# The Perilous Road Towards World Society (?): Global South in

# The Russo-Ukraine War

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*This paper addresses the lukewarm reaction exhibited by most of the Global South (GS) states regarding the Russo-Ukraine war. Despite the massive campaigning from the West for the world to side with Ukraine and go against Russia, only a few of the GS states follow through with this narration. Most of them choose to pledge neutrality instead, which is unexpected if one considers that the majority of the GS also experienced military aggressions and occupations in the past. By employing qualitative research methods, this paper is written to provide an interpretation of this phenomenon through the English School perspective, precisely its argument regarding the concepts of the 'International System,' 'International Society,' and 'World Society' spectrum. This paper finds that this condition happens because the GS perceives the Russo-Ukrainian conflict as an 'alien' conflict largely detached from the GS' own international society, which has a separate model of interactions built upon a long span of historical events unrelated to both Russia and Ukraine. This sense of viewing the conflict as 'foreign' emerges from the perspective of this conflict being fought amongst the 'Global North' states. This means that both belligerents are conceptually equal in terms of being actors from 'outside' the international society of the GS. Other than that, the GS also has shared norms that go against the interventionist policies advocated by the GN states. However, the loose notion of 'World Society' is still viable, as, despite the North-South divide, both societies share the expected value of a nation-state's sovereignty.*

*Keywords: Global South; Global North; English school, Russo-Ukraine war*

**Introduction**

      Russia started its military aggression on Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Since then, there has been no foreseeable end to the armed conflict, with both belligerents staying firm in their stances. Aside from the United States (US) and states from the European Union (EU) that express their support to Ukraine's cause and are willing to do interventionist actions, there are also a few Asian countries that follow through the steps, namely Japan (Michito, 2022), Singapore, and South Korea (Anonymous, 2022b). A few countries in the Southern Hemisphere also put sanctions on Russia, such as Australia (Anonymous, 2022c) and New Zealand (Anonymous, 2022f). Some experts saw this as proof that the international order led by the US is alive and well (Beckley & Brands, 2022) and that states from all around the world are united by their mutual commitment to the protection of freedom and democracy for all nation-states in the world (Beckley & Brands, 2022).

      However, the same could not be said about the rest of the world, particularly from the Global South (GS) states. During the time this paper was written, there has been no

clear stance from the GS as a whole or from individual states; this also applies to the tremendous democratic states that are expected to agree with the stance, such as India or the countries in South America (Menon, 2022) that choose to pledge neutrality and urge the commencement of two-way dialogue to resolve the conflict promptly instead of encouraging the currently ongoing assaults to Russia commenced by the Western powers (Anonymous, 2022g). However, on the other hand, they also do not express overt support for Russia's actions either, choosing to focus more on the conflict's effects on the global economy (Anonymous, 2022g). This raises an inquiry about the underlying consideration behind GS states behavior and this research is intended to enrich the scholarship, especially regarding the GS literature.

There is already some literature about how countries in the GS respond to international phenomena outside their territory, especially regarding their response to international conflicts between the Global North (GN) states. When summarised, a few perspectives constantly appear in the body of literature. First, there is the mainstream argument about the realpolitik nature of the decision and how GS states usually respond to the conflicts about the GN, especially those fought between the US, Europe, and aspiring great powers such as China and Russia (Ciorcaori, 2009; Wohlforth, 2009; Herring, 2013; Trenin, 2014; Murphy, 2017; Beehner & Collins, 2020). Meanwhile, some experts argue about the possibility of absolute gain as the main driving factor of the

GS states (Oğultürk, 2017; Miskimmon & O'Loughlin, 2017).

However, in that body of literature, there exists a gap: there has been a scarcity in the literature that views this phenomenon specifically through the divergence in how GS states view the world from the concept of 'Global North' and, consequently, how states can deal with armed conflicts according to the GS' norms and rules, that were developed separately from norms and values adhered to by the GN. Aiming to bridge that specific gap, this paper is arranged to answer this research question:

> How did GS develop essential values and norms distinct from those known by the GN states? Which characteristics help explain GS' overall different response compared to the GN regarding the Russo-Ukraine war?

