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The Global South and Western Attempts at Holding Russia Accountable for the War in Ukraine: Arguments for Reluctance

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 5

 Defining the Global South..... 5

 Theoretical viewpoints on Global South’s reluctance..... 5

 The ‘Rhetoric of Reaction’ and the Global South..... 7

RESEARCH DESIGN..... 10

 Case selection 10

 Operationalization of core concepts..... 10

 Data collection 12

 Method of data analysis..... 13

ANALYSIS 15

 Case 1: The condemnation of the war in Ukraine by the United Nations General Assembly 15

 Case 2: The suspension of Russia from the Human Rights Council..... 17

 Case 3: Responses to the International Criminal Court and its approach towards Ukraine 19

 Final overview 20

CONCLUSION..... 21

BIBLIOGRAPHY 23

APPENDIX..... 29

INTRODUCTION

On the 24th of February 2022, The Russian Federation attacked the state of Ukraine, starting an ongoing war that would cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of people (Reuters, 2022) and displace millions (Duvell & Lapshyana, 2022). The war has generated outrage from around the world, and has united the West in unprecedented ways. Miliband (2023) stated that it has “produced remarkable unity and action for the liberal democratic world” (Miliband, 2023). The possibility of holding political and military leaders accountable for the attack on Ukraine has become a prominent part of the media and public discourse surrounding the war. Western countries have jumped at the opportunity to hold Russia accountable for its actions and to support a revival of international criminal justice (Vasiliev, 2022). The West has attempted to hold Russia accountable in many ways. For example, condemning Russia’s invasion within the United Nations General Assembly (Ambos, 2022), removing Russia from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UN News, 2022), and supporting the International Criminal Court in its investigation into war crimes committed in Ukraine and the arrest warrant against Putin for these alleged war crimes that followed (International Criminal Court, 2023).

Many of these efforts to hold Russia accountable have been generally supported. One of them is the ‘Uniting for Peace’ Resolution that was passed in the United Nations General Assembly on March 2nd 2022, that not only condemned the invasion, but also demanded an immediate ceasefire (Ambos, 2022) However, a closer look at the voting patterns regarding this resolution and others passed within the General Assembly, portrays a worrying regional distribution. Many of the abstaining or no-voting countries were from non-Western countries, like the Global South. This shows that, even though the resolutions are passed, there is less of a universal condemnation of the Russian invasion in Ukraine than one would originally think, (Ambos, 2022).

The Global South has traditionally been critical of the West in respect to their view on international law, stating that the West cannot claim to be defending a rules-based order when they themselves break this order regularly (Ambos, 2022). Furthermore, the Global South has been critical of the International Criminal Court (ICC), viewing it as a neocolonial Western body with an unfair treatment towards the African region and an unequal power balance (Niang, 2017; De Hoon, 2017). Strengthening these concerns, is the unprecedented financial and operational support the ICC has received since the invasion of Ukraine (Vasiliev, 2022).

One could argue that holding Russia accountable for the invasion of Ukraine, prosecuting one of the Security Council permanent five members, could be a way to break

through the barrier of double standard and broaden international criminal law from the African bias, but Global South countries seem reluctant and quiet (Kaur, 2022). The question of why the Global South is reluctant is too broad and almost impossible to answer. What can be researched however, is the response of Global South countries to these Western attempts at Russian accountability and how they justify their probable reluctance. Therefore, this thesis will attempt to answer the question:

How does the Global South justify their reluctance towards Western attempts at holding Russia accountable for the war in Ukraine?

In order to answer this question, the Global South response to several attempts at holding Russia accountable for the war have been analyzed, namely resolutions passed in 2022 and 2023 within the United Nations General Assembly to condemn the attack by Russia on Ukraine, the resolution passed in 2022 to suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council, and the arrest warrant for President Putin by the International Criminal Court in 2023. Applying a critical discourse analysis whilst using postcolonial theory and rhetorical theory by Albert O. Hirschmann, this thesis attempts to add to the already existing research on accountability by providing insight in how the Global South justifies their reluctance towards this. It also attempts to apply Hirschmann's theory, originally used to criticize conservative argumentation on social welfare policy, on an international level regarding international accountability for the war in Ukraine. In this way, the thesis contributes to already existing literature.

In short, this thesis finds that justifications of the Global South are mainly consistent with arguments that Western attempts at holding Russia accountable are overshadowed by a double standard and form of hypocrisy. Furthermore, Global South countries underline that attempts at holding Russia accountable could have negative consequences, such as escalating the conflict or undermining the legitimacy of the United Nations.

