrainian diaspora in Latin America (primarily in the Brazilian state of Paraná, but also in Argentina and Paraguay) in creating the conditions for understanding the situation in Ukraine.

Ultimately, the deficits observed in Latin America are simply a variant of the problematic ignorance of numerous Western publics about the history of Ukraine and its difficult emancipation from colonization by Russia (Kurylo 2023), exacerbated by local conditions in Latin America. Providing the necessary resources and infrastructure for this could be an important task for Western think tanks and political foundations. In Ukraine itself, there are currently hardly any resources for engagement with Latin America, and there is often a lack of necessary experience. Considering the need to (re)build Eastern Europe expertise in Western countries and move it away from its traditional focus on Russia, such support would ultimately be beneficial in several respects.

About the Author

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Russian Disinformation Strategy in Africa: Impact on Ukraine and Relations with the West

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Abstract

Africa plays a pivotal role in Putin’s foreign policy, which seeks to shift global power dynamics. Putin promises Russian support to African nations while tapping into the legacy of the continent’s colonial trauma in efforts to bolster Russian interests in the region. In the UN, where African countries hold a quarter of the votes, African support is essential for Russia’s resolutions. Russian disinformation in Africa targets countries with fragile democracies and conflicts, promoting the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and portraying the Russian presence positively while criticizing the involvement of Western countries, particularly France. African fact-checking organizations—including Africa Check, Pesa Check, FactSpace West Africa, and Dubawa—work to counter misinformation and encourage healthier online discussions.

Africa plays a significant role in Putin’s foreign policy agenda, which is committed to dismantling what he sees as an inequitable “unipolar” global order characterized by U.S. and European dominance and establishing a more balanced “multipolar” framework of major powers, including Russia. Within this narrative, Putin extends a promise of Russian support to African nations as they strive to shed the remnants of European colonialism.

Furthermore, Africa stands out as the focus of Putin’s efforts to counter diplomatic isolation. The backing of African allies has assumed paramount importance for Russia, especially within the United Nations (UN), where African countries account for a quarter of all votes in the General Assembly. The participation of African states plays a pivotal role in Moscow’s periodic calls for support from nations, seeking their votes—or at least abstentions—on critical UN resolutions.

During the UN General Assembly held in February 2023, nations including Botswana, Zambia, and Tunisia lent their support to the cause of “a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in Ukraine.” Conversely, Mali and Eritrea expressed their dissent through opposing votes, while a further 15 African nations chose to abstain from the voting process (UN News 2023).

According to research conducted by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2023), an academic institution operating under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Defense, Russian efforts to influence the political agenda in Africa manifest in various ways. The most frequently observed tactics are disinformation campaigns, interference in electoral processes, and backing of extra-constitutional power claims.

The U.S. State Department (2022), as well as think tanks like the Atlantic Council (le Roux and Knight 2023) and the Africa Center for Strategic Studies

(2022b), has linked a significant portion of Russian disinformation campaigns to the deceased (according to Russian media) Yevgeny Prigozhin and the Wagner private military company. In their view, Prigozhin’s network in Africa is actively working to exert a forceful influence on public opinion throughout the continent, with the ultimate goal of promoting increased Russian presence and influence in the region.

Advancing War in Ukraine and Expanding Russian Influence

Geographically speaking, Russian disinformation campaigns have reached a significant portion of the African continent. According to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2022b), such campaigns have been documented in no fewer than 16 countries on the continent, including South Africa, Sudan, Libya, and Mozambique. The primary targets of these disinformation efforts tend to be nations characterized by fragile democratic systems and those embroiled in ongoing conflicts (Africa Center for Strategic Studies 2023). It is noteworthy that Russia’s interference in the democratic processes of these nations is having the detrimental effect of perpetuating these conflicts, as it hinders the prospects for negotiated political resolutions.

Russian disinformation campaigns in the region have two primary objectives. First, they seek to garner support for the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by framing it in a favorable light. Second, they aim to portray Russia’s increasing presence on the African continent as advantageous while simultaneously depicting American and European (particularly French) involvement in Africa in a negative manner.

Concerning the extensive Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian disinformation tactics involve the utilization of well-known narratives. These include

depicting the conflict as a “proxy war between Russia and Western powers,” characterizing the Ukrainian government as “Nazi,” spreading baseless allegations about “biolaboratories,” and other unfounded claims. Russian figures actively employ social media platforms to disseminate these narratives.

In the wake of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine on March 2, 2022, there unfolded a concerted effort involving thousands of newly created, counterfeit, and compromised accounts (Africa Center for Strategic Studies 2022a). These accounts launched a large-scale, synchronized operation aimed at manipulating Twitter’s algorithm to propel two pro-Russian hashtags onto the list of trending topics in South Africa, Ghana, and Nigeria. These hashtags were #IStandwithPutin and #IStandwithRussia.

In a separate incident, over 1,500 social media accounts belonging to Nigerian journalists fell victim to hacking. Of these, more than 600 were commandeered to disseminate nearly 800 unauthorized messages and promote pro-Kremlin narratives regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine across various platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Notably, these disinformation efforts are not limited to conventional social media and news networks, but also extend to various levels of officials, including local embassies.

According to *Deutsche Welle*, in early July 2023, the Russian embassy in South Africa shared what it claimed was a screenshot of a *POLITICO* article entitled “20,000,000 Lives for the Sake of Freedom” (Wesolowski and Gatanazi 2023). Commenting on the alleged screenshot, the embassy accused NATO of prolonging the conflict in Ukraine, suggesting that the latter was willing to sacrifice Ukrainian lives.

Upon closer examination and subsequent research, it became evident that the screenshot was fraudulent. *POLITICO* had never published such an article. Furthermore, the fake screenshot featured numerous grammatical and spelling errors, and the *POLITICO* logo that appeared in it was fabricated. Although the Russian embassy in South Africa eventually removed the post, it garnered over 100,000 views on Twitter.

Disinformation about Ukraine has also targeted the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which, since August 2022, has exported over 32 million metric tons of Ukrainian grain and food products globally, aiding food-insecure regions like the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. However, Russia has deployed disinformation to downplay the deal’s significance for Africa and spread false narratives about it. (For more in-depth information on Russia’s disinformation tactics related to the Black Sea Grain Initiative and its impact on food security, please see the We Are Ukraine [2023] report entitled “Russia’s Myths about Food Security and the Black Sea Grain Initiative.”)

Nevertheless, in a recent survey conducted among people with an active interest in news and politics in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, and Zambia, it was discovered that most of them perceive the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a violation of international law (Ipsos 2023). Furthermore, a considerable number of respondents shared the belief that Russia bears responsibility for war crimes committed in Ukraine.

It is important to understand that the threat of Russian disinformation not only affects Ukraine and issues surrounding the war against Ukraine, but also deepens the chasm between Africa and Europe, created and expanded by centuries of European colonialism, the consequences of which are felt to this day. The Russian “anti-West” disinformation campaign, which is largely anti-French, aims to spread false narratives claiming that France has ambitions to control the entire African continent. It portrays French troops as weak and hints that Russia will provide African states with assistance in liberating themselves from France. Misleading Facebook posts are the key tool of this campaign. Pro-Russia pages actively share content depicting Russian soldiers as superior and ready to replace French forces. A video that circulated in Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Ivory Coast shows Russian Wagner private military company soldiers aiding Malian soldiers in the fight against symbolic “French zombies” (Cartes du Monde 2023). Ultimately, Russia is weaponizing the traumatic legacy of European colonialism in Africa as a means of propelling itself to the position of a trusted outsider.

Conclusion

Africa plays a crucial role in Vladimir Putin’s foreign policy agenda as Russia aims to reshape the global order. Putin offers support to African nations seeking to overcome colonial legacies and has made Africa central to countering Russia’s diplomatic isolation. Russian disinformation campaigns in Africa serve two purposes: (1) garnering support for the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine and (2) portraying the Russian presence in Africa favorably while casting Western involvement in a negative light.

Several tools are available to combat Russian disinformation campaigns in the region. Media giants such as Meta and Google have actively engaged in detecting and blocking Russian disinformation networks in Europe, making them valuable assets for similar efforts in Africa (*Associated Press* 2022). Additionally, over 30 countries have taken measures to block Russian media outlets like *RT* and *Sputnik* from broadcasting within their borders to counter disinformation (National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine 2022).

Africa has also developed its own solutions to confront and counter disinformation online, thereby foster-

ing healthier online discussions. Africa Check (<https://africacheck.org>), launched in 2012 in South Africa, was the continent's first initiative to promote media literacy and has since evolved into a prominent fact-checking organization for Africa. Other initiatives—such as Pesa

Check, Africa's largest indigenous fact-checking organization (<https://pesacheck.org>); FactSpace West Africa (factspace.org); and Nigeria's Dubawa (dubawa.org)—are actively contributing to reducing the spread of misinformation on the continent.

About the Author

Artem Miniailo serves as the Managing Editor of and a contributor to [WeAreUkraine.info](https://weareukraine.info), bringing with him 8 years of experience in the realm of international relations within both the governmental and civil sectors. We Are Ukraine is a repository of truth about Ukraine's contribution to freedom and lasting peace in the world. The initiative was launched in 2022 as a response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, aimed at disseminating comprehensive insights about the resilient Ukrainian nation and providing a truthful account of the war in Ukraine. This project is being implemented by the civil society organization "Resilient Ukraine."

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Russian Propaganda in the Near and Far Abroad: A Comparison of Kyrgyzstan and Germany

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Abstract

The Russian regime's propaganda strategy reaches far beyond the country's borders. Tailored narratives and influence operations target different audiences. This article looks at two cases of Russia's influence operations: one in Kyrgyzstan, a country with a Soviet past, and the other in Germany, a NATO member country. The article spotlights key instruments and narratives in Russian propaganda tailored to specific audiences.

For years, the Russian regime has been investing in its domestic and international media strategies. Over time, domestic media censorship has entailed appropriation of key television channels by the state or state-loyal corporations, showcase murders of investigative journalists, retaliation against social media users, and the adoption of strategic legislation for media manipulation, among other tactics. In the aftermath of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, objective reporting in Russia became virtually impossible, leading to a mass exodus of media outlets and journalists (Venkina 2023). Much like in Soviet times, the state has taken steps to isolate Russian audiences from messages that are not state-approved.

Parallel to these domestic control strategies, the regime has established international broadcasters such as *RT* and *Sputnik*, which deliver their messages globally and in a variety of languages. The lines between traditional and digital media have begun to blur due to the state propaganda machine's heavy reliance on the Internet to spread information. *Sputnik*, for instance, is primarily an online news agency that is also active on social media. In addition to these official outlets, the regime has relied on a troll army to sway online discussions (Doroshenko and Lukito 2021) and instrumentalized informal leaders such as artists and influencers to support the official agenda and to distract audiences (Biasioli 2023). In this regard, propaganda cannot be understood simply as something news-related—it is multimodal and multisemiotic. Propaganda is embedded in the cultural code, permeating movies, public art, songs, proverbs, humor, etc.

Russia's international propaganda strategy can be roughly divided into two parts: efforts targeting the so-called "near abroad" (former Soviet republics) and efforts directed at the "far abroad" (global audiences). When targeting audiences beyond the country's borders, Russian media aim to reach Russian citizens living abroad, ethnic Russians, and Russophones more

broadly, while also delivering news in the local languages of target states and pitching across the entire political spectrum.

A stream of Russian propaganda narratives focuses on the amoral nature of the collective West. The West is accused of destroying traditional values, being promiscuous, and spreading the LGBT agenda globally. In contrast, Russia is portrayed as the defender of traditional values. As is often the case in the Russian media, there are contradicting lines of argumentation here. On the one hand, the West is accused of being too tolerant and foolishly open to multiculturalism, which is destroying it. The word "tolerance" in this case is used as something between naivety and political incompetence. This narrative aligns with the far-right nativist voices that advocate for border closure and the preservation of ethnocultural homogeneity. On the other hand, the West is accused of Islamophobia and racism, which resonates with minorities and liberals. This combination of seemingly contradictory narratives contributes to the central goal of undermining the West in the eyes of divergent audiences, be they Eurosceptics or defenders of European values. Contradictions and narrative inconsistencies are not erroneous, but rather part of a strategy to persuade wide audiences and undermine the enemy from multiple angles.

In what follows, the article will explore Russian propaganda strategies through two cases representing the "near" and "far" abroad. First, the article describes the impact of Russian propaganda on Kyrgyzstan, a country in the "near abroad," where traditional Russian media are dominant due to habit and a relative lack of competition (Gabdulhakov 2023). This is followed by the "far abroad" case of "Russia Germans," in which the propaganda machine relies on social media to reach and influence a specific group of people in Europe with cultural and linguistic ties to Russia. In conclusion, the article discusses potential strategies for combating Russian propaganda.

Targeting the Near Abroad: The Case of Kyrgyzstan¹

Russian propaganda in Kyrgyzstan is massive. It penetrates in a variety of formats and in a volume with which domestic and Western media outlets cannot compete. Central narratives of Russian propaganda focus on the demonization of the “collective West,” the demonization of Ukraine, the glorification of Russia, and the portrayal of Kyrgyzstan as a state dependent on Russia (Gabdulhakov 2023).

There are several narrative strands that demonize the West. One stresses the idea that the West is responsible for the war in Ukraine, as it left Russia no choice. In this narrative, Europe is portrayed as a puppet in the hands of the United States, whose core mission is to conquer the world and destroy Russia. The central argument in this narrative is that countries such as Ukraine fall victim to manipulation. Ukraine is accused of stepping down the path of Nazism and killing its own people in the pursuit of false promises made by the West. Russia is thus saving itself from Western aggression, saving Ukraine from the Nazis, and saving the world from capitalist colonizers.