**Conceptual Framework**

This paper uses the perspective of the English School to answer the research questions, specifically about its tenets concerning the spectrum of the 'International System,' 'International Society,' and 'World Society.' In this school of thought, it is presumed that there is a 'spectrum' to categorize the degree of 'cohesion' of shared norms and rules between states (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012): 1) International system indicates a sense of detachment between states; that is, closer to realist assumption, the state view each other merely as another state with one shared characteristic of the need for survival; 2) Interna-

tional society acknowledges the existence of certain groups of states that have shared values and norms, that create a unique way on how each state interacts within and outside of their pocket; 3) World society, in which this name posits an expectation for the existence of universal values and norms that is adhered universally by all the states. Thus, as a whole, the English School argues that the relations between states are not only fueled by the all-encompassing concepts of 'power' and 'interest' (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). This perspective is also essential to highlight the societal and historical aspects to understand how particular dynamics may be formed between states that bring forth a distinct set of norms and rules that states adhere to in various degrees.

To carefully examine the particular issue this paper aims to address, this paper explicitly uses Barry Buzan's approach to the English School as the reference to answer the research questions. Based on one of Buzan's articles, "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School" (1993), he emphasizes examining the difference between 'system' and 'society.' While 'system' connotes the fundamental form of inter-state relations based on power and interest, he argued that the term 'society' imbues such rudimentary inter-state relations with a shared understanding of norms and rules between states. This posits Buzan should be preceded by forming a 'sense of community' between the states that thus enables the emergence of a 'norm of reciprocity.' This very concept of 'community' that does not

exist in the calculation of realist and liberal views, argues Buzan, opens up the 'hidden' factor that underlies the formation of such a community with mutual recognition: political foundation needed to motivate the emergence of 'regime' between states.

Buzan also stressed other points about the existence of international societies and their relation to the concept of world society. A few different international societies with varying levels of cohesion between their member states might exist simultaneously. In these societies, state actors are the main actors in the anarchical world setting (Buzan, 1993, pp. 337-339). He also highlighted a peculiar idea that the world society can still exist. At the same time, there is more than one international society because he believes that 'world society' only needs the existence of a typical, universal value to exist (Buzan, 1993, p. 339), one prime example being the notion of national self-determination which has become a worldwide norm after the World War II.

## Main Argumentation

This paper posits that the possibility of the GS states' lukewarm response by not taking sides in the Russo-Ukraine war is motivated by the basis of 'foreign' ness of the way GN states to resolve conflict and spread their value. This contrast is especially evident in the regimes born through GN Western states' own experiences, using military campaigns and harsh economic sanctions as the go-to instruments to deal with conflicts and spread their value across the globe.

This paper is arranged into two steps of analysis in order to answer the research question. This paper places the current GS' stance regarding the Russo-Ukraine war as the dependent variable (DV). This variable is influenced by the divergence of the long historical process of the formation of GN and GS, which brings along specific different rules and norms about international conflict, about what is considered a 'dire' security problem, and how the international society should deal with it as the independent variable (IV). Through the description of historical occurrences experienced by both GS and GN and the comparison of divergence between their rules and norms in viewing international conflict resolution, the argument is built around the idea of two co-existing yet having considerable differences in their basic rules and norms.

**Research Method**

The writing of this paper is conducted through a qualitative research method that employs a literature review as the primary data collection method. Thus, it focuses on the interpretative methodology of the paper and aims to emphasize an ideational point of view why the GS states that consist of developing countries situated in the southern part of the globe, in contrast to their northern counterparts, have been advocating the use of peaceful negotiation between Russia and Ukraine as equal belligerents instead of putting both military and economic coercion towards Russia and its people that we and its allies have done for the time being. This research employs second-hand qualitative data

that revolve around 1) Official statements and reports of conferences, proceedings, and action about the Russo-Ukraine war from pivotal GN states, pivotal GS states, and the UN; 2) News websites regarding how states around the world are reacting to the ongoing Russo-Ukraine war; 3) Analysis taken from various policy briefs about how the GS states handle international conflicts, especially of conflicts between GN states, be it as individual states or as a whole community of GS states; 4) Analysis taken from books and journal articles about the background of GS states' involvements in GN-focused conflicts; 5) Online op-ed articles written by experts regarding the GS states' way of dealing with conflicts fought between GN states.