This thesis is structured as follows: first, a theoretical framework regarding literature on the Global South, postcolonialism and theory regarding rhetoric is presented and the hypotheses are established. Following, a research design is portrayed consisting of operationalizations of the core concepts and an explanation of the methodology, namely using a critical discourse analysis. Next, the analysis is presented arguing which hypotheses can be accepted or rejected supported by the cases analyzed. Finally, a conclusion will be provided including the thesis' main argument, a recognition of the shortcomings of this thesis as well as some implications and recommendations for further research and policy makers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Defining the Global South

Before stating what problems the Global South could have with Western pursues of accountability mechanisms, the Global South must be defined. The Global South can be interpreted as a relational category that “describes a subdued position in a structural relationship of domination between interconnected entities within a global system” (Berger, 2021, p. 2002). It has less to do with a geographical place in the world and more so with a history of suffering caused by capitalism and colonialism of the West (Berger, 2021). It can be seen as a “general rubric for the decolonized nations located roughly, but not exclusively, south of the old colonial centers of power” (Haug, Braveboy-Wagner, et al., 2021, p. 1927). The label itself is inherently “slippery” (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012, p. 126) simply because the term only reflects a relation towards other countries, and not a thing for itself (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012).

Berger (2021) defines five aspects that make the Global South concept an “analytical utility” (2021, p. 2003). They are all countries that suffer from some form of marginalization, which has historically mainly been in terms of racialized hierarchies. This is highly due to their relatively late entry into society. These racialized hierarchies have been resisted by Global South countries through shared social imaginaries, such as terms like the Third World (Berger, 2021).

Theoretical viewpoints on Global South’s reluctance

Some countries from the Global South, as defined above, have been reluctant to support Western attempts at accountability for Russia and even more so, have been critical of these attempts. Reasons for this can be found in different theories regarding the Global South and its position in relation to the West. Research found that countries with a stronger economic and military dependence and relationship with Russia are more likely to support, or at the least not vote against, the Russian Federation in the war against Ukraine (Farzanegan & Gholipour, 2023; Miliband, 2023), is in line with a form of Realpolitik and neoclassical realism. This theory focuses on hard power and material gains (Elman, 2007) and in short would state that it is these aspects that would influence countries’ decisions on how to vote in regards to Russia and Ukraine. Furthermore, countries with greater historical legacies, political similarities to Russia and a long history of leftist governments would also be more inclined to criticize the West for holding Russia accountable (Farzanegan and Gholipour,

2023).

A more relevant theoretical viewpoint for the research questions through which Global South justifications for reluctance could be established, is postcolonialism, with a focus on the accusation of a Western double standard in international politics. Postcolonialism is in essence not the end of colonialism, but the legacies that colonialism has left on certain countries and their role in the world (Mishra & Hodge, 2005). The Global South, who are part of these decolonized countries, have maintained a critical stand towards a certain “Western ethos of power as manifested in postwar politics (Grovoqui, 2003, p. 35). Postcolonial politics had a goal to eradicate Western-imposed structures of “power, interest, and subjectivity” (Grovoqui, 2003, p. 32). More importantly, there is a feeling of mistrust towards Western countries because of the history between these countries and those of the Global South. Because of this mistrust, there is a significant need for objectivity, transparency and non-selectivity within the international sphere. Furthermore, there is a sense of grievance and frustration as it is shown that the UN human rights appliance only seems to exercise a Western standard, even when Western countries themselves violate human rights as well (Thakur, 2016).

This same sense of frustration can be found specifically in regards to the situation in Ukraine, where postcolonialism can be found in the sense of anger about the Western-led world order and failure of globalization since the end of the Cold War. Not only that, but the Western response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, has emphasized the times when Western countries themselves violated their own rules, outlining a sense of hypocrisy that is felt from those Global South countries (Miliband, 2023). The war in Ukraine, to a large extent, has its roots in a dispute about colonial imperial legacies. Therefore, one would assume that the Global South, who have also been victim to these legacies, would show support and empathy for Ukraine. However, the Global South does not see Russia within this colonial light, but in the light of the former Soviet Union that helped them decolonize from the West (Klyszcz, 2023). The conversations about the war in Ukraine, the human rights violations happening there, and holding Russia accountable for said war over the last year, have happened in international fora such as the United Nations General Assembly or the Security Council, where there has long been a critical sense of the upholding of a Western, and specifically instigated by the United States, double standard (Ortiz, 2004; Forsythe, 1985). Therefore, I argue that this line of argument is most likely to also be used in the Global South justification for their reluctance on the attempts to hold Russia accountable, resulting in the following hypothesis:

H1: The Global South will justify its reluctance towards Western attempts at accountability towards Russia on the basis of a double standard and hypocrisy.