Cold War-era narratives on the “decaying West” and the inability of capitalists to sustain their people are back. Russian media report on severe food shortages and poverty across Europe and the United States. At the same time, the reports make the case that the West is after global dominance. Here, Russian media take advantage of the anticolonial narratives that are gaining momentum in public discourse in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere. While it views post-Soviet states as de facto part of the “Russian world,”² Russia denies its colonial past. In a way, Russia hijacks decolonization discourses and deploys them against the collective West, which is deemed the true colonizer. At the same time, any attempt to de-Sovietize on the part of Kyrgyzstan leads to a harsh reaction and threats from Moscow (Najibullah 2022).

Russian propaganda in Kyrgyzstan is available in both Russian and Kyrgyz. [Sputnik.kg](https://sputnik.kg) is a prominent example of a bilingual platform: the home page is entirely in Kyrgyz and users can use the menu to opt for Russian. Both versions of the website run a thematic block dedicated to Russia’s war against Ukraine—or,

as the agency describes it, Russia’s “special operation for protection of Donbas.” Kyrgyz citizens—and Central Asian labor migrants more broadly—are actively recruited to fight in Russia’s war against Ukraine. This is done through both gratification and enforcement. In the gratification scenario, labor migrants are promised high monthly payments and a simplified pathway to Russian citizenship. In the enforcement scenario, people are either abducted or are threatened with deportation and loss of citizenship should they refuse to go to war (Institute for War and Peace Reporting 2022).

In reporting on the war itself, Russian propaganda in Kyrgyzstan plays on World War II references and sentiments. For years, the annual victory celebrations on May 9 have been accompanied by such slogans as “we can repeat this,” hinting at the idea that war might recur. These sentiments are coupled with the broader mythology of a lost paradise. In this narrative, the USSR is portrayed in the most positive light, as a country where everyone was socially and economically protected, that was a world leader in education and medicine, and of which everyone was afraid. The “evil West,” meanwhile, is portrayed as the serpent that destroyed this paradise. Now, in order to restore paradise, Russia must reclaim its lands. This propaganda seeks to persuade its targets that even if the USSR will not be restored per se, countries in the “near abroad” must be oriented toward Russia for their own good. If you are on good terms with Russia, the narrative goes, it will protect you from invaders of all kind, be they Western colonizers, the Taliban or China—but if you turn away and become “Russophobic,” the fate of Ukraine awaits you.

Targeting the Far Abroad: The Case of “Russia Germans”³

Having settled in the Russian empire in the 18th and 19th centuries, ethnic Germans (*Russlanddeutsche*, lit. “Russia Germans,” sometimes called Russian Germans) were exiled to Central Asia during World War II.⁴ As the USSR dissolved, they were invited to resettle in the historical motherland—the reunited Federal Republic of Germany. Facing integration issues, these ethnic Germans (who often refer to themselves as *Rusaki*⁵—Rus-

1 The information in this section is based on the author’s ongoing research, as well as a published report to which the author contributed. The full report is available at “Narratives and Perceptions of Russian Propaganda in Kyrgyzstan,” Institute for War and Peace Reporting (July 2023), <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/print-publications/russian-propaganda-kyrgyzstan>.

2 “Russkii Mir” is a political doctrine encompassing Russia’s political and cultural sphere of influence. In 2007, Vladimir Putin established the Russian World Foundation to promote Russian language and culture. For more on the Russian World, see Kudors 2010.

3 The information in this section is based on the author’s ongoing research, as well as a published forum to which the author contributed. The forum is available at: A. Mahon et al., “Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine: What Did We Miss?” *International Studies Perspectives*, May 10, 2023, doi: 10.1093/isp/ekad006.

4 For a detailed account of Russia Germans, see L. Isurin and C.M. Riehl, eds., *Integration, Identity and Language Maintenance in Young Immigrants: Russian Germans or German Russians* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2017).

5 According to field interviews with Russia Germans. The use of the term is informed by Russia Germans being both Russophones and descendants of Germans who lived in Russia.

sians) maintained cultural and ideological ties with Russia. Amid Russia's global disinformation strategy and influence operations, this group is actively targeted by pro-Kremlin propaganda.

The impact of Russia's influence operations targeting Russia Germans first became vividly apparent during the "European refugee crisis" of 2015–2016, when anti-refugee sentiments reached a tipping point. When a Russia German girl named Lisa claimed to have been abducted and raped by refugees, Russia used the story to undermine the credibility of the German establishment, stressing that the welcoming culture advocated by Angela Merkel was threatening the security of German citizens. Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov even referred to the girl as "our Lisa." While the story turned out to be made up, the "Lisa case" sparked outrage and protests across Germany (Rinke & Carrel, 2016). Arguably, these events and the surrounding anti-refugee/anti-EU narratives helped the far-right AfD party (Alternative für Deutschland, Alternative for Germany) gain popularity. Russia Germans tend to be prominent supporters of the party (Golova 2017).

While Telegram is certainly gaining momentum in spreading Russian propaganda, having transformed from an enemy platform (Akbari & Gabdulhakov 2019) into a go-to milieu for Russian propagandists (Akbari & Gabdulhakov forthcoming), among Russia Germans a special role is played by the social network Odnoklassniki (Classmates). Odnoklassniki is poorly regulated and is anarchical when it comes to access to unmoderated hate speech, pirated movies/music, pornographic content, etc. This platform's popularity among Russia Germans can be explained by two factors: time and affordances. Time-wise, Odnoklassniki was established in 2006, when there were few other social media platforms. Those who had repatriated to their historical motherland embraced the network to find friends and neighbors they had left behind. Odnoklassniki was and remains popular due to its simple interface in Russian as well as other affordances that have evolved along with the platform, including convenient tools for streaming, chatting, and even transferring money. Over the years, due to the number of people already present on the platform, especially among the older generation, Odnoklassniki has become THE platform for finding former neighbors and childhood friends.

Amid Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, anti-Ukraine, anti-EU, and pro-Russian narratives have flooded social media groups designed for Russophones in Germany. These groups⁶ are attractive to Russophones seeking assistance with practical matters: one can advertise products and services or inquire about mundane

topics such as public transport, the education system, visas for relatives, etc., etc. Yet the feeds in these groups are also flooded with politicized content and propaganda. Group admins become the rulers of these online communities: they set the agenda and moderate the discussions. If someone dares challenge the set agenda, they are at best removed from the group, losing access to thousands of community members. In severe cases, those who challenge the admin are declared "enemies of the people" and publicly shamed in the group, with relevant screenshots and personal information shared.

Netnographic observations revealed that there is an active influence operation taking place on the Odnoklassniki groups designed for Russia Germans. Posts shared across these groups demonize Ukraine, its people, and its political leadership. Ukraine is framed as an artificially created Nazi state that requires liberation. Much like other refugees, Ukrainians fleeing war are portrayed as invaders who put pressure on the German economy while not genuinely requiring protection. Volodymyr Zelensky is ridiculed as a homosexual and a drug addict. The shared content also systematically undermines German policies in support of Ukraine; it is Eurosceptic and openly pro-Kremlin. The persona of Vladimir Putin is elevated to the status of a superhero fighting global evil. Some of the shared content is openly racist, using derogatory terms for Ukrainians, but due to the anarchic moderation on Odnoklassniki, it can actively reach out to audiences in Europe.

Conclusion

The Kremlin's propaganda machine is massive, multifaceted, and far-reaching. In Kyrgyzstan, Russian media are omnipresent and active in influencing people's perceptions of the West, Ukraine, Russia, and themselves. The West is portrayed as evil, Russia is portrayed as a security guarantor, and war is framed as an opportunity. In Germany, the target audience is actively reached out to online and persuaded that Ukraine is an artificially created Nazi state, that the German establishment and the EU are dysfunctional, and that Russia is saving the world. In both cases, the "lost paradise" myth about the glory days of the USSR is promoted to draw historical parallels and to persuade audiences that friendship with Moscow will lead to security and prosperity.

In Kyrgyzstan, the Russian media have built on their historical presence, adding new formats and news in the local language. To succeed in countering Russian propaganda here, significant resources will have to be poured into alternative content creation. Not only are such resources nowhere on the horizon, but the situation is further eroded by the repressive legislation that

6 There is a plethora of such groups. Only groups open to the public (those that do not require an administrator's approval to join) were studied.

the current political leadership in Kyrgyzstan has been adopting to silence civil society and critical voices (Cabar. Asia 2023).

When it comes to active recruitment of Kyrgyz citizens to serve in the Russian army and fight in Ukraine, it is not enough to just remind citizens that becoming a foreign combatant is illegal. There must be active counter-campaigns to discourage people from falling for this offer. However, the state has no capacity to protect its citizens or to employ them at home—and a few thousand visas for seasonal work in Western countries cannot significantly reduce Kyrgyzstan's dependency on Russia for remittances.

In Germany, citizens fall prey to Russian propaganda and choose candidates during elections on that basis. It is no longer possible to draw a clear line between tradi-

tional and social media, as traditional media products penetrate the digital domain, making measures such as restricting access to *RT* and *Sputnik* in the European Union hardly effective. Here, resources should be directed to countering Russian propaganda on the same platforms where it penetrates. These measures should go hand in hand with calling group admins to account for what they spread online. It does not help that opportunistic politicians in Europe itself build campaigns on those narratives pitched by Russian propaganda that are anti-EU and anti-Ukraine.

The strength of Russian propaganda is in its flexibility. Naturally, therefore, any attempts to resist the propaganda machine also require a certain departure from conventional approaches. However, it is important not to fall into the trap of becoming the enemy during the fight.

About the Author

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The Discontents of Ukraine's Civilizational Wartime Diplomacy in the Global South

Chelsea Ngoc Minh Nguyen

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Abstract

This is an ideational polemic essay on Ukraine's wartime diplomacy in the Global South, with a focus on Asia. The main argument made is that Ukraine's civilizational approach to wartime diplomacy for rallying international support in the Global South has been self-constraining and is bound to be self-defeating when it comes to achieving greater respectability and broader appeal, support, and a sense of a shared struggle among governments and peoples across the Global South in the long term.

As the Russian invasion of Ukraine approaches its second anniversary, 2023 has been a historic year for passionate evocations of the "Global South"—as much in grieving protest as in exuberant confidence—by its individual members, from India to Brazil. These constitute serious attempts by various power centers of the Global South, with an ever-stronger sense of collective momentum, to push forward alternative political visions for a new multipolar and post-liberal world order in the face of a growing power vacuum created by an increasingly constrained U.S. unipolarity and a faltering Russian regional hegemony.

What does this historic moment entail for Ukraine and the notion of "the Global South" as such? I wish to stimulate such a discussion with a polemical essay on Ukraine's wartime diplomatic efforts to rally international support in the Global South, with a focus on Asia. My main argument is that Ukraine's civilizational approach to wartime diplomacy in the Global South has been self-constraining and is bound to be self-defeating when it comes to achieving greater respectability and broader appeal, as well as cultivating a sense of a shared struggle among governments and peoples across the Global South in the long term. This is an important debate to have, as it ultimately concerns the discontents of the civilizational visions of Ukraine, held by dominant voices within the country and its external rearguards in the West in response to the civilizational "Russian world," for the political nature of its national survival and post-war independence in relation to its place in an emerging new world order that is inevitably gravitating toward the Global South. Ukraine's future with the Global South is already being decided today.

A Civilizational Imaginary of a War of Liberation

Civilizational portrayals of a war of liberation have featured heavily in Ukraine's wartime diplomacy as

conducted by the highest levels of its government, its intelligentsia, and its public. In marking the first anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion, President Volodymyr Zelensky gave a speech at the European Parliament in which he declared Russia to be "the biggest anti-European force of the modern world" (European Parliament News 2023). By "European," he meant a way of life ostensibly "steeped in rules, values, equality, and fairness." This Europe, he indicated, is "a place where Ukraine is firmly at home": "This is our Europe, these are our rules, this is our way of life, and for Ukraine, it's a way home, a way to home." On the same occasion, the philosopher Volodymyr Yermolenko argued that Russia's invasion was "making Russia become more Asian" and that Ukraine's struggle for its national survival was "extending Europe's borders eastwards."¹ This was later echoed by the secretary of Ukraine's National Defense and Security Council, Oleksiy Danilov. In an interview with a British magazine in January 2023, Danilov said, "We [Ukraine] are a nation that belongs to Europe. Russians are a nation that belongs to Asia. There is nothing wrong with it, but it has to be understood" (New Statesman 2023). In a local interview in August 2023, Danilov argued that Russians were inherently inhumane by dint of the fact that "they are Asian" (likely referring to their so-called Asiatic "Mongol origins").² In September 2023, Zelensky advisor Mykhailo Podolyak claimed that "the Chinese and Indians have low intellectual potential" in the context of their governments' official neutrality vis-à-vis the Russian invasion (The Wire 2023). All these remarks preceded an infamous statement made in October 2022 by the chief of EU's external affairs, Josep Borrell, in which he declared that "Europe is a garden of prosperity," that "the rest of the world remains a jungle, and that the jungle could invade the garden" (Euronews 2023). Subsequently, in

1 In a deleted Twitter thread written by Volodymyr Yermolenko on February 18, 2023.

2 Interview with the Lviv-based Ukrainian media channel *NTA* on August 4, 2023.

a self-congratulatory assessment of Ukraine's wartime diplomacy, Yuna Potomkina, an advisor to Ukraine's Ministry of Defense, concluded that "Ukraine has been highly successful at getting across the message that Russia's invasion is a clash of civilizations with global implications" (Atlantic Council 2023).

However, looking beyond Ukraine's trans-Atlantic rearguards to see how these messages may be being interpreted by the diverse audiences of the Global South, this optimistic assessment appears premature.