**Discussion**

**Global South: Its Conception, Intent, and the Meaning Behind It**

Before talking about the correlation between GS states' stance towards the currently ongoing Russo-Ukraine war to their identification as the 'South,' it is paramount first to establish what the term 'Global South' means in this paper. One important concept is often associated with the term 'Brandt Line.' This term was coined after Willy Brant, the chair of the initiation of a publication titled "North-South: A Program for Survival" (Lees, 2021, pp. 86-87). The publication is a report from experts originating from both 'North' and 'South' parts of the world, containing several recommendations to advance the South after the surge of narration about the North's obligation to help their recently independent, ex-colonial territories to reach

prosperity (Lees, 2021, p. 87). Based on the description from "World Politics: Trend and Transformation" written by Shannon E. Blanton and Charles W. Kegley (2017:117-118), three main ways become the concept's core tenets. First, 'Global South' refers to a specific group of states categorized as 'poor,' that is, underdeveloped compared to the 'Global North' states. Second, the description is also based on an imagined geographical 'dividing line' based on the equator, from which the terms 'North' and 'South' came. Then the third, which this paper argues is an essential distinction between the 'North' and 'South,' is the historical background of colonialism, more specifically, the colonization of the 'South' done by the 'North.'

Why does the factor of colonization history become the essential building block in constructing the meaning of 'Global South'? This paper reasons that in the long centuries of colonization, the colonized territories, more precisely those situated outside of the Northern hemisphere, shared the experience of being 'conquered' by colonizers, mainly those from European states. This thus helps to explain the reason why the 'Global South' classification is still very much in use today, despite today's wide variety of the GS states' level of income, stability, ethnicity, and geographical condition (Blanton & Kegley, 2017, p. 119).

While the sub-region of North America also experienced a period of being 'colonized' by the European powers, commonly referred to as the 'first wave' of colonization, there is a particular tenet of the colonization process GS experienced (referred to as the 'second wave' of colonization) that separates it from the first wave: the economic orientation that shaped the motive of colonization itself (Blanton & Kegley, 2017, pp. 120-121). If the first wave was motivated by the mercantilist strategies employed by European states for the sole purpose of filling their national coffers, the second wave had two underlying motivations: 1) To make the economic system of capitalism thrive by providing cheap natural resources and opening up new markets to sell the finished products, and; 2) An attempt at power projection between the fellow European states.

However, just the coincidence of sharing that particular brand of historical background could not possibly create such a robust identity and perception of 'oneness' as a distinct international society that persists until today; there have been conscious efforts to build upon the idea of 'South' as a distinct international society from those states positioned in the 'Global North.' As a relatively novel concept in the long history of international politics, it came into existence in massive decolonization in the aftermath of World War II. At the same time, the end of said colonization also set the stage for the prelude of another global contest: the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union.

Due to this bipolar conflict between the then-superpowers of the world, two international societies were formed between states, the Western Bloc led by the US and Eastern Bloc led by the Soviet Union. Consequently, this division also created other terms to describe the two blocs; 'First World' and 'Second World' (Blanton & Kegley, 2017, p.

118). While these two groups vied for ideological domination over the other and aimed to urge all states to follow either of the blocs, there existed several states that, for their reasons, refused to join either bloc. This group of states would later be called the 'Third World,' consisting of states deemed 'less developed,' spanning across the regions of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America (Blanton & Kegley, 2017, p. 118).

Those 'Third World' states then banded together under the initiative of Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan through the commencement of the Bandung Conference, sometimes referred to as Asia-Africa Conference, on April 18-24, 1955 ("Bandung Conference," 1998). This conference, attended by 29 countries that represented more than half of the world's population at the time, brought upon a particular narrative that rejects any forms of imperialism and colonialism, including but not limited to the practice of establishing spheres of influence practiced by both the US and Soviet Union at that time (Blanton & Kegley, 2017, p. 121). From this conference, the Third World states coined a set of norms to be acknowledged among them, called Bandung Dasasila (Ten Principles of Bandung) (National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014:18):

1. To honor the basics of human rights and to uphold the goals and principles stipulated in the UN Charter;
2. To honor the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nation-states;
3. To recognize the equality of all nations, irreverent to the nation's magnitude;
4. To not commit intervention in the matters of other nation's domestic problems;
5. To honor the right of each nation to defend itself, be it through the might of its own or doing collective measures to do so, as stipulated in the UN charter;
6. To not utilize collective regulations and defense arrangements to advance certain great powers' specific interests; 2) To not exercise pressure onto other nations.
7. To not conduct actions or threats of aggression nor the usage of violence to the territorial integrity or political independence of all states.
8. To resolve every international dispute through peaceful means, such as through negotiations, agreements, arbitrations, judicial approach, or other peaceful means according to the involved parties' preference in accordance with the UN Charter.
9. To advance collective interests and cooperation.
10. To uphold the rule of law and international obligations in the utmost respect.