The ‘Rhetoric of Reaction’ and the Global South

Because the question this thesis aims to answer is based on justifications and arguments of countries regarding their abstention in voting or disapproval of Western attempts to hold Russia accountable, theory regarding rhetoric should also be taken into account. Rhetoric covers the entire field of informal reasoning and therefore all forms of argumentation (Perelman, Winchester, et al., 1994). However, this section will focus on the use of rhetoric in a political setting. Politics requires choices and decisions to be made, and persuasion to gain support for these choices and decisions (Martin, 2013). This persuasion can be seen as a justification for the choice made. One aspect of international relations that is usually accompanied by at least some effort at justification, is organized violence. Rhetoric consists of certain arguments and the framing of these arguments to persuade an audience that an event or issue is a problem that is very specific and requires a particular response (Medzihorsky, Popovic, Jenne, 2017).

In his book *Rhetoric of Reaction*, Hirschmann (1991) defines three ways in which conservatives present their arguments against social reform. Although he exclusively applies his theory on these “historical debates surrounding critical reform measures in the development of full citizenship in Western democracies” (Dollery & Crase, 2002, p. 5), his typology of arguments can be applied to several policy proposals. Since one could argue that the unprecedented effort to hold Russia accountable for the war in Ukraine can be categorized as a progressive reform within international law, Hirschmann’s categorization of these arguments can be utilized in analyzing the argumentation of the reluctant Global South countries.

Hirschmann identifies three theses in which arguments against reform are made. The first is the *perversity* thesis, which in short states that “everything backfires” (Hirschmann, 1991, p. 35). It states that the attempt to push society in a certain direction will result in its moving, but in the opposite direction. The second is the *futility* thesis, which states that any attempt at change is useless as the “deep structures of society remain wholly untouched” (Hirschmann, 1991, p. 43). In a way, this thesis is more insulting towards agents of change, as it states that no matter what they do, they will not achieve any change. If the outcome of change is the unintended one, like in the perversity thesis, at least there is a sign of some kind of movement of change. With the futility thesis, it is stated that society is unchangeable no

matter the efforts. The final thesis is the *jeopardy* one, which states that even though the proposed change may be desirable, it “involves unacceptable costs or consequences of one sort or another” (Hirschmann, 1991, p. 81) that will seriously disturb the previous accomplishments done within society. In short, the costs and consequences of the intended change are considered to outweigh the benefits this change could bring (Hirschmann, 1991).

In the case of holding Russia accountable for the war in Ukraine the theses could provide different lines of arguments. The perversity thesis would, in this case, emphasize that holding Russia accountable would result in the escalation of the conflict, instead of giving a solution that would provide peace in Ukraine. The futility thesis would state that holding Russia accountable would have zero consequences whatsoever and that the situation would remain the same. Lastly, the jeopardy thesis would claim that although holding Russia accountable would be desirable, it would have very undesirable consequences. In this specific case of reasoning, the futility thesis would not be a realistic line of argument as a conflict is not a situation that can entirely stand ‘still’ and therefore holding Russia accountable will always have some sort of consequence to the situation. Therefore, for this thesis, the futility thesis will not be considered.

The perversity and jeopardy thesis obviously differ in certain theoretical aspects, but have an important stance in common, they both give off a sense of prudence towards progressive policy. To be prudent is to be cautious and to want to establish good judgment before making certain decisions. Consideration of prudence do not necessarily determine the outcome of what is to be established, but they do “condition its treatment” (Linklater, 2011, p. 1180). Being prudent in a way can prevent us from losing sight of how we get to our established goals (Hoffman, Müller, et al., 2013). In the sense of Ukraine and Russia, being prudent can express itself in terms of wanting to be cautious in holding Russia accountable because of the possible negative consequences attached to this accountability. Considering the perversity and the jeopardy thesis within this context, two more hypotheses can be established:

H2: The Global South will argue their reluctance at holding Russia accountable because they state this will only escalate the conflict and therefore have perverse consequences.

H3: The Global South will argue that although holding Russia accountable would be desirable, the negative consequences this will bring with it would not outweigh this desirability.

The main differences between these hypotheses, lies in the fact that the jeopardy thesis would at least claim that Russian accountability is desirable would it not be for the negative consequences, whereas the perversity thesis states that Russian accountability not only is not desirable, but would create perverse consequences, namely an escalation of the conflict. The undesirable consequences that could come up with the jeopardy thesis for example could be, the undermining of United Nations processes, or a deterioration of relationships with Russia.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This section discusses the case selection and data collection that was used in order to answer the research question. The core concepts of the research question, the Global South and their reluctance, are operationalized and the method of data analysis will be discussed and justified.