The Rise of Civilizationism and the Return of the Global South

When I refer to "civilizational" wartime diplomacy, my conceptual thoughts are in the spirit of Amartya Sen's criticism of Samuel Huntington's take on world history as a clash between a federation of "civilizations"—a permanent state of war and conflict-ready tensions between peoples, often rooted in mythologically imagined, nativist, predestined, and spatially fixed political, cultural and religious identities, values, and glorified interpretations of history. In emphasizing that any human being is inherently composed of plural identities and associational belongings, Sen (2007) warns that various manifestations of violence, against external "enemies" as much as internal subjects, are often bred of a sense of inevitability about an allegedly choiceless, unique, and often belligerent single identity.

Ukraine's patterns must also be situated within a broader trend of "civilizational" international politics in recent times. What Bettiza et. al. (2023) call "civilizationalism"—which is associated with conservative, illiberal, and authoritarian political values and forces—presently proliferates across the West, the Middle East, China, India, Russia, and elsewhere. Ukraine is understandably embedded within this global ideological trend. However, ongoing struggles around the world to achieve political, economic, and social prosperities and freedoms are not for an exclusive new "European future," but for a more universally shared one: an equal humanity of dignity, worth, and protection as promised by the international laws and the UN Charter as the most basic litmus test for such a possible future.

Until recently, I had been reluctant to use the all-encompassing term "the Global South," as it had since the early 1980s degenerated into a term without much cohesively shared political meaning, organizational capacity, or alternative systemic visions for a more equal and just world order. The dominant ideologies of the domestic politics behind some of its major countries' current push for a new multipolar world order are themselves steeped in crude civilizational conservatism and developmentalist hyper-capitalism (see Meduza 2023 and Posle 2022). The current ruling powers of some such

major countries are even aiding creeping illiberalism and ethnic and religious majoritarianism within their ostensibly democratic societies. Yet this new multipolarity is being portrayed as an alternative progressive politics for a new world order that would replace U.S. unilateralism and its ability to abuse power with impunity.

In reality, such alternative politics is a politics of desiring these same privileges of power and impunity, as well as putting a final end to sovereign equality by entitlements to predestined "spheres of influence." Zhang (2023) warns about the dangers of treating binaries like "North/South" and "West/non-West" as inherently opposing political spheres: "While illiberal movements that appropriate the anti-colonial rhetoric purport to challenge the moral geography underpinning the liberal international order, they [end up] producing its essentializing, hierarchical, and racialized logics in reversing its value judgement." Indeed, as Biao (2023) observes: "Mainstream opinion in China today is not talking about doing something different, but about becoming number one, and many basic ways of thinking are similar to what we see in the US, which to my mind has to do with our loss of common ideals." In the case of India, the columnist Happymon Jacob similarly asserts that "what New Delhi is really after is a seat at the high table of international politics. Its revisionist language is rooted in its desire to be part of a restructured status quo" (The Hindu 2023).

In making my criticism of Ukraine's wartime diplomatic efforts to rally international support in the Global South, I will refer to the Global South as a broad community of various social strata but with a largely shared intimate experience and historical consciousness of past Western colonial rule and contemporary hypocrisies in the West's selective compliances and approaches to international laws, wars, conflicts, and struggles. My criticism applies especially to those countries and societies of the Global South with previously strong ties to—and often overall positive experiences with—the former Soviet Union (USSR).

Ukraine's Wartime Diplomacy in Indonesia

While Indonesia was a firm U.S. ally under a military dictatorship between 1965 and 1998, it is also a country where many people continue to have a fond appreciation and memories of the USSR (though disproportionately associated with Russia), especially when it comes to culture, education, and a past shared political vision of pushing forward a non-capitalist and decolonized world order. Many Indonesians remember fondly how the USSR, in fact the UN Mission of the Ukraine Socialist Republic (Soviet Ukraine), raised the question of Indonesian independence at the UN Security Council in 1946 as the Dutch were waging a brutal war to re-col-

onize Indonesia (1945–49). These ties peaked between 1955 and 1964, a time of reverberating decolonial euphoria, as Indonesia's prestige grew across the Global South (or the non-aligned "third world") following the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung and its complete victory over the Dutch—with significant Soviet military assistance—by 1962.

On the one hand, Indonesia's government has so far voted consistently in support of all UN General Assembly resolutions that have called for Ukraine's legitimate territorial integrity and sovereignty to be respected and the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine. Moreover, as the chair of the G20 Summit in 2022, Indonesia's president, Joko Widodo (or "Jokowi"), and his wife, Iriana Joko Widodo, paid a visit to Kyiv, making him the first statesman from the Global South to visit wartime Ukraine. In contrast to India, which hosted the G20 in 2023, Indonesia allowed President Zelensky to attend the summit and present his 10-point peace plan to the world for the first time (Presidential Office of Ukraine 2022). On the other hand, public sentiments, even shared internally by various segments of the Indonesian government, have been predominantly marked by sympathy for Russia and cynicism toward Ukraine. Some corroboration of this can be found in polls of Indonesian respondents regarding their overall impression of Russia. A recent poll by the Pew Research Center, released in July 2023, showed that Indonesians were among the nationalities that viewed Russia the most favorably, alongside Indians and Nigerians.

In a statement made on March 2, 2022, Ukraine's ambassador to Indonesia, Vasyl Hamianin, sought to win support from the Indonesian government and public in two distinct ways (Detik News 2022). The first was to draw parallels between Indonesia's past anti-colonial wars of independence, notably against the Dutch and the Japanese, and Ukraine's ongoing defense against a Russian conquest. The second, however, was to invoke Indonesia's bloody past of anti-communism: "You [Indonesia] are a wise nation that were able to ward off the communists' seductions and not to submit to them." Hamianin went on to claim that "today's Russia is a continuation of the communist regime." As much as a brewing Islamic populism and anti-communism continue to go together in contemporary Indonesian politics, the evocation of memories of one of the twentieth century's bloodiest massacres in 1965, which left between 500,000 and 1 million people dead, is itself morally abhorrent and lacking in basic historical sensibility, whatever his political intentions. The massacres targeted members and sympathizers of the Indonesian Communist Party, as well as citizens of Chinese origin. Perpetrators were part of the Indonesian army and specially formed militias under the command of General

and later President Suharto. President Jokowi was first elected in 2014 partly on an electoral promise to courageously push forward an agenda of national reconciliation for the many silenced victims of the 1965 massacres across Indonesia. For years, the president faced tremendous opposition to this agenda from powerful forces within Indonesia's military and the Islamic establishment. At last, on January 11, 2023, the president formally extended the Indonesian state's "deep regrets" and acknowledgment that the 1965 massacres indeed took place, alongside 11 other "gross human rights violations" between 1965 and 2003 (The Guardian 2023).

Another episode took place in relation to Israel's air strikes on the Gaza strip on August 5, 2022, which Indonesia resolutely condemned. This is in accordance with Indonesia's anti-colonial tradition of solidarity with Palestine: it is among the few countries in the world that still do not have formal diplomatic relations with Israel while affirming the two-state solution and pre-1967 borders. Indeed, 2022 was the deadliest year in the last seven years in terms of Israeli and Palestinian civilian casualties, which came disproportionately among Palestinians (UN 2022). In response to Indonesia's condemnation of Israel's escalatory violence in the Gaza strip, Hamianin tweeted in all caps: "How about strong condemnation of brutal attacks on Ukraine during the last five months? And deaths of hundreds if not thousands of children, including Muslim kids?" (The Jakarta Globe 2022). Shortly thereafter, Ukraine's ambassador to Israel, Yevgen Korniychuk, released a public statement, saying: "As a Ukrainian whose country is under a brutal and prolonged attack by its nearest neighbor, I feel great sympathy for the Israeli public. Terrorism and malicious attacks against civilians have become the daily routine of Israelis and Ukrainians" (The Palestine Chronicle 2022). The Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs then summoned Hamianin to express "displeasure and resentment" over comments deemed "hurtful for Indonesians who consider Ukrainians as friends" (The Jakarta Globe 2022).

At issue is not Ukraine's position on the Israel–Palestine conflict per se, but rather the illusory universality of international laws and the unequal value placed on civilian victims of wars. It is worth asking why—beyond the "obvious" answer of affinities—Indonesia's condemnation of Israel's escalatory violence ought to go against Ukraine's cause of national survival and self-determination. What were the merits of openly attacking Indonesia's position on another major global conflict, especially in the absence of moralizing reciprocal consistency? This only alienated large segments of the Indonesian public further, as no other international conflict has timelessly galvanized many Indonesians as has the Israel–Palestine conflict and the cause of Palestin-

ian statehood. This exemplifies Ukraine's civilizational approach to wartime diplomacy: Ukraine finds it impossible to recognize similar struggles for self-determination, universal human dignity and protection, equality, and fairness unless the countries engaged in these struggles are either spatially part of or on the periphery of Europe, the purported epitome of civilization.

Ukraine's Wartime Diplomacy in Vietnam

There can be no doubt that the US has been the most significant external rearguard behind Ukraine's war of self-defense against Russia. Understandably, U.S. and Ukrainian wartime diplomatic efforts have been well-coordinated and, so far, largely in unison. On March 10, 2022, refuting Russia's allegations that the US was operating biological weapons programs in Ukraine, the U.S. embassy in Vietnam released a brazen statement stating: "Russia, not the United States, has a long and well-documented track of using chemical weapons" (The Diplomat 2022).³ This statement naturally caused the embassy's official Facebook page to become engulfed in local repugnance. By official Vietnamese estimates, 3 to 4.8 million people in Vietnam were exposed to Agent Orange, a defoliant that contained such ferociously toxic chemicals as dioxin and was deployed as part of the United States' chemical warfare against communist insurgencies and local populations across South Vietnam between 1961 and 1971 (The Diplomat 2022). With official local estimates suggesting that 25% of southern Vietnamese land areas were sprayed with Agent Orange, some have called out the United States' past "ecocide" in Vietnam (Wilcox 2011).

Especially in the early phases of the Russian invasion, there was at times widespread local sympathy for Russia's stated justifications for attacking Ukraine. They have been manifested in popular perceptions and discourses that view the current situation largely through the lens of great power geopolitics, as well as painful historical consciousness and experience with past Western militarism and international sanctions throughout the last Cold (Hot) War (Ha and Dien 2022). More profoundly than in Indonesia, many Vietnamese retain a deep-seated appreciation for—and cherish the memory of—the USSR. Unlike that of Ukraine, Russia's wartime diplomacy has been successful at calling up and connecting with such local memories, albeit through a dishonest portrayal of the contemporary Russian state as the sole heir of the USSR and the latter's contributions to various twentieth-century anti-colonial struggles. Meanwhile, to many Vietnamese, especially among the older generations, who are simultaneously sympa-

thetic to Ukraine's fight for its national survival and fond of the historical USSR, the current war is one between two formerly socialist and brotherly nations of Vietnam—a war of tremendous sadness that marks the culmination of the long collapse of the USSR. The Soviet project is perceived by many of its Vietnamese sympathizers as an anti-(Western) imperialist and internationalist project that served as an alternative model of rapid economic, social, and human development with a political vision of a more just and decolonized world order. The 1917 Russian Revolution and its global ramifications heavily influenced various early-twentieth-century Vietnamese independence movements, including the current ruling Vietnamese Communist Party. These perceptions may contrast with the more intimate (diverse) experiences of many other individuals, ethnic minorities, and nations within the USSR and its border peripheries, including those of many Ukrainians. The roles of geographical distance, relatively less exposure to the discontents of the USSR, and the fact that local historiographies of the USSR are largely drawn from Russian-centric perspectives have indeed given rise to an overall Vietnamese over-romanticization of the USSR.

That being said, of the thousands of military and technical advisors from the USSR who served on the ground in Vietnam during the U.S. invasion (1965–73), many were in fact Ukrainians. Today, around 500 surviving members belong to the All Ukrainian Union of War Veterans alone (Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations 2021). Following the U.S. military withdrawal in 1973 and the reunification of Vietnam in 1975, it was largely the USSR and the Eastern Bloc that helped a war-ravaged Vietnam fill its acute human capital gaps and train its modern state-builders (engineers, agronomists, geologists, economists, teachers, architects, and so on). Once again, assistance from Soviet Ukraine was indispensable, helping to alleviate unified Vietnam's many diplomatic, economic, and social crises by providing subsidized crops, food aid, maintenance of military hardware, and educational opportunities. Most soberingly, between 1979 and 1994, 11 Soviet experts (among them Ukrainians) perished during the construction of the Hoà Bình Dam ("Peace Dam"), which was until 2021 Southeast Asia's largest hydropower plant (VnExpress 2019). Until higher education in the West became more available from the early 1990s, the opportunity to gain higher education in the USSR was a dream for many Vietnamese and millions of others in the poorer parts of the world. Among those Vietnamese figures who have come out to publicly condemn Russia's war on Ukraine, from prominent lawmakers to retired military generals,

3 Russia's allegations of U.S. biological weapons programs run in Ukraine were subsequently refuted by the International Atomic Energy Agency on March 18, 2022, and the UN's Office for Disarmament Affairs on October 27, 2022.

many previously studied in the USSR; they have universally begun their statements with an outpouring of gratitude for the years they spent in the USSR during their youth. Understandably, there have been some comparisons between wartime Ukraine and Vietnam, giving rise to arguments that Ukraine is “the Vietnam of the 21st century” (Barnett 2022).

The Difference between a Civilizational and a Universalist Wartime Diplomacy for Decolonization

For Vietnam, its wartime diplomacy was not about seeking a civilizational decolonization by a return to an ancient past, without the necessity of a social revolution at home to lift up the oppressed classes and (class) nations in the pursuit of national liberation, as a solution to such modern questions as colonialism and imperialism. It was about promoting the universality of socialism, national liberation, civil rights, and the solidarity movements that were simultaneously taking place across the world and were regarded as a shared struggle for Vietnam, especially in the lands of the “enemy” governments of the US and France (Asselin 2018). There was also a separate front of “people-to-people” diplomacy (however characteristically “top-down”), in which wartime Vietnamese diplomats conducted extensive tours of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe to express their solidarity and convey the commonalities of each other’s struggles. Ordinary American and French people were seldom a target of official Vietnamese wartime propaganda and denunciations. Instead, American and French intellectuals, students, politicians, military veterans, cultural icons, and the like were fully embraced by a united campaign to have the US withdraw militarily from South Vietnam.