As the Soviet Union dissolved, the terms of 'first,' 'second,' and 'third' world countries became obsolete, thus giving way to the usage of North-South terms widely used today. Despite that, this paper argues that the effect of the rules and norms of the Bandung Conference still lingers. It is also reflected in the GS states' foreign policy, specifically their stances regarding the

Russo-Ukraine war.

## Global North Definition Revisited: Two Enduring Different Principles

Other than examining the historical process of formation of values and rules of the GS, this paper also aims to provide the same scrutiny for the GN society. Starting from the most 'obvious' one, the Brandt Line released in the 1980s (Lees, 2020, pp. 86-87) categorized the 'North' as the territories belonging to the Western and Eastern blocs as the main contending parties in the Cold War. One peculiar thing about this labeling is that after the dissolvent of the Soviet Union, all of the states that were a part of it are still automatically recognized as part of the GN society (Anonymous, 2022a).

Suppose we are talking about the main factors that help 'build' the sense of 'community' in the GN. In that case, the process is inseparable from the existence of three international regimes: the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Warsaw Pact, and the European Union (EU). This section delves into the historical and ideational background of these three regimes as the most apparent manifestations of the North's cohesion dan division shown through the emergence and relations of these international societies. The process already started by the end of World War II. In the aftermath of said war, there was an enormous change to the society of European countries, which were heavily damaged and lost their centuries-long domination over the world (Gabellini, 2016). In comparison, on the opposite, the US experienced a big boom in its

economy due to the wartime industrial revival, due to its workforce being immensely revitalized for the war effort, and succeeded in transitioning into the peace-time industry (Pruitt, 2020).

Due to Europe being in shambles after the war, it is reasonable that even colonial powerhouses such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands were forced to forfeit their possessions and, to some degree, influence their colonial subjects (Gabellini, 2016). Then, they were forced to turn back and look after the situation in their war-torn home continent. During this time, the US and the Soviet Union rose as the world's two superpowers, thus giving them a chance to contribute significantly to reshaping the dynamics of relations between the weakened European states. Other than giving various forms of help to rejuvenate war-torn Europe, these two superpowers also created their sphere of influence through the formation of different international societies: while the US formed NATO out of the Western Europe sub-continent (Mudge, 2022), the Soviet Union formed the Warsaw Pact out of the Central and Eastern Europe sub-regions, along with the sub-region of Central Asia in 1955 (Cavendish, 2005). These two international societies, then, became what we know as 'First World' and 'Second World,' respectively.

To compare how the two differ significantly, this paper provides more context regarding these two organizations' values and purposes. First, this paper delves into NATO's history, purposes, and core values. Mentioned on its website (Anonymous, 2022d) that NATO's establishment in 1949 is

based on the "common values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law" (Anonymous, 2022d) held by the US and its allies. Also, said the organization is also intended to drive the point across that North America is also involved in European security (Anonymous, 2022d), thus linking said sub-region with Western Europe to create an international society that operates under the same norms and rules mentioned before.

Meanwhile, Warsaw Pact operated under different norms and rules. Built upon the idea of creating solidarity between communist states and spreading the Soviet Union's sphere of influence, it was created after NATO decided to facilitate the remilitarisation of West Germany and later admitted the state into NATO (Robertson, Dixon & Schleich, 2015). While NATO based its activity based on its stated commitment to uphold the norm of keeping its member states' liberty and democracy, Warsaw Pact used norms and rules that aimed to bind its member states to the Soviet Union's leadership, which explained the quick crumble of said organization after Gorbachev deprived the organization of its centralistic principles (Robertson, Dixon & Schleich, 2015).

Those divergent international societies with starkly different values and norms co-existed in Europe throughout the Cold War. They contributed significantly to shaping the region's sense of cohesion between political entities inside its borders. However, as the Cold War slowly proceeded and the Soviet Union gradually declined over the years, there were some attempts at re-

gime-building by the European states, done through various treaties and agreements such as the European Coal and Steel Community created in 1951, Treaty of Rome that led to the creation of European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, and culminated in the Treaty of Maastricht that became the base of the EU's formation in 1992 (Valls, 2016). After the Soviet Union's collapse, the EU started its enlargement program to Central and Eastern Europe, slowly unraveling the international society built on the bipolar balance of power. However, the change only happens in the de jure sense because, de facto, the perception of First-Second world division still perseveres today. It impacts various things, including how the GS, as an 'outsider' international society, perceives the Russo-Ukraine war. That part will be elaborated on in the next section.