Case selection

To answer the research question, three cases will be analyzed regarding Western attempts to hold Russia accountable for the attack on Ukraine. The case selection for this thesis consists of three attempts at holding Russia accountable for the war in Ukraine, two of which take place within the United Nations General Assembly. All cases encompass a different aspect of the war and a different level of holding Russia accountable. The cases can therefore be qualified as illustrative cases to support the question of how the Global South justifies their reluctance. The cases will be the following:

1. The condemnation of the war in Ukraine within the United Nations General Assembly
2. The expulsion of Russia in the Human Rights Council within the United Nations General Assembly
3. The response of Global South countries to the investigation into war crimes committed in Ukraine and the arrest warrant for Putin laid out by the International Criminal Court

As stated before, the three cases illustrate different aspects of the war in Ukraine that Global South countries could be reluctant to support. In two of these cases, statements given by countries to explain their way of voting in the United Nations General Assembly are analyzed and in the last case, statements of Global South countries regarding the ICC are analyzed.

Operationalization of core concepts

The research question: *How does the Global South justify their reluctance towards Western attempts at holding Russia accountable for the war in Ukraine?* has a few concepts that need to be operationalized. The first core concept, and perhaps the most important one, is the Global South. As mentioned before, the Global South can be defined as being a relational category describing decolonized countries that are located “roughly, but not exclusively, south of the old colonial centers of power” (Haug, Braveboy-Wagner, et al., 2021, p. 1927). Within the analysis, the Global South is operationalized as the Group of 77, an intergovernmental organization of developing countries in the United Nations that unites countries of the South in promoting collective economic interests and enhances their “joint negotiating capacity on

all major international economic issues” (*About the Group of 77*, n.d.). The Group of 77 is seen as a loose coalition, but an effective force within international relations. The emergence of the Group of 77 back in 1968, was then defined as a “revolution of the Colonized” (Friedman & Williams, 1979, p. 557) and seen as consistent of countries that were non-European, non-white and anti-colonial (Friedman & Williams, 1979). These definitions overlap with earlier definitions used for the Global South. Since two of the three cases take place within the United Nations, operationalizing the Global South through an organization within the UN is not only efficient, but also portrays a clear picture of the arguments the Global South could give for their reluctance, as these arguments are most likely in tune with each other. Evidently, not the entirety of statements made by the Group of 77 can be analyzed as this would exceed the scope of this thesis. Countries within the Group of 77 that abstained, voted no or did not vote during the UN Plenary Meeting have been categorized. Furthermore, only the statements of countries falling within this category that explicitly argued their vote during the meetings are considered in the analysis. This categorization also implies the nuance in which this thesis is working, that not the entirety of the Global South is indeed reluctant, and many countries do support the attempts of the West for accountability. It is only a category of certain countries and this thesis aims to analyze their specific justifications.

The second concept that needs to be operationalized is the concept of reluctance in supporting Western attempts at holding Russia accountable for the war in Ukraine. Reluctance is a concept that does not hold a clear definition. Studies of reluctance often go into a certain way that states shape their foreign policy or their behavior. Reluctance is often associated with holding an ambivalent attitude, hesitant behavior and selective commitment. In short, reluctance can express itself as “obstructionism towards others initiatives and a certain slowness in implementing policies” (Destradi, 2017, p. 320) whilst shirking responsibility and upholding a hesitant attitude (Destradi, 2017). Taking into account these associations, reluctance in the case of holding Russia accountable for the war in Ukraine, can be considered not supporting, or being hesitant in supporting Western attempts for said accountability. For the two cases where voting statements in the United Nations were analyzed, reluctance can be considered an abstention, a no-vote, or not voting at meetings discussing the draft resolutions. An overview of the abstaining and no-voting countries for the different resolutions can be found in appendix A, B and C. In the case of the ICC arrest warrant, reluctance can be operationalized in showing a clear sign of disagreement with the arrest warrant, or a hesitance to comply with this arrest warrant.