While I acknowledge that, given many Ukrainians’ complicated and diverse historical experiences of the imperial Soviet and Russian pasts, my recommendation may come across as painfully difficult, it must be said: I sincerely do not recommend pushing away Russian sympathizers of Ukraine as a strategy for rallying international support. In the long run, support from Western governments and publics alone will be insufficient to ensure Ukraine’s freedom and survival. Wartime diplomacy is as much about winning the hearts and minds of ordinary people around the world as it is about lobbying for precious material and military support from powerful, wealthy, and resourceful governments. If the latter were the only component, then Vietnam would have been satisfied to confine its wartime diplomacy to the USSR, the Eastern Bloc, and China.

But the realities of the transformative possibilities of anti-war activism in contemporary times compared to the age of 1968 must be made clear. Without any doubt, Vietnam won the hearts of peoples across the Western world, especially in the US and France, partly due to the basic civil liberties enshrined in the latter societies, which allowed people to organize, express their sense of justice in the streets, and speak truth to power in the face of sophisticated state repressions. By contrast, almost half a decade on, social movements across the world have been severely weakened by over 40 years of atomizing depoliticization and hyper-capitalism. Thousands of Russia’s anti-war protesters were arrested and brutally suppressed in the early days and weeks of the invasion of Ukraine. Such dangerously efficient state repressions, ranging from arbitrary arrests to pro-invasion propaganda in media and education, have had a chilling effect on Russian society, encouraging a collectively self-imposed suppression of dissent and sympathy for the Ukrainian people among far too many millions of Russian people. Unfortunately, Vietnam has had the privilege of being militarily invaded on a large scale by both the US and China (1979–1989) in recent times. For many Vietnamese people, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine also invoked painful memories and historical consciousness of the Chinese invasion in 1979. Among the reasons why post-war reconciliation between Vietnam and China, at both the government and popular levels, has not progressed with as much sincerity as with France and the US is that government discourse and public opinion in China continue to view the invasion of Vietnam as righteous, with crimes committed in Vietnam still occasionally glorified in Chinese online media and patriotic education.

The Relevance of Ukraine to the Global South

The question of Ukraine’s self-identification in the face of an emerging Global South-oriented new world order is therefore timely. Many in the Global South may find it hardly liberating to themselves when, behind the major external rearguards of Ukraine, are the very same unyielding private and multilateral creditors who often hold the majority ownership of their unsustainably high total public debts.⁴ It is this precarious context that the unwillingness and even inability of the majority of countries in the Global South to adopt economic sanctions against Russia deserves sympathy. In many ways, Ukraine is facing similar problems due to the ongoing government-led neoliberalization of its wartime economy on a scale without historical precedent for any coun-

4 A UN report published in July 2023 disclosed that the number of countries where interest payments account for 10% or more of government revenues increased from 29 in 2010 to 55 in 2020, with at least 19 developing countries allocating more revenues to interest payments

try under an external military invasion (Cooper 2022, Semchuk/Rowley 2023, Slobodyan 2023). Today, many in the Global South are asking whether Ukraine is willing to self-identify with such common problems and break that tide, or rather voluntarily join it and become a mirror of their own chained predicaments as opposed to a source of inspiration—an independent and progressive political agent in its wartime diplomacy and political visions at home.

There is no doubt that Ukraine's war of defense against Russia carries inherent appeal among those who suffer directly from the claws of Russian neo-imperial military interventions across the world, from Syria to Myanmar. It is also a defense of the UN Charter for smaller states in other parts of the world that are likewise embroiled in and victims of illegitimate territorial encroachments and threats of invasions by great powers. On March 2, 2022, the head of Vietnam's diplomatic mission to the UN gave a speech to the UN General Assembly, notably remarking: "For a number of times, our nation's own history of enduring wars has shown that too often wars and conflicts until today stem from obsolete doctrines of power politics, the ambition of domination and the imposition and the use of force in settling international disputes. A number of them are associated with historical legacies, misperception, and misunderstanding" (Báo Quốc Tế 2022). This has been understood to be a veiled criticism of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. On the occasion of the first anniversary of the war, two prominent Vietnamese military generals, Major General Nguyễn Hồng Quân (FBNC 2023) and Lt. General Nguyễn Chí Vịnh (VTC 2023), harshly criticized Russia's war on Ukraine. They both asserted that Vietnam's abstention at the UN General Assembly did not imply support for Russia's war. However, Nguyễn Chí Vịnh also pointed out that it was difficult for Vietnam to formally support Ukraine due to the latter government's "pro-U.S. ideology." This was a clear reference to the prevailing Vietnamese perception, within the government as much as the public, that any Ukrainian victory will realistically and painfully demand a Ukrain-

ian diplomatic rebalancing between the West and Russia, no matter how "Europeanized" Ukraine comes out of the war in the end. This perception is largely rooted in Vietnam's own traumatic experiences with its past formal alliances with great powers, including with the US (South Vietnam) and China and the USSR (North Vietnam, reunified Vietnam), especially in terms of safeguarding its territorial integrity, political independence, and population from prolonged wars with China and the Cambodian Khmer Rouge regime throughout the late 1970s-80s (Nguyễn 2023).

Conclusion

The open question is whether Ukraine will be able to realize its potentially universal and progressive relevance to the future of the world rather than merely becoming "part of Europe." The year 2023 has seen greater Ukrainian attention to the Global South as an inevitably emerging power and voice in international politics (Foreign Policy 2023). The meetings in Copenhagen and Jeddah this summer, in preparation for a "global peace summit," reflect Ukraine's long-term desire to generate more support from major countries in the Global South. This is a difficult process that demands historical sensitivity and political acumen. However, the latest escalations of the Israel–Palestine conflict provide a bloody reminder of the imperative to move beyond a civilizational understanding of itself as well as the broader world, in particular the Global South. This reminder is being marked by explosive outrage on the part of governments and peoples across the Middle East, the Islamic world, and many other countries in the Global South about a perceived peripheralized humanity, reflected in the apparently unequal worth, dignity, and protection of civilian victims of different wars, territorial occupations, and geographical "spheres of civilization." Such is the peril of civilizationalism, now unfolding into its most morally bankrupt manifestations through a renunciation of international law and anything that was left of basic human decency and honesty.

About the Author

Chelsea Ngoc Minh Nguyen worked at the UN in Indonesia (2019–2022) and Thailand (2016–2017) on rural and local economic development, trade policy, and peacebuilding. She has intimate experience with the UN-led post-war reconciliation efforts between Indonesia and East Timor following the latter's UN-backed independence referendum in 1999 and has published on the topic.

Further Reading

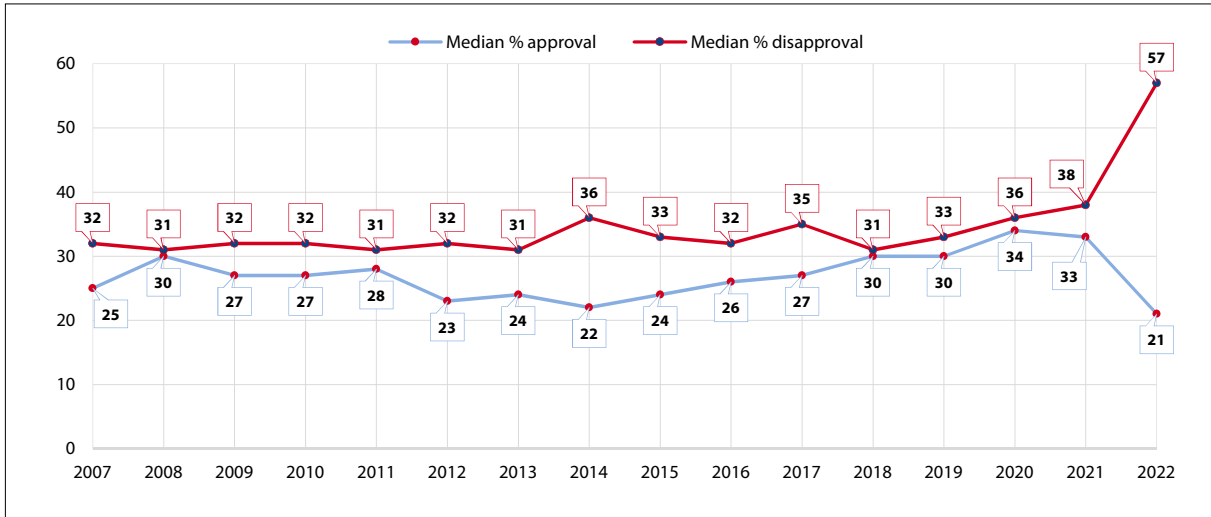
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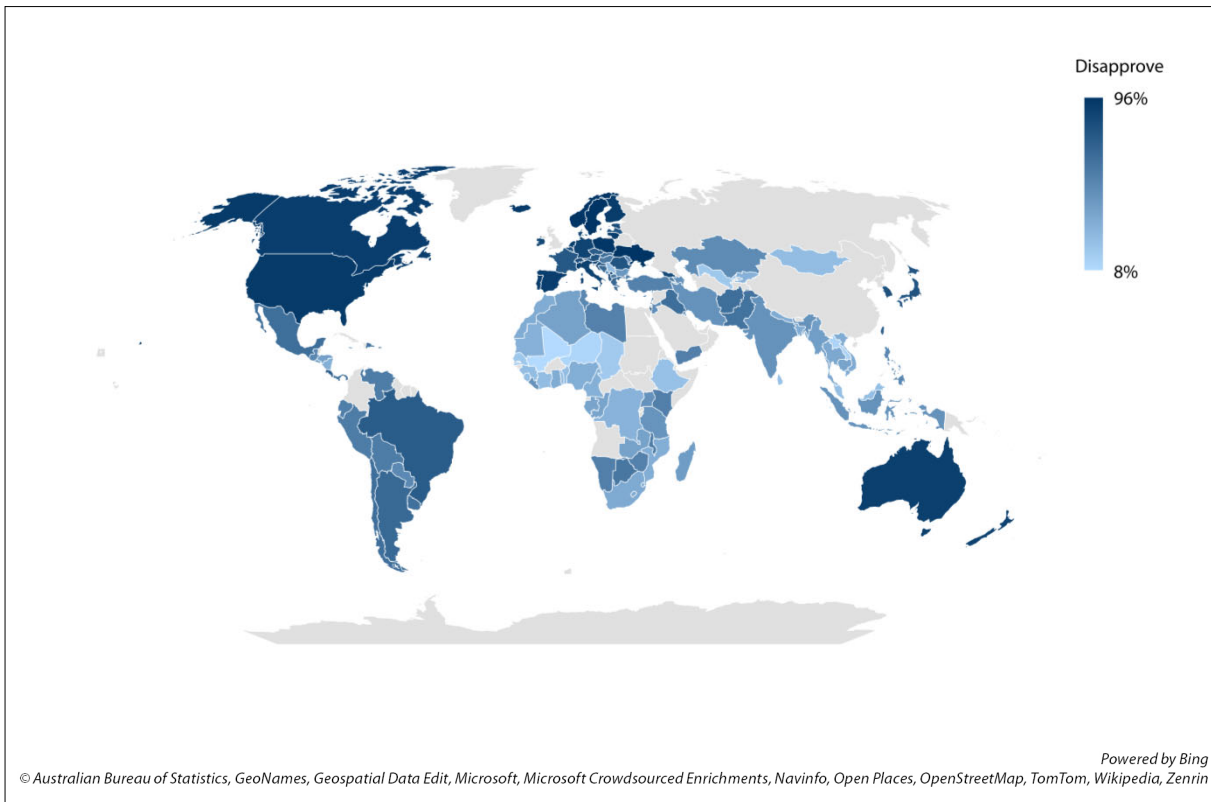
The Global South and Russia's War against Ukraine

Figure 1: Global Ratings of Russia's Leadership (Gallup)



Source: Crabtree, Steve; Ritter, Zacc. Russia suffers Global Rebuke After Invasion. Gallup. 25 April 2023. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/474596/russia-suffers-global-rebuke-invasion.aspx>

Figure 2: Disapproval of Russia's Leadership Worldwide (Gallup)



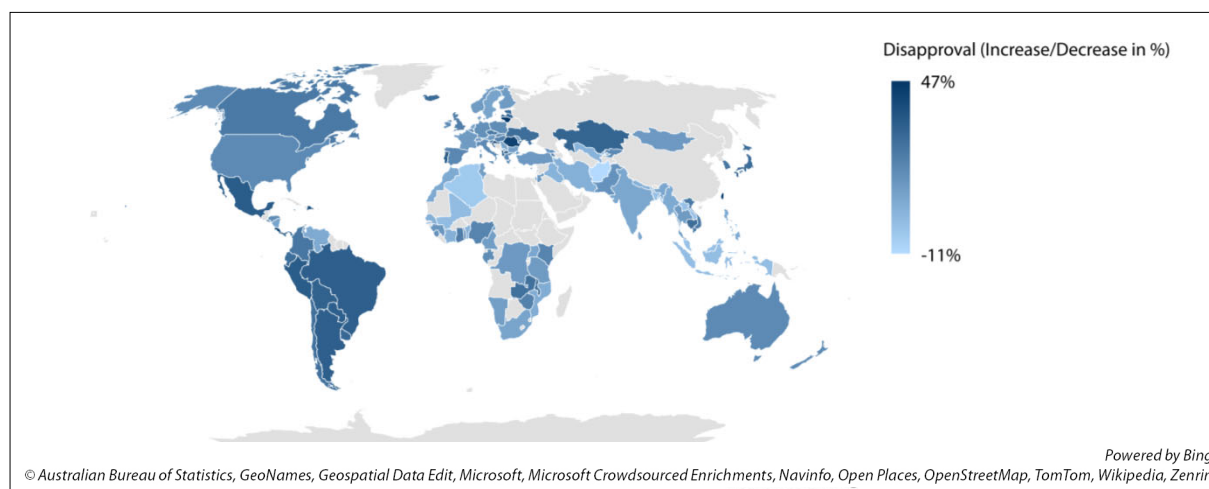
Source: Crabtree, Steve; Ritter, Zacc. Russia suffers Global Rebuke After Invasion. Gallup. 25 April 2023. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/474596/russia-suffers-global-rebuke-invasion.aspx>; see also Table 1 overleaf.