## Looking At the North-South Divide: The Context of Russo-Ukraine War

As a continuation of the previous section, in this section, the paper discusses the connection between the underlying context of the 'North' and 'South' labels elaborated in the previous sections and uses the correlation to theorize about its influence on the GS' states behavior in the middle of the ongoing Russo-Ukraine war. Despite the end of the Cold War, this paper argues that the lingering sentiments of politics and belonging still lingers today. One such intriguing sign is that most of the post-Soviet states, including Ukraine, are still categorized as the 'Global North' despite their status as developing economies (Anonymous, 2022a).

Based on the Brandt Line and GDP per capita division comparison, it is evident that the North-South division is more about the political factor than about perceived economic disparity. We can see that the division is based on two distinct international societies, with the 'North' primarily including states that were part of the First and Second World states in the Cold War. Meanwhile, the 'South' mainly comprises the states that were part of the Third World international society. This division, this paper argues, brings about inevitable normative consequences even these days. As mentioned in the previous section, the Third World countries coined Bandung Dasasila during the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference. From those ten principles, this paper posits a few central values that underlie how the Third World states position themselves as a community. Bandung Dasasila's ten points revolve around independence, nationhood, non-intervention, peaceful negotiation to resolve international disputes and the prevention of excellent power dominance at the expense of other states. Those values are stark in difference compared to most international regimes of the 'North.' For example, NATO encourages military intervention as a means to safeguard its members' territorial integrity, be it originating from the member states' direct borders or far from NATO's territorial scoop, as long as there is enough pretext to do so. The EU also employs a super-state government to rule over various member states, influencing how vital aspects of the members' domestic and international policies are made. Those unique values make sense in how both NATO and EU involve themselves in the current Russo-Ukraine war. This background then explains NATO's active involvement in Ukraine (Anonymous, 2022e), the EU's snap decision to quick-start Ukraine's previously slow initiation process to said super-state entity (Parker, Inwood, & Rosenberg, 2022), and economic sanctions imposed on Russia are primarily sanctions from the GN states and enterprises (Funakoshi, Lawson & Deka, 2022). Based on such occurrences, this paper posits that those actions are already ingrained deep in their values as an international society in the first place. This paper posits that the rift, as mentioned earlier, of norms and rules between the GS and GN is suitable to understand one of the reasons why the GS states respond to the Russo-Ukraine war the way they do. Hill and Stent (2022) observed that during the few years leading up to the current conflict, Russia had been steadily building its relations with various GS states based on three things: 1) Economic cooperation, 2) Arms trade, and help in the defense sector; 3) The recognition of Russia as a power committed to realizing Soviet Union's post-colonial national liberation movement, and that Russo-Ukraine war is not a conflict that requires the GS' direct involvement in an ideological sense. The third instrument is especially indicative in showing how not only the North-South division as different international societies still persevere but also that of the enduring First and Second world international society divide. It still has relevance as one of the factors to drive across the point on the herculean task of realizing the notion of 'World Society' that Kant visual-

ized as the one final form of state relations in which every single state in the world share a single value and abide by the same norms and rules. However, if using Buzan's looser definition of 'World Society' that only needs one underlying global value, this definition is still viable to be reached.

## Conclusion

This paper contains an in-depth contextual, interpretive analysis of how the English School perspective could be used to explain how GS' lukewarm response towards the GN's campaign to side with Ukraine in the ongoing Russo-Ukraine war. This paper finds that different norms and values adhered to by the GN and GS influence the difference between how the GN and GS respond to said war. GS, in particular, only views itself as an 'outsider' in the conflict through the ideological perspective. Thus, it could only offer suggestions to resolve the conflict through two-way negotiation of the conflicting parties.

Through the process of writing this paper, the writer noticed that the discourse about how the GS states' unique norms and rules could be utilized to formulate alternative solutions to bridge the North-South gap in their methods of seeing and dealing with international conflicts. The standard norm of state sovereignty also could bolster the negotiation between the conflicting parties. Hence, the writer sees much potential in different research areas about how that particular value's significance in bridging the North-South divide could be implemented.

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