Data collection

For the first two cases, namely the condemnation of the war in Ukraine and the expulsion of Russia of the Human Rights Council, several plenary meetings of the Eleventh Emergency Session of the UN General Assembly were analyzed. These were gathered through the Digital Library of the UN which holds the meeting records and voting data. The plenary meetings that were analyzed were before and after certain times of voting about resolutions regarding holding Russia accountable for the war in Ukraine. An overview of the analyzed meetings can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Overview of the meetings analyzed for the first two cases

Case	Resolution to be voted about	Plenary meetings analyzed	Date of meeting
Condemnation of the war in Ukraine within the UN GA	A/ES/L.1	1 st Plenary Meeting	28 Feb 2022
		2 nd Plenary Meeting	28 Feb 2022
		3 rd Plenary Meeting	1 March 2022
		4 th Plenary Meeting	1 March 2022
		5 th Plenary Meeting	2 March 2022
	A/ES/L.7	17 th Plenary Meeting	22 Feb 2023
		18 th Plenary Meeting	23 Feb 2023

		19 th Plenary Meeting	23 Feb 2023
Expulsion of Russia of the Human Rights Council	A/ES-11/L.4	10 th Plenary Meeting	7 April 2022
		11 th Plenary Meeting	7 April 2022

For analyzing the first case, two resolutions on which countries voted, were analyzed. One from March 2022, when the war had just started, and one from February 2023, a year after the war had started. For the second case, only the votes on the resolution regarding the expulsion of Russia of the HRC on the 7th of April 2022 had to be analyzed. For the final case, responses to the International Criminal Court and its approach towards Ukraine, there was less of an obvious method to collect the data, as not all Global South have made official statements regarding their opinions, in fact, most have not. Responses to the ICC arrest warrant specifically have been found in news articles surrounding the arrest warrant, particularly regarding the upcoming BRICS-convention in South Africa.

Method of data analysis

The method used in order to analyze the data is in line with a critical discourse analysis. The importance with this analysis is not just the text, but the relation of the text to the context, in this case the United Nations, and the intentions of the producer of the text, in this case possibly convincing other countries to also abstain or vote no on resolutions to hold Russia accountable (Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004). There is not one single way or method that stays consistent throughout critical discourse analysis, but what is crucial is that it is concerned with social and political problems, researching a form of inequality, and not merely linguistic (Blackledge, 2004). In this analysis, language used arguing for a reluctance to Western attempts at holding Russia accountable for the war in Ukraine is studied. This can be seen as analyzing a form of inequality within international relations and specifically the United Nations, as the Global South countries abstaining from voting or voting no, are countries that can be considered less represented within the international fora, or at least, not part of the older Western hemisphere in which these were established (Grovoqui, 2003). In seeing the

language used and the arguments chosen to justify this reluctance, insight will be given in how the West should and could promote their attempts at holding Russia accountable and moreover, how they can convince more countries from the Global South to support it. To test the hypotheses earlier formulated, a coding scheme was formed, including all three hypotheses, a short description of what an argument they hold could contain, and indicators for which was searched when analyzing the data:

Table 2: Coding scheme

Category	Category description	Indicators
Post colonialist	Argument with the core idea that a country is reluctant because it finds the attempts at accountability to be underlined with a double standard	Double standards, hypocrisy of the West, selectivity, politicization, objectivity, impartiality, transparency etc.
Perversity thesis	Argument with core idea that holding Russia accountable will backfire, with perverse consequences.	Escalation of the conflict, negative consequences, diplomacy, peace talks, adverse effects, etc.
Jeopardy thesis	Argument with core idea that holding Russia accountable is desirable, but has unacceptable costs and is therefore an unwise idea	Negative consequences, legitimacy of the UN, important to hold Russia accountable, due process etc.

ANALYSIS

The findings will be discussed in three sections, one for each case. Each section will walk through the case, looking at what justifications are given to explain their abstention, no-voting or not voting at all for the resolutions stated above. The hypotheses will be tested against each case, checking which one explains the analyzed case the best.

Case 1: The condemnation of the war in Ukraine by the United Nations General Assembly

The first case is split up into two meetings regarding resolutions on condemning the war in Ukraine, namely one voted for on March 2nd 2022 and one voted for on February 23rd 2023. When looking at the general arguments made by countries abstaining or voting no for these resolutions, they are mainly focused along the lines of accusing the West of upholding a double standard and therefore being hypocritical.

Throughout the first case it is very clear that one of the main justifications for Global South countries to be reluctant to support the resolutions in the UN GA is because they think the West is upholding a double standard and is being hypocritical. In fact, 18 out of the 24 countries making statements for their abstentions or no-voting, included arguments along these lines, in their remarks. As mentioned above, these arguments are made by directly accusing the West of these things, but there are also more nuanced ways of doing this.

For example, there are several mentions of former invasions that were led by the United States, namely Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Yugoslavia, with states claiming they reject *all* unilateral invasion and action by various powers, making it an argument of double standard (UNGA, 2022a). There are quite some mentions of the United Nations needing to let go of a Cold War mentality and that the General Assembly should not go back to operating in separate blocs. Some countries, like Viet Nam, Congo and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, included their own experience with war and Western occupation when making remarks about how seriously they are taking the conflict and that they condone any form of violation of sovereignty (UNGA, 2022c). What is emphasized in these statements, however, is the condemnation of *all* violations, not just those now happening in Ukraine, but also the ones they experienced at the hands of Western countries, making it an argument about hypocrisy.