Figure 2: Disapproval of Russia's Leadership Worldwide (Gallup)

Country	% Disapprove	Country	% Disapprove	Country	% Disapprove
Mali	8%	Tanzania	45%	Argentina	68%
Niger	11%	Azerbaijan	46%	Bosnia and Herzegovina	68%
Lao People's Democratic Republic	12%	India	46%	Hong Kong	68%
Chad	17%	Indonesia	46%	Greece	69%
Senegal	18%	Iran	46%	Puerto Rico	71%
Uzbekistan	18%	Liberia	46%	Taiwan	72%
Sri Lanka	21%	Uganda	46%	Costa Rica	73%
Ethiopia	22%	Jordan	48%	Luxembourg	73%
Malaysia	23%	Kuwait	48%	Czech Republic	74%
Sierra Leone	23%	Montenegro	49%	Brazil	75%
Benin	24%	Kazakhstan	50%	France	77%
Cote d'Ivoire	24%	Paraguay	51%	Latvia	78%
Guinea	24%	Guatemala	52%	Japan	79%
Mongolia	24%	Philippines	52%	Romania	79%
Serbia	24%	Tunisia	52%	Albania	80%
Togo	26%	Cyprus	54%	Austria	80%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	29%	Moldova	54%	South Korea	81%
Gambia	29%	Libya	55%	Croatia	82%
Kyrgyzstan	30%	Northern Cyprus	55%	Estonia	84%
Mauritania	30%	Zimbabwe	55%	Israel	84%
Cameroon	31%	Kenya	56%	Switzerland	84%
Eswatini	31%	Namibia	56%	Belgium	85%
Nicaragua	31%	Yemen	56%	Georgia	85%
Jamaica	32%	Ecuador	57%	Ireland	86%
Mozambique	32%	Singapore	57%	Malta	86%
Nigeria	32%	Armenia	58%	Denmark	87%
Bangladesh	33%	Bolivia	58%	Germany	88%
Ghana	33%	Malawi	58%	Slovenia	88%
Morocco	33%	Peru	58%	Italy	89%
Nepal	33%	Venezuela	58%	New Zealand	89%
Vietnam	33%	Lebanon	59%	Australia	90%
Lesotho	34%	Mauritius	59%	Canada	91%
South Africa	34%	Türkiye	59%	Kosovo	91%
Thailand	35%	Hungary	60%	Lithuania	91%
Cambodia	37%	Palestinian Territories	60%	Portugal	91%
Comoros	37%	Botswana	61%	Spain	91%
Republic of the Congo	37%	North Macedonia	61%	Finland	92%
Gabon	37%	Colombia	63%	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	92%
Algeria	38%	Dominican Republic	63%	Iceland	93%
Zambia	38%	Pakistan	63%	Netherlands	93%
Honduras	39%	Uruguay	64%	United States of America	93%
El Salvador	40%	Afghanistan	65%	Poland	95%
Myanmar	40%	Chile	65%	Norway	96%
Madagascar	41%	Iraq	65%	Sweden	96%
Bulgaria	43%	Mexico	65%	Ukraine	96%
		Panama	66%		
		Slovakia	66%		

Source: Crabtree, Steve; Ritter, Zacc. *Russia suffers Global Rebuke After Invasion*. Gallup. 25 April 2023. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/474596/russia-suffers-global-rebuke-invasion.aspx>; see also Figure 1 on previous page.

Figure 3: Changes in Disapproval of Russia's Leadership Between 2021 and 2022 (Gallup)



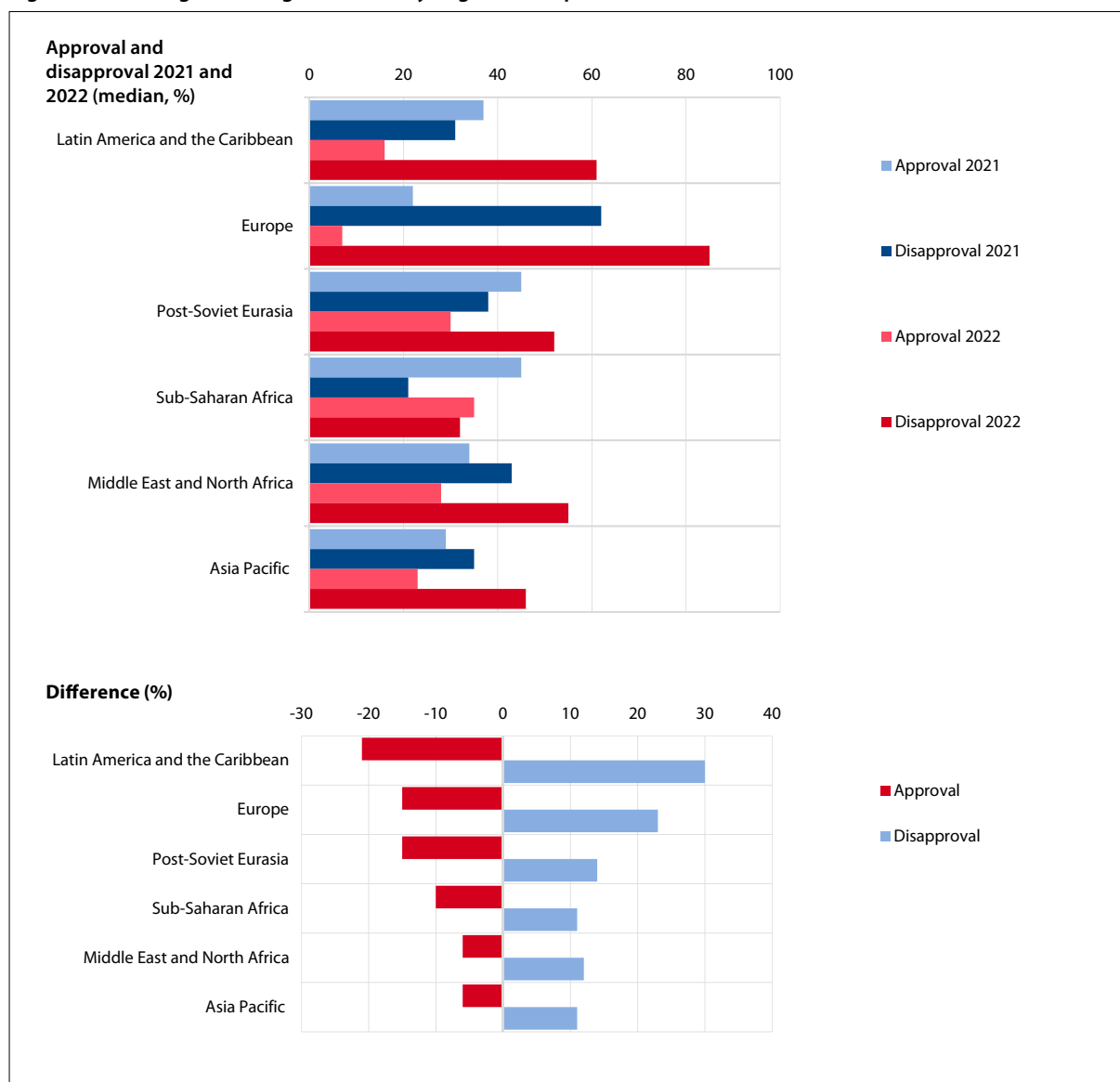
Country	Difference (Increase/Decrease in %)
Lithuania	47%
Taiwan	46%
Romania	42%
Costa Rica	40%
Croatia	39%
Dominican Republic	36%
Portugal	33%
Mexico	33%
Peru	33%
Argentina	32%
Paraguay	32%
Brazil	32%
Singapore	32%
Malta	32%
Slovenia	32%
Albania	31%
North Macedonia	31%
Bolivia	31%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	30%
Panama	30%
Kazakhstan	30%
Latvia	29%
Uruguay	29%
Iceland	28%
Estonia	28%
Cambodia	27%
Ukraine	27%
Japan	27%
Ecuador	27%
Zambia	26%
Chile	26%
Malawi	25%
South Korea	24%
Mauritius	24%
Colombia	24%
Vietnam	23%
Canada	23%
Czech Republic	23%

Country	Difference (Increase/Decrease in %)
United Kingdom	21%
El Salvador	21%
Ghana	21%
Hungary	21%
Zimbabwe	20%
Cyprus	20%
Armenia	20%
Kenya	19%
Nigeria	19%
Israel	19%
Spain	18%
Belgium	18%
Greece	18%
Australia	17%
United States of America	17%
New Zealand	17%
Italy	17%
Ireland	17%
Kyrgyzstan	17%
Honduras	16%
Gabon	16%
Poland	16%
Slovakia	15%
Germany	15%
Pakistan	14%
Togo	14%
Georgia	14%
Moldova	14%
Sierra Leone	14%
Guinea	13%
Jordan	12%
Congo	12%
Hong Kong	12%
Türkiye	12%
Mongolia	12%
Austria	11%
Tanzania	11%
Kosovo	11%
Finland	11%

Country	Difference (Increase/Decrease in %)
Norway	11%
France	11%
Thailand	11%
Tunisia	10%
Namibia	10%
Cameroon	10%
Bulgaria	10%
Jamaica	9%
Denmark	9%
Lebanon	9%
Switzerland	9%
Netherlands	8%
South Africa	8%
Nicaragua	8%
Serbia	8%
Sweden	8%
India	7%
Uganda	7%
Sri Lanka	7%
Myanmar	6%
Morocco	6%
Philippines	6%
Venezuela	6%
Mozambique	5%
Iran	4%
Nepal	4%
Senegal	4%
Cote d'Ivoire	4%
Iraq	3%
Benin	3%
Uzbekistan	3%
Mali	0%
Indonesia	-1%
Bangladesh	-2%
Malaysia	-2%
Lao People's Democratic Republic	-2%
Algeria	-5%
Afghanistan	-11%

Source: Crabtree, Steve; Ritter, Zacc. Russia suffers Global Rebuke After Invasion. Gallup. 25 April 2023. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/474596/russia-suffers-global-rebuke-invasion.aspx>.

Figure 4: Change in Ratings of Russia, by Region (Gallup)

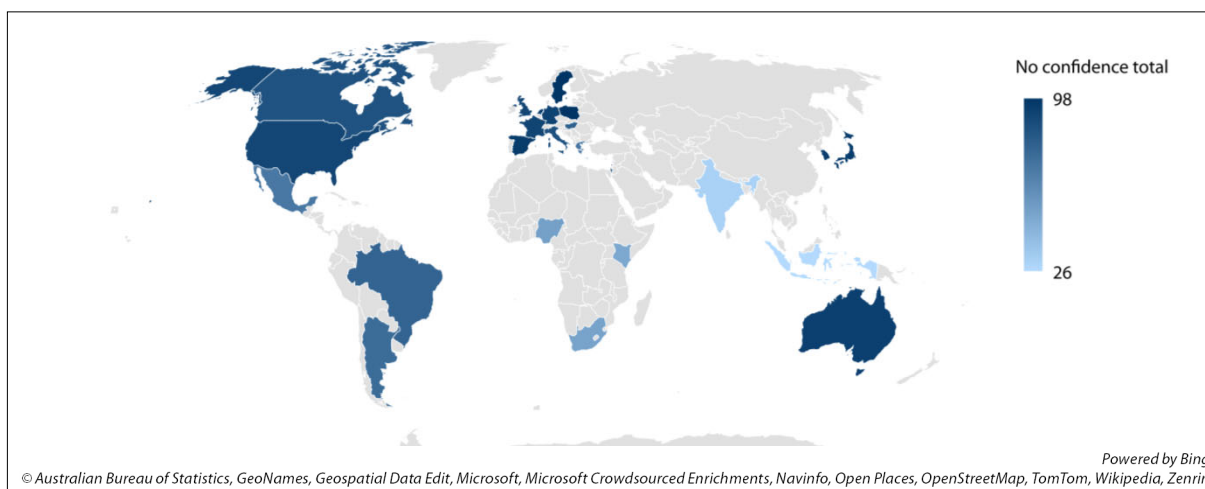


Region	2021 (median)		2022 (median)		Difference	
	Approve (%)	Disapprove (%)	Approve (%)	Disapprove (%)	Approve (%)	Disapprove (%)
Latin America and the Caribbean	37	31	16	61	-21	30
Europe	22	62	7	85	-15	23
Post-Soviet Eurasia	45	38	30	52	-15	14
Sub-Saharan Africa	45	21	35	32	-10	11
Middle East and North Africa	34	43	28	55	-6	12
Asia Pacific	29	35	23	46	-6	11

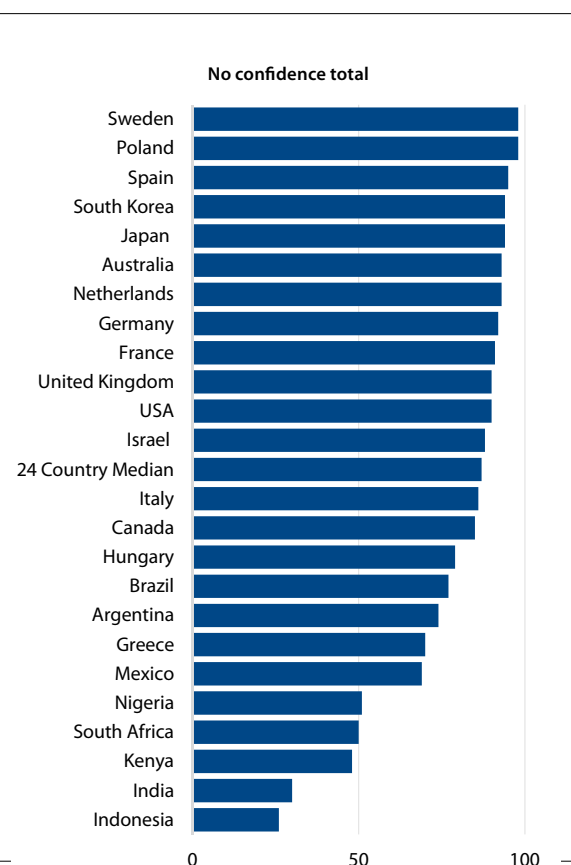
Source: Crabtree, Steve; Ritter, Zacc. *Russia suffers Global Rebuke After Invasion*. Gallup. 25 April 2023. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/474596/russia-suffers-global-rebuke-invasion.aspx>

Figure 5: Confidence in Putin to Handle World Affairs

% Who Have ... in Russian President Vladimir Putin To Do the Right Thing Regarding World Affairs (Pew Research)



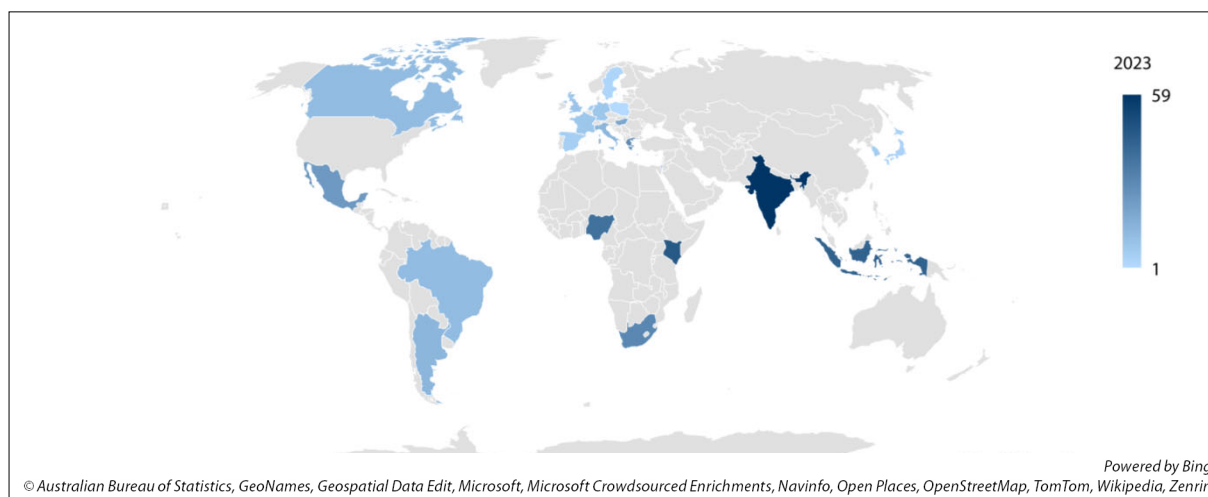
Country	No confidence at all	Not too much confidence	A lot/some confidence	No confidence total
USA	71	19	7	90
Canada	73	12	12	85
Poland	92	6	1	98
Sweden	92	6	3	98
Spain	81	14	5	95
Netherlands	85	8	7	93
Germany	81	11	8	92
France	82	9	8	91
United Kingdom	80	10	9	90
Italy	65	21	14	86
Hungary	50	29	19	79
Greece	52	18	29	70
Japan	79	15	4	94
South Korea	71	23	6	94
Australia	80	13	5	93
India	23	7	59	30
Indonesia	7	19	43	26
Israel	70	18	10	88
Nigeria	31	20	38	51
South Africa	37	13	30	50
Kenya	31	17	46	48
Brazil	64	13	12	77
Argentina	56	18	14	74
Mexico	48	21	24	69
24-Country Median	87		11	87



Source: Fagan, Moira; Gubbala, Sneha; Poushter, Jacob. Confidence in Putin to handle world affairs. Pew Research Center. 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/07/10/confidence-in-putin-to-handle-world-affairs/>

Figure 6: Confidence in Putin Remains Low in Most Countries

% Who Have Confidence in Russian President Vladimir Putin To Do the Right Thing Regarding World Affairs (Pew Research)



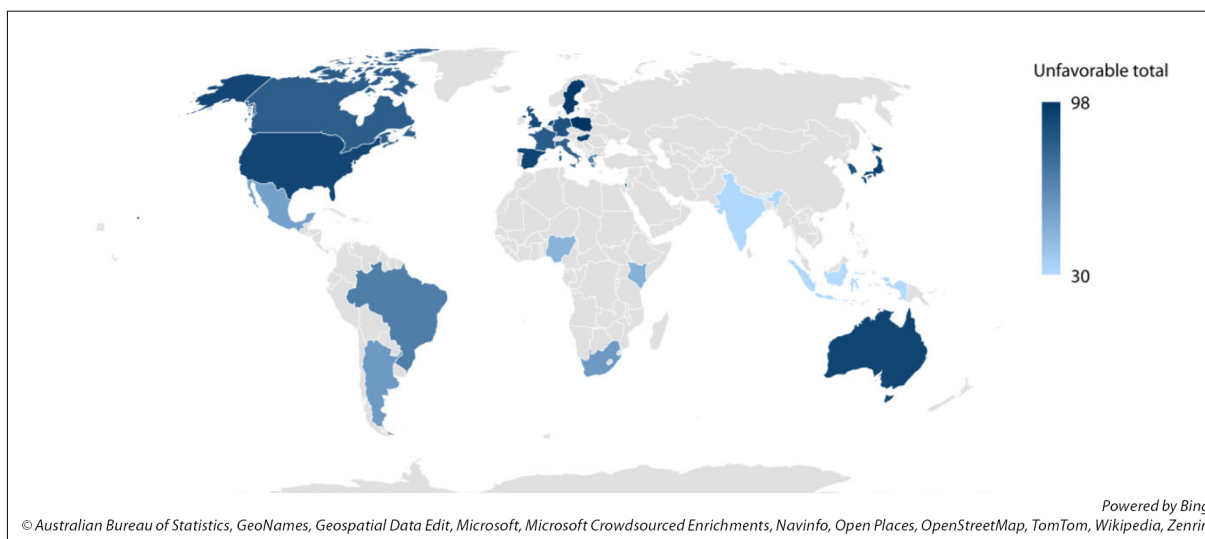
	2001	2003	2006	2007	2008	2012	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change 2022-2023
Israel	-	-	37	17	-	-	28	24	-	28	32	36	-	-	16	10	-6
Germany	41	75	50	32	38	22	2	23	31	25	35	36	31	27	14	8	-6
France	14	48	24	19	17	12	16	15	20	18	20	28	25	26	10	8	-2
Japan	-	-	40	19	28	27	20	22	26	28	26	26	23	22	6	4	-2
Sweden	-	-	-	23	-	-	-	-	12	12	18	17	17	14	4	3	-1
Poland	-	-	-	7	14	19	8	9	7	4	7	15	-	-	2	1	-1
United Kingdom	26	53	33	37	28	21	20	14	20	19	22	26	23	22	9	9	0
Spain	-	31	10	7	10	10	7	6	8	8	10	21	20	18	5	5	0
Netherlands	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	12	14	24	18	18	6	7	1
South Korea	-	37	-	24	27	-	32	27	-	27	32	25	22	23	5	6	1
Greece	-	-	-	-	-	39	41	-	53	50	45	52	-	55	57	29	2
Hungary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	38	34	30	28	-	-	17	19	2
Canada	-	54	-	36	-	-	-	17	26	19	25	29	24	20	10	12	2
Italy	24	44	-	26	-	17	18	18	31	26	31	38	37	36	11	14	3
																	Change 2019-2023
Argentina	-	-	-	5	7	-	10	20	-	19	25	30	-	-	-	14	-16
South Africa	-	-	-	-	16	-	23	28	33	33	34	36	-	-	-	30	-6
Brazil	-	-	-	-	-	19	12	23	-	19	16	17	-	-	-	12	-5
Mexico	-	-	-	23	10	16	13	19	-	19	20	28	-	-	-	24	-4
Nigeria	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	44	28	39	39	41	-	-	-	38	-3
Kenya	-	-	-	50	-	-	50	37	27	33	38	39	-	-	-	46	7
Indonesia	-	-	21	22	18	-	8	25	-	31	35	36	-	-	-	43	7
India	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	36	24	29	-	42	-	-	-	59	17
USA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	
Australia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	

Highest rating
Lowest rating

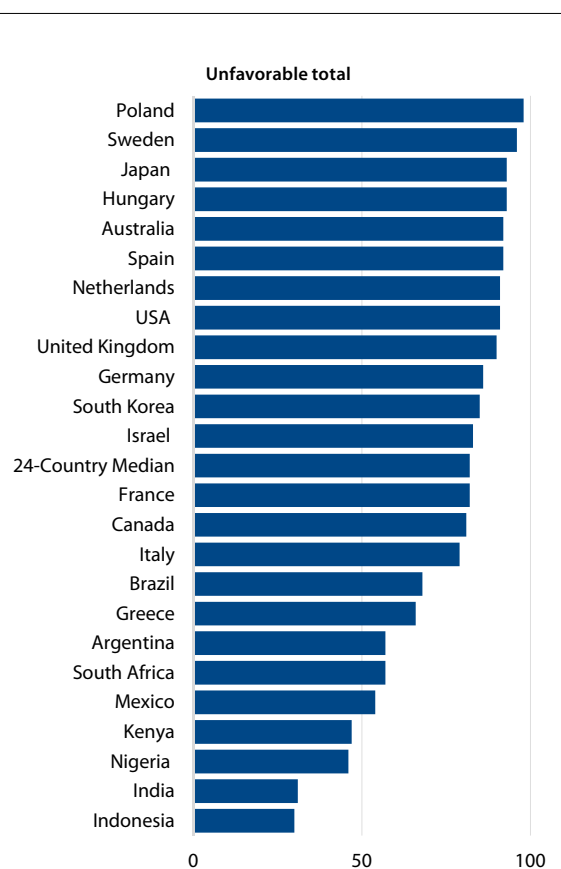
Source: Fagan, Moira; Gubbala, Sneha; Poushter, Jacob. Confidence in Putin to handle world affairs. Pew Research Center. 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/07/10/confidence-in-putin-to-handle-world-affairs/>

Figure 7: Views of Russia Are Largely Negative—and in Several Countries Most Are Very Unfavorable

% Who Have ... Opinion of Russia (Pew Research)



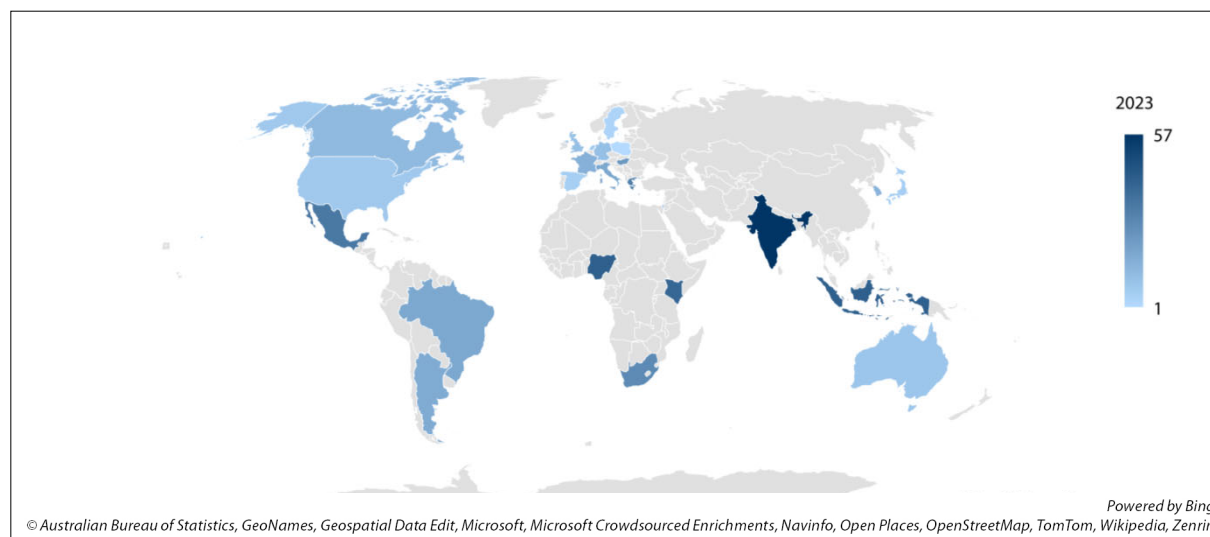
Country	Very unfavorable	Unfavorable	Very/somewhat favorable	Unfavorable total
USA	62	29	7	91
Canada	61	20	12	81
Poland	90	8	1	98
Sweden	82	14	3	96
Spain	63	29	5	92
Netherlands	71	20	7	91
United Kingdom	67	23	10	90
Germany	49	37	10	86
France	52	30	15	82
Italy	49	30	18	79
Hungary	39	34	23	93
Greece	32	34	32	66
Japan	68	25	5	93
Australia	70	22	8	92
South Korea	46	39	14	85
India	18	13	57	31
Indonesia	6	24	42	30
Israel	58	25	13	83
South Africa	46	11	8	57
Kenya	29	18	40	47
Nigeria	26	20	42	46
Brazil	27	41	18	68
Argentina	35	22	17	57
Mexico	30	24	34	54
24-Country Median	82		15	82