An argument that is also very dominant, is that these resolutions do not include a proper understanding of the root causes of the conflict in Ukraine. Several countries reiterate that the United States and the West, and specifically NATO, have been pushing Russia

towards this escalation of the conflict and that they left the Russian Federation no choice but to take matters into its own hands (UNGA, 2022c; UNGA, 2023c). They argue that without acknowledgement of Western involvement in the escalation of the conflict, specifically the involvement of NATO, they cannot support it.

What is furthermore interesting to see in the first case, is the difference in which countries are explicit with their statements of double standards and hypocrisy. For example, Syria and Belarus, are very obvious with their attacks on Western countries, whereas countries like China and India are much more subtle with their slander, reiterating a number of times the importance of talks and diplomacy (UNGA 2022d).

The examples given above of argumentation used in the plenary meetings discussing the condemnation of the war are in line with hypothesis 1: the Global South justifies its reluctance towards Western attempts at accountability towards Russia on the basis of a double standard and hypocrisy. However, more arguments were made during these meetings.

Many countries also spoke about fearing that resolutions explicitly condemning the war in Ukraine at this stage, will only add fuel to the fire and will exacerbate the conflict. They stated that imposing sanctions and creating clear divisions will further complicate the situation and will lead to a spillover of negative effects of the crisis to even more countries. There is the idea that these resolutions will drive a deeper wedge between the parties (UNGA, 2022d). Often these claims of escalation went together with claims of a double standard and hypocrisy, implying that justifications were often made using arguments from hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2.

As mentioned above, what is interesting is that not all countries explicitly imply that the resolutions will lead to an escalation of the country, but almost all countries emphasize the need for diplomacy and a continuation of peace talks instead of the resolution. One could argue that not supporting a resolution to condemn the war, but also emphasizing that it needs to be solved through diplomatic measures, is implying that the resolution will not lead to a peaceful solution and therefore escalate the conflict (UNGA, 2022a; UNGA, 2022c; UNGA, 2023a).

Overall, arguments in line with hypothesis 1 and 2 can be found in the first case, with an emphasis on hypothesis 1 as most reasons for reluctance were that the West has also violated the United Nations Charter several times, and that the West, and specifically the United States, is in part to blame for the escalation of events in Ukraine, because of the expansion of NATO and lack of effort to persuade Ukraine to abide by the Minsk Agreements made and signed by both Ukraine and Russia in 2014 (UNGA, 2022d).

Case 2: The suspension of Russia from the Human Rights Council

In the second case, the suspension of Russia from the Human Rights Council, it is also clear that arguments of double standards and hypocrisy take the lead in justifying why countries would not support a resolution to suspend Russia from the HRC, but other lines of arguments supporting the other two hypotheses are also mentioned. Interestingly, arguments in line with the jeopardy thesis, hypothesis 3, take quite a dominance when explaining the case.

First of all, it is quite notable that many more countries abstained/voted no/did not vote for this resolution, than they did for the resolutions concerning the condemnation of the war, already stating that more countries have trouble with this type of attempt to hold Russia accountable (UNGA, 2022f).

An argument that many countries gave for their reluctance in supporting this resolution, which is in line with hypothesis 1, was that they felt like this resolution politicized human rights for the national and geopolitical benefits of certain countries and that it left other countries out in the cold (UNGA, 2022f). They argued that human rights should be approached without politicization and without selectivity and that this resolution was an effort by Western countries to impose their hegemony onto the world. Decisions regarding the HRC should only be made after careful examination and transparent and impartial research (UNGA, 2022f; UNGA, 2022g).

Something that was also often mentioned, is that it is hypocritical of the West to be outraged by human rights violations in this instance, when they are being silent and complicit in the violations when they happen in and at the hand of Western countries. Cuba even went so far as to ask the question of whether the General Assembly would ever see itself suspending the membership of the United States (UNGA, 2022f). These arguments are all in line with an accusation of double standard and hypocrisy and therefore support hypothesis 1.

For the second case, there is also evidence to support hypothesis 2. There were proclamations stating that the resolution to suspend Russia from the HRC would purposely push the world into a more acute phase of the conflict and that it will risk the potential for future peaceful negotiations. Again, countries claimed that this resolution would fuel the escalation of tensions and trigger further consequences that would intensify the situation (UNGA, 2022f). All of these arguments are in line with hypothesis 2.