Source: Fagan, Moira; Gubbala, Sneha; Poushter, Jacob. Confidence in Putin to handle world affairs. Pew Research Center. 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/07/10/confidence-in-putin-to-handle-world-affairs/>

Figure 8: Views of Russia Remain Low, Reaching Record Lows in Many Countries

% Who Have a Favorable View of Russia (Pew Research)



	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2017	2018	2019	2020	2022	2023	Change 2022–2023
Israel	29	31	-	29	-	21	30	25	35	34	45	-	19	13	-6
Germany	34	2	50	47	33	32	19	27	27	35	35	30	16	10	-6
Spain	35	36	40	46	36	38	18	25	27	24	29	31	8	5	-3
Sweden	31	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	17	12	16	5	3	-2
Japan	22	23	30	28	22	27	32	21	26	26	25	18	6	5	-1
Poland	34	33	45	35	34	36	12	15	21	22	33	-	2	1	-1
United Kingdom	47	45	46	50	38	38	25	18	26	22	26	24	10	10	0
Netherlands	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	15	23	22	7	7	0
USA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	7	7	0
France	35	43	51	53	36	36	26	30	36	30	33	35	14	15	1
South Korea	54	50	40	-	-	53	43	46	36	53	42	39	13	14	1
Hungary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	39	38	35	-	21	23	2
Canada	52	51	-	-	-	42	-	26	27	27	30	30	10	12	2
Australia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	6	8	2
Italy	37	-	-	-	23	31	20	27	35	37	43	48	14	18	4
Greece	-	-	-	-	61	63	61	-	64	52	58	-	27	32	5
															Change 2019–2023
Argentina	19	23	24	-	-	26	19	27	27	34	36	-	-	17	-19
Brazil	-	-	38	33	27	34	24	26	35	35	34	-	-	18	-16
Mexico	38	29	25	23	25	28	21	24	32	37	39	-	-	34	-5
South Africa	-	-	-	-	-	26	25	25	28	34	33	-	-	28	-5
Nigeria	-	-	53	-	-	38	41	39	45	41	41	-	-	42	1
Kenya	57	35	47	34	-	47	49	35	27	40	38	-	-	40	2
Indonesia	36	32	38	35	-	43	38	28	36	46	39	-	-	42	3
India	-	-	-	-	-	45*	39	43	47	-	49	-	-	57	8

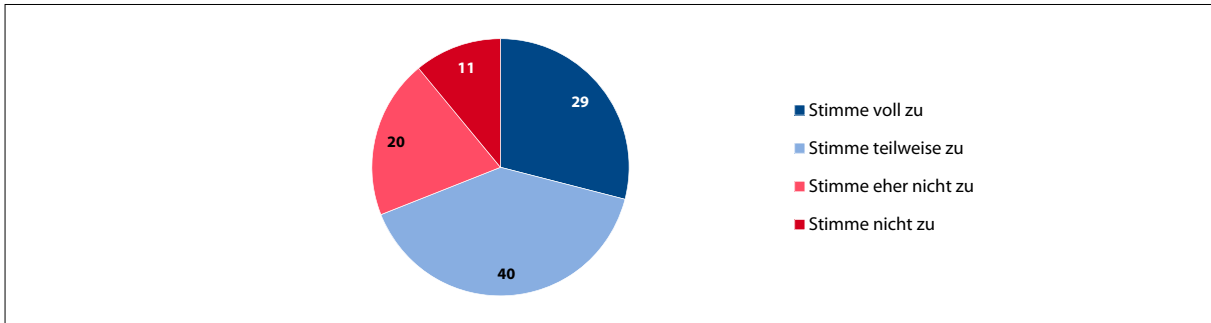
Highest rating
Lowest rating

* Survey in India conducted through the winter of 2013 and 2014

Source: Fagan, Moira; Gubbala, Sneha; Poushter, Jacob. Confidence in Putin to handle world affairs. Pew Research Center. 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/07/10/confidence-in-putin-to-handle-world-affairs/>

Figure 9: Average Support for Ukraine

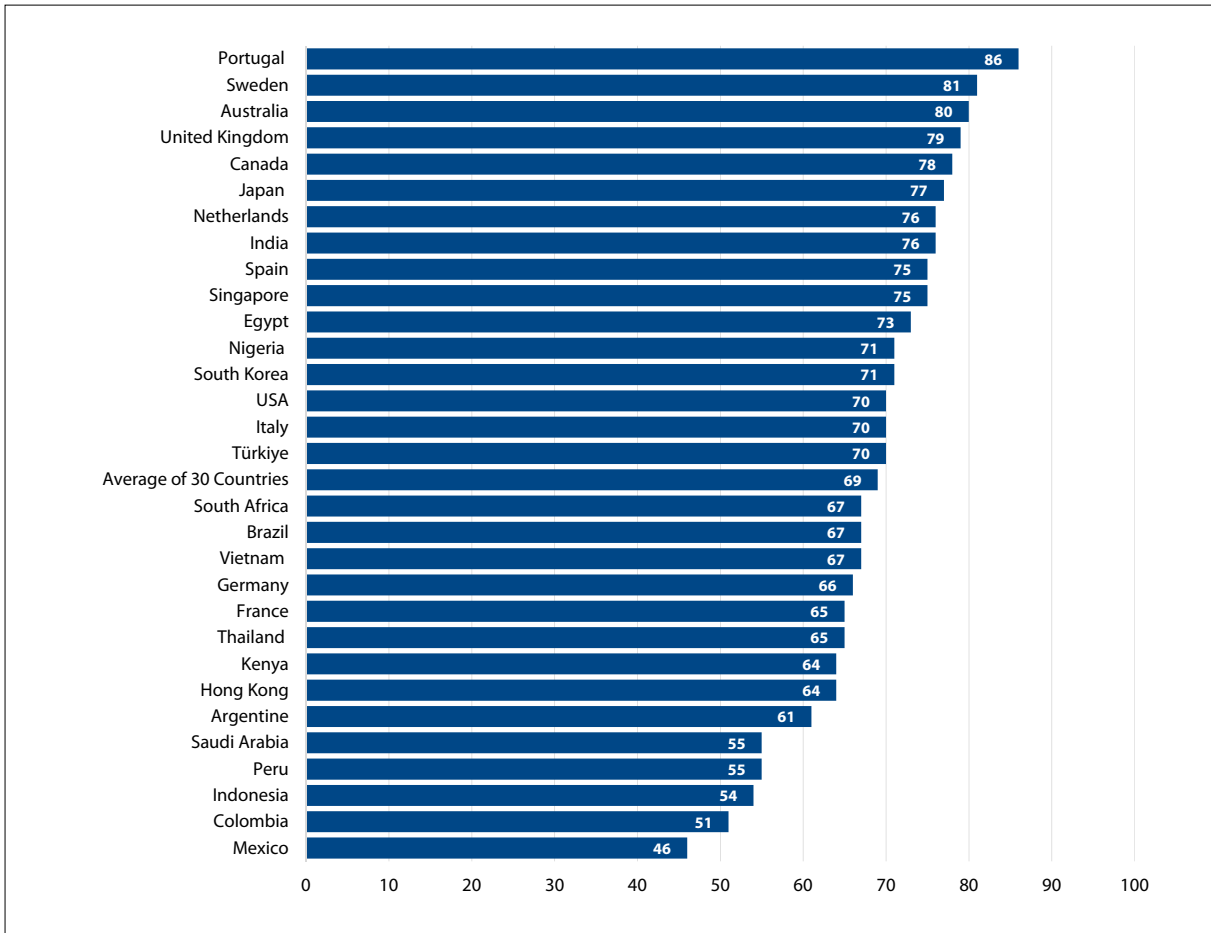
Question: "Our Government Should Support Ukraine"
Average of 30 Countries (Not Asked in China) in %, 2023 (Globescan)



Source: Globescan. *Seven in Ten People Across the World Want Their Governments to Support Ukraine*. 18 October 2023. <https://globescan.com/2023/10/18/seven-in-ten-people-want-their-governments-to-support-ukraine/>

Figure 10: Support for Ukraine by Country

Question: "Our Government Should Support Ukraine"
"Strongly Agree" and "Somewhat Agree," by Country (Not Asked in China) in %, 2023 (Globescan)



Source: Globescan. *Seven in Ten People Across the World Want Their Governments to Support Ukraine*. 18 October 2023. <https://globescan.com/2023/10/18/seven-in-ten-people-want-their-governments-to-support-ukraine/>

DOCUMENTATION

Voting in the General Assembly of the United Nations on Resolutions Concerning the War in Ukraine

Table 1: Voting Record of the General Assembly of the United Nations on Resolutions Concerning the War in Ukraine (2022–2023)

Country	A/RES/ES-11/1 "Aggression against Ukraine", 02 March 2022	A/RES/ES-11/2 "Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine," 24 March 2022	A/RES/ES-11/4 "Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations," 12 October 2022	A/RES/ES-11/6 "Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine," 23 February 2023
Afghanistan	Y	Y	Y	Y
Albania	Y	Y	Y	Y
Algeria	A	A	A	A
Andorra	Y	Y	Y	Y
Angola	Y	A	Y	A
Antigua and Barbuda	Y	Y	Y	Y
Argentina	Y	Y	Y	Y
Armenia	A	A	A	A
Australia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Austria	Y	Y	Y	Y
Azerbaijan				
Bahamas	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bahrain	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bangladesh	A	Y	Y	A
Barbados	Y	Y	Y	Y
Belarus	N	N	N	N
Belgium	Y	Y	Y	Y
Belize	Y	Y	Y	Y
Benin	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bhutan	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bolivia	A	A	A	A
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Y	Y	Y	Y
Botswana	Y	A	Y	Y
Brazil	Y	Y	Y	Y
Brunei Darussalam	Y	A	Y	Y
Bulgaria	Y	Y	Y	Y
Burkina Faso				
Burundi	A	A	A	A
Cabo Verde	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cambodia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cameroon				
Canada	Y	Y	Y	Y
Central African Republic	A	A	A	A
Chad	Y	Y	Y	Y
Chile	Y	Y	Y	Y
China	A	A	A	A
Colombia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Comoros	Y		Y	Y

Continued overleaf

Table 1: Voting Record of the General Assembly of the United Nations on Resolutions Concerning the War in Ukraine (2022–2023) (Continued)

Country	A/RES/ES-11/1 “Aggression against Ukraine”, 02 March 2022	A/RES/ES-11/2 “Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine,” 24 March 2022	A/RES/ES-11/4 “Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations,” 12 October 2022	A/RES/ES-11/6 “Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine,” 23 February 2023
Congo	A	A	A	A
Costa Rica	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cote d’Ivoire	Y	Y	Y	Y
Croatia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cuba	A	A	A	A
Cyprus	Y	Y	Y	Y
Czechia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Democratic People’s Republic of Korea	N	N	N	N
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Y	Y	Y	Y
Denmark	Y	Y	Y	Y
Djibouti	Y	Y		Y
Dominica	Y		Y	
Dominican Republic	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ecuador	Y	Y	Y	Y
Egypt	Y	Y	Y	Y
El Salvador	A	A		A
Equatorial Guinea	A	A		
Eritrea	N	N	A	N
Estonia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Eswatini		A	A	
Ethiopia		A	A	A
Fiji	Y	Y	Y	Y
Finland	Y	Y	Y	Y
France	Y	Y	Y	Y
Gabon	Y	Y	Y	A
Gambia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Georgia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Germany	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ghana	Y	Y	Y	Y
Greece	Y	Y	Y	Y
Grenada	Y	Y	Y	
Guatemala	Y	Y	Y	Y
Guinea			A	A
Guinea-Bissau		A	Y	
Guyana	Y	Y	Y	Y
Haiti	Y	Y	Y	Y
Honduras	Y	Y	A	Y
Hungary	Y	Y	Y	Y
Iceland	Y	Y	Y	Y
India	A	A	A	A
Indonesia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	A	A		A

Continued overleaf

Table 1: Voting Record of the General Assembly of the United Nations on Resolutions Concerning the War in Ukraine (2022–2023) (Continued)

Country	A/RES/ES-11/1 “Aggression against Ukraine”, 02 March 2022	A/RES/ES-11/2 “Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine,” 24 March 2022	A/RES/ES-11/4 “Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations,” 12 October 2022	A/RES/ES-11/6 “Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine,” 23 February 2023
Iraq	A	Y	Y	Y
Ireland	Y	Y	Y	Y
Israel	Y	Y	Y	Y
Italy	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jamaica	Y	Y	Y	Y
Japan	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jordan	Y	Y	Y	Y
Kazakhstan	A	A	A	A
Kenya	Y	Y	Y	Y
Kiribati	Y	Y	Y	Y
Kuwait	Y	Y	Y	Y
Kyrgyzstan	A	A	A	A
Lao People's Democratic Republic	A	A	A	A
Latvia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lebanon	Y	Y	Y	
Lesotho	Y	Y	A	Y
Liberia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Libya	Y	Y	Y	Y
Liechtenstein	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lithuania	Y	Y	Y	Y
Luxemburg	Y	Y	Y	Y
Madagascar	A	A	Y	Y
Malawi	Y	Y	Y	Y
Malaysia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Maldives	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mali	A	A	A	N
Malta	Y	Y	Y	Y
Marshall Islands	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mauretania	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mauritius	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mexico	Y	Y	Y	Y
Micronesia (Federated States of)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Monaco	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mongolia	A	A	A	A
Montenegro	Y	Y	Y	Y
Morocco			Y	Y
Mozambique	A	A	A	A
Myanmar	Y	Y	Y	Y
Namibia	A	A	A	A
Nauru	Y	Y	Y	Y
Nepal	Y	Y	Y	Y
Netherlands	Y	Y	Y	Y

Continued overleaf

Table 1: Voting Record of the General Assembly of the United Nations on Resolutions Concerning the War in Ukraine (2022–2023) (Continued)

Country	A/RES/ES-11/1 "Aggression against Ukraine", 02 March 2022	A/RES/ES-11/2 "Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine," 24 March 2022	A/RES/ES-11/4 "Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations," 12 October 2022	A/RES/ES-11/6 "Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine," 23 February 2023
New Zealand	Y	Y	Y	Y
Nicaragua	A	A	N	N
Niger	Y	Y	Y	Y
Nigeria	Y	Y	Y	Y
North Macedonia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Norway	Y	Y	Y	Y
Oman	Y	Y	Y	Y
Pakistan	A	A	A	A
Palau	Y	Y	Y	Y
Panama	Y	Y	Y	Y
Papua New Guinea	Y	Y	Y	Y
Paraguay	Y	Y	Y	Y
Peru	Y	Y	Y	Y
Philippines	Y	Y	Y	Y
Poland	Y	Y	Y	Y
Portugal	Y	Y	Y	Y
Qatar	Y	Y	Y	Y
Republic of Korea	Y	Y	Y	Y
Republic of Moldova	Y	Y	Y	Y
Romania	Y	Y	Y	Y
Russian Federation	N	N	N	N
Rwanda	Y	Y	Y	Y
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Y	Y	Y	Y
Saint Lucia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Y	Y	Y	Y
Samoa	Y	Y	Y	Y
San Marino	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sao Tome and Principe	Y	Y		Y
Saudi Arabia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Senegal	A	Y	Y	
Serbia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Seychelles	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sierra Leone	Y	Y	Y	Y
Singapore	Y	Y	Y	Y
Slovakia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Slovenia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Solomon Islands	Y	Y	Y	Y
Somalia	Y		Y	Y
South Africa	A	A	A	A
South Sudan	A	Y	A	Y
Spain	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sri Lanka	A	A	A	A
Sudan	A	A	A	A

Continued overleaf

Table 1: Voting Record of the General Assembly of the United Nations on Resolutions Concerning the War in Ukraine (2022–2023) (Continued)

Country	A/RES/ES-11/1 "Aggression against Ukraine", 02 March 2022	A/RES/ES-11/2 "Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine," 24 March 2022	A/RES/ES-11/4 "Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations," 12 October 2022	A/RES/ES-11/6 "Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine," 23 February 2023
Suriname	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sweden	Y	Y	Y	Y
Switzerland	Y	Y	Y	Y
Syrian Arab Republic	N	N	N	N
Tajikistan	A	A	A	A
Thailand	Y	Y	A	Y
Timor-Leste	Y	Y	Y	Y
Togo		A	A	A
Tonga	Y	Y	Y	Y
Trinidad and Tobago	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tunisia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Turkey	Y	Y	Y	Y
Turkmenistan				
Tuvalu	Y	Y	Y	Y
Uganda	A	A	A	A
Ukraine	Y	Y	Y	Y
United Arab Emirates	Y	Y	Y	Y
United Kingdom	Y	Y	Y	Y
United Republic of Tanzania	A	A	A	
United States	Y	Y	Y	Y
Uruguay	Y	Y	Y	Y
Uzbekistan		A	A	A
Vanuatu	Y	Y	Y	Y
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)				
Viet Nam	A	A	A	A
Yemen	Y	Y	Y	Y
Zambia	Y	Y	Y	Y
Zimbabwe	A	A	A	A

Key to abbreviations and
color codes:

Voted "For"/"Yes": Y	Voted "Against"/"No": N	Abstained: A	(Absent)
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Sources: United Nations Resolution A/RES/ES-11/1. Aggression against Ukraine. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3959039>; United Nations Resolution A/RES/ES-11/2. Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3965954?ln=en>; United Nations Resolution A/RES/ES-11/4. Territorial Integrity of Ukraine. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3990400?ln=en>; United Nations Resolution A/RES/ES-11/6. Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4003921>

Further Reading: Analyses of the Voting in the General Assembly of the United Nations

Mohammad Reza Farzanegana und Hassan F. Gholipour. 2023. "Russia's invasion of Ukraine and votes in favor of Russia in the UN General Assembly", in: *International Interactions* 49(3), p. 454–470. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03050629.2023.2179046>

Abstract:

"Why did some countries decline to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine at the United Nations General Assembly's first emergency session since 1997? Our research investigates the various economic, military, political, geographic, and historical factors that may have influenced the voting behavior of these countries in favor of Russia. Our Probit regressions reveal that the probability of voting in favor of Russia is significantly and robustly higher in countries that have defense cooperation agreements with Russia, have a longer history of leftist governments, are major recipients of Russian aid, have political similarities with Russia, and have no history of war with the Soviet Union."

Alessia Amighini und Alicia García-Herrero. 2023. »What really influences United Nations voting on Ukraine?« *Bruegel Analysis*, 3 May, <https://www.bruegel.org/analysis/what-really-influences-united-nations-voting-ukraine>.

Summary of the results of the analysis:

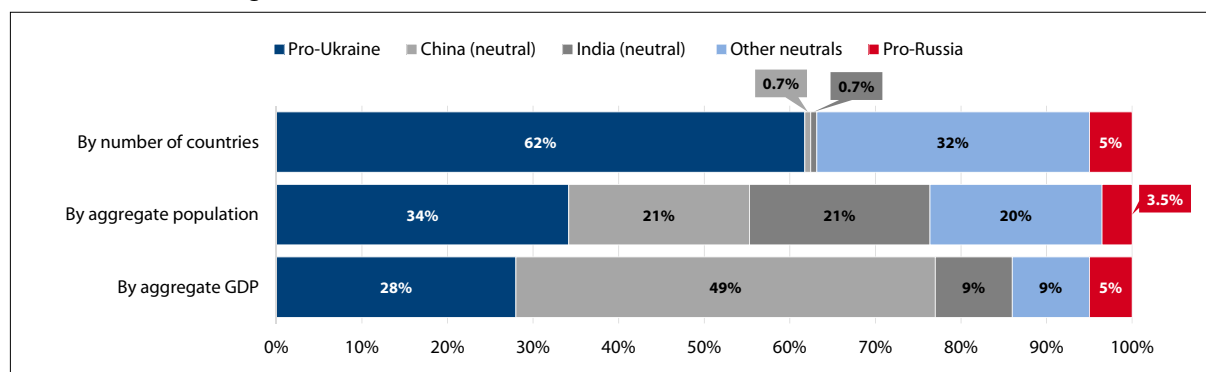
"In terms of economic influence, we find empirical evidence in favour of the hypothesis that countries' votes were mostly influenced by trade with Russia (especially import shares). Imports from Russia positively influenced the probability of voting in favour of Russia, and this is consistent across different models. However, more trade with China, measured by export or import trade intensity, is not significant in explaining UN voting patterns on Ukraine. Nor are the presence of institutional agreements with Russia (preferential trade agreements or bilateral investment treaties), or presence of Russian FDI.

Among the non-economic factors, defence cooperation with Russia and BRI membership both influenced the odds of not voting in favour of Ukraine. Abstentions were mostly driven by belonging to the Global South, while votes in favour of Russia were driven by sizable amounts of state aid from Russia received in the recent past.

Our results are partly consistent with Farzanegan and Gholipour (2023), which showed the relevance of trade ties with Russia for countries' positions in the UN vote on 2 March 2022 demanding that Russia withdraw from Ukraine. Moreover, we find significant hard and soft power factors at work, including defence cooperation and foreign aid from Russia, together with *prima facie* evidence of China's influence through its BRI framework and in the Global South; this significantly influenced decisions by countries to take neutral positions in votes."

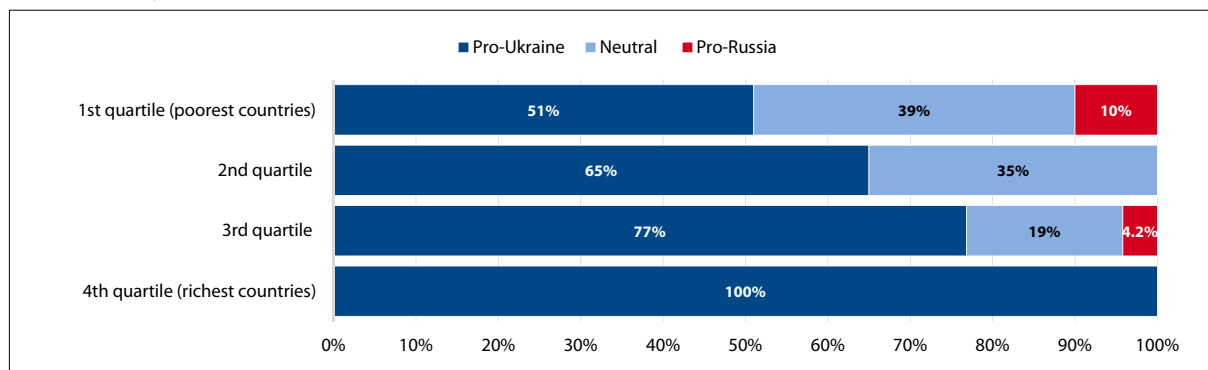
Detailed Analysis of Voting on the Resolution "Principles of the Charter of the United Nations Underlying a Comprehensive, Just and Lasting peace in Ukraine" of 23 February 2023 in the General Assembly

Figure 1: Countries in the Global South Have Mixed Positions on the War in Ukraine: Votes from Countries in the Global South for Feb 23 [2023] United Nations General Assembly Resolution Demanding Russia Leave Ukraine



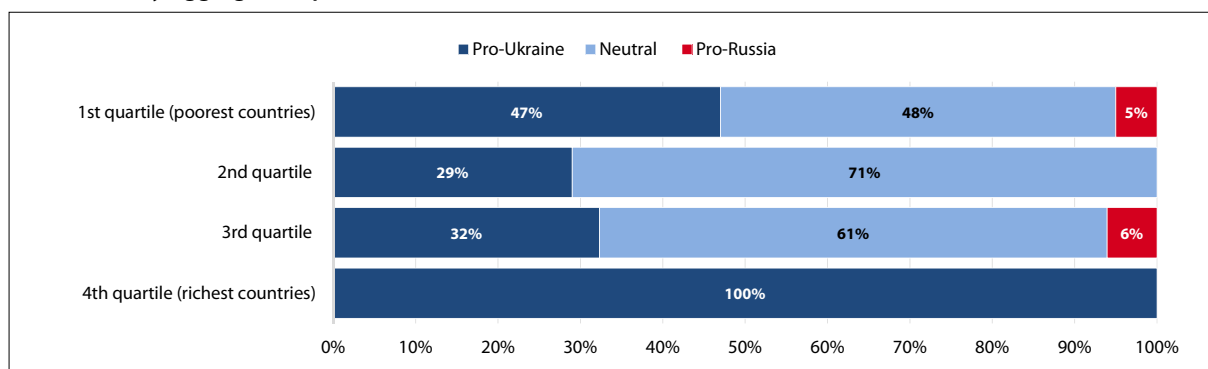
Source: Nicolas Veron. *Much of the Global South is on Ukraine's side*. PIIE, 08 March 2023. <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/much-global-south-ukraines-side>

Figure 2a: Support for Ukraine is Correlated with Wealth: Votes for Feb 23 [2023] United Nations General Assembly Resolution Demanding Russia Leave Ukraine, by Voting Countries' GDP Per Capita By Number of Countries



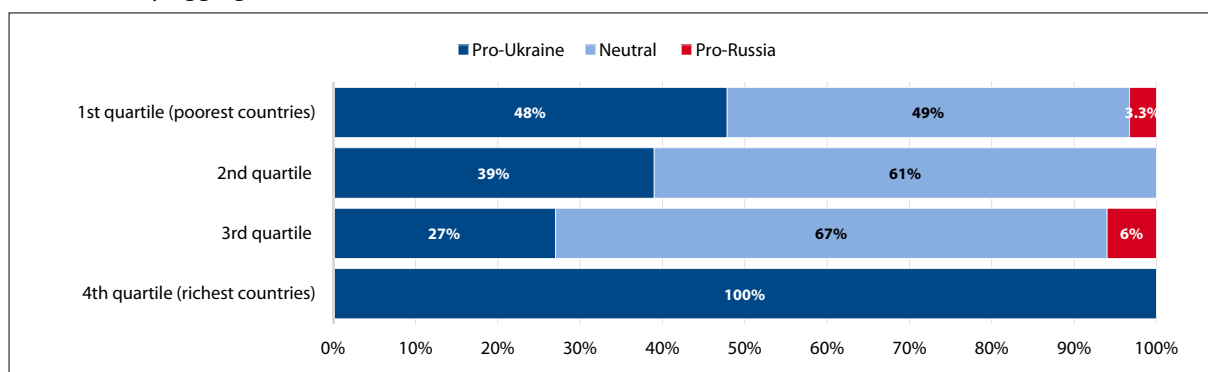
Source: Nicolas Veron. *Much of the Global South is on Ukraine's side*. PIIE. 08 March 2023. <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/much-global-south-ukraines-side>

Figure 2b: Support for Ukraine is Correlated with Wealth: Votes for Feb 23 [2023] United Nations General Assembly Resolution Demanding Russia Leave Ukraine, by Voting Countries' GDP Per Capita By Aggregate Population



Source: Nicolas Veron. *Much of the Global South is on Ukraine's side*. PIIE. 08 March 2023. <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/much-global-south-ukraines-side>

Figure 2c: Support for Ukraine is Correlated with Wealth: Votes for Feb 23 [2023] United Nations General Assembly Resolution Demanding Russia Leave Ukraine, by Voting Countries' GDP Per Capita By Aggregate GDP



Source: Nicolas Veron. *Much of the Global South is on Ukraine's side*. PIIE. 08 March 2023. <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/much-global-south-ukraines-side>

ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

Editors: Fabian Burkhardt, Robert Ortting, Jeronim Perović, Heiko Pleines, Hans-Henning Schröder

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