Furthermore, even if countries did not emphasize that there would be perverse consequences attached to, they did agree that the resolution would not advance the chances of a peaceful resolution occurring (UNGA, 2022f).

When making their statements about whether or not Russia should be suspended, most countries emphasized that they found the human rights violations to be very concerning and that someone should definitely be held accountable for this. Countries also expressed their support for the Human Rights Commission of Inquiry that was put into place shortly before this resolution was discussed (UNGA, 2022f). However, the thing that kept these countries from voting in favor of a resolution suspending Russia from the HRC, was the negative consequences that they saw occurring if this resolution was passed, making it an argument in line with the jeopardy thesis.

Countries state that the resolution was being discussed too early and that the voting should be based on the outcomes of thorough investigation of these alleged human rights violations. The emphasis on this argument was that the investigation needed to be impartial and independent and that the General Assembly should not make any rash decisions (UNGA, 2022f). This is in line with the idea of prudence that was discussed earlier in the theoretical framework.

Most importantly, many countries stated that, should the GA vote in favor of a resolution that prejudged the outcomes of the independent investigation by the Commission of Inquiry, this would have negative consequences for the United Nations and specifically for the legitimacy of the United Nations. South Africa, for example, stated that without following due process the credibility of the GA and the HRC would be undermined. Some countries also stated that passing through the resolution would set a negative precedent (UNGA, 2022f). These arguments, combined with the emphasis that these countries do feel strongly about accountability for human rights violations in general, give a clear example of the jeopardy thesis and are therefore evidence for hypothesis 3.

Bearing in mind that the line of argument found in hypothesis 3 was not present in other cases that this one, it cannot be considered as overwhelming evidence for why Global South countries are reluctant in supporting Western attempts for accountability. However, taking into consideration that for the Global South to state that they find accountability desirable, there needs to be explicit discussions about human rights violations, this can be an interesting implication for how to approach these kinds of resolutions in the future.

Case 3: Responses to the International Criminal Court and its approach towards Ukraine

Finally the third case, the response to the International Criminal Court and its approach towards the war in Ukraine, namely its decision to investigate war crimes in the area and the arrest warrant against President Putin and the Commissioner for Children's Rights in the Office of the President of the Russian Federation, Ms Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova (International Criminal Court, 2023), is analyzed through different responses of several countries.

Two countries that have responded with accusations of the ICC upholding a double standard and being hypocritical, were China and South Africa. China stated that the ICC needs to take a just and objective position and avoid politicization and double standards (The Economic Times, 2023). Interestingly enough, China has not adopted the Rome Statute and therefore has no international obligation to arrest Putin were he to step foot in the country.

Two countries that would have a complicated situation at their hands are Brazil and South Africa. These countries have adopted the Rome Statute and therefore have an international obligation to arrest Putin for the ICC if he were to visit their countries. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Mauro Vieira, has stated that they have no official position on the warrant, but that it would cause "complications" if Putin stepped foot in Brazil, but there were no mentions of a double standard (Metropoles, 2023).

South Africa, on the other hand, has been quite vocal about a double standard at the ICC, threatening to leave the Court because of this arrest warrant, stating that it is a matter of "unfair treatment" and that the ICC does not serve the interests of all, only a few (Al Jazeera, 2023). Furthermore, the Secretary General of the ANC has stated that they would want to welcome Putin with open arms and responded to a British journalist saying: "How many crimes has your country committed in Iraq? Where is your arrest warrant?" (Sackur, 2023).

The arguments presented above are clear examples of arguments in line with double standards and hypocrisy and therefore support hypothesis 1. Evidence to defend other hypotheses was not found within this case.

Final overview

Overall, all three hypotheses can be detected in the cases, but the evidence for hypothesis 1 is more overwhelming than the evidence for the other two hypotheses. This is highlighted even more when we take a more analytical look at hypothesis one, given in Table 3, we can see that the indicators provided through the coding scheme are mentioned in Global South statement quite frequently.

Table 3: Indicators found in the analyzed data

Indicator	Times mentioned in data of all three cases
Double standards	20
Hypocrisy/hypocritical	6
Selectivity/selective	6
Politicization/politicizing	14
Objectivity	9
Impartiality	12
Transparency	9

Hypothesis 1 can, for the reasons mentioned in this analysis, be grandly accepted. This indicates that Global South justifications for reluctance towards Western attempts at holding Russia accountable, are generally in line with an argument that the West is upholding double standards and is being hypocritical. However, even though hypothesis 2 and 3 are less represented, they are still important in explaining the arguments of the reluctant Global South countries. This indicates that Global South justifications are also argued through a type of fear that holding Russia accountable could escalate the conflict. Furthermore, accepting hypothesis 3 indicates that, when human rights violations are discussed, Global South countries are more likely to express their desires for some form of accountability. However, they do emphasize that doing this without due process and therefore rushing the accountability procedure, would have overwhelming negative consequences and that they are therefore reluctant in supporting a resolution that would make that happen.

CONCLUSION

Some Global South countries are reluctant in supporting Western attempts at holding Russia accountable for the war in Ukraine. This thesis has attempted to answer the question:

How does the Global South justify their reluctance towards Western attempts at holding Russia accountable for the war in Ukraine?

It did so by analyzing several statements made by Global South countries regarding Western attempts to hold Russia accountable and taking a closer look at their argumentation or justification for this reluctance. This thesis has aimed at providing an overview of these justifications and therefore contributing to research on international accountability and the role the Global South has in this.

Analyzing the statements made by Global South countries through testing three hypotheses has given us several insights. First of all, most Global South countries argue their reluctance through arguing that the West is upholding a double standard and that holding Russia accountable is hypocritical if Western countries are not also held accountable. Second of all, Global South countries argue their reluctance is out of a fear that holding Russia accountable could lead to an escalation of the conflict and that this could have negative spillover effects on the rest of the world. Finally, when discussing human rights violations, Global South countries would be eager to hold Russia accountable, but only after due process and independent investigations within the UN are properly held, otherwise holding Russia accountable could have negative effects on UN legitimacy.

Generally, these findings are in line with the theories outlined in the theoretical framework, namely postcolonialism and mistrust (Mishra & Hodge, 2005; Grovogui, 2003; Thakur, 2016) and Hirschmann's theory on rhetoric (1991). What this thesis has therefore also done is show that the rhetoric of reaction, conceptualized by Hirschmann (1991), which was originally critical theory on how conservatives react to progressive social reform policy, can be applied to international rhetoric as well and that those lines of argument are still very present. This can be significant for further rhetorical research on statements made in international fora.

Future research could take a closer look at patterns surrounding the justifications of different separate countries within the General Assembly. It was mentioned before, that some countries were more vocal about their outrage about double standards than others. Looking at the individual motivations of these countries and their relationship to Russia could provide

further insights in how these countries view Western attempts at holding Russia accountable.

This thesis has furthermore shown that Global South countries are more likely to find accountability desirable, should human rights violations be involved and explicitly mentioned, if they are researched through due process. It could be interesting to research first of all, why this is, and second of all if there is a way to use this knowledge to make sure that future resolutions attempting to hold Russia accountable would have more widespread support under Global South countries.

There are, of course, limitations and shortcomings to this thesis. Too little data was available on responses of the Global South to the International Criminal Court arrest warrant. This is due to the fact that this arrest warrant is still very recent and there are not many official responses. It is going to be very interesting to see what will happen if Putin decides to go to the BRICS convention in South Africa. How the South African government will respond to this will send a clear message to the Global South on how to act towards attempts to hold Russia accountable. However, this thesis has been unable to take this into account with the analysis, simply due to time complications.

On a final note and possibly most importantly, the findings of this thesis provide insights for Western countries and how they should approach their attempts at holding Russia accountable for the war in Ukraine. The Global South is against the conflict as well and wants the countries involved to achieve a peaceful resolution, but is having trouble supporting the West in condemning it as the West has not taken accountability for their violations concerning international law. Should the West do this to a certain extent and propose their attempts at holding Russia accountable whilst admitting their own part in international violations, there is a chance that support for holding Russia accountable will become more widespread. Furthermore, this can be an opportunity to connect the Global North and South instead of polarizing them further.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

List of Global South Countries Abstaining/Voting No and Yes/No spoke in meetings on RES
A/ES-11/L.1 March 2nd 2022

Country	Abstained / Voted no / Not present at time of voting	Spoke in Meeting(s)
Algeria	Abstaining	Yes
Angola	Abstaining	No
Armenia	Abstaining	No
Azerbaijan	Not present	Yes
Bangladesh	Abstained	Yes
Belarus	Voted no	Yes
Bolivia	Abstained	Yes
Burkina Faso	Not present	No
Burundi	Abstained	No
Cameroon	Not present	No
Central African Republic	Abstained	No
China	Abstained	Yes
Congo	Abstained	No
Cuba	Abstained	Yes
Democratic Republic of Korea	Voted no	Yes
El Salvador	Abstained	No
Equatorial Guinea	Abstained	No
Eritrea	Voted no	Yes
Eswatini	Not present	No
Ethiopia	Not present	No
Guinea	Not present	No
Guinea-Bissau	Not present	No
India	Abstained	Yes
Iran	Abstained	Yes
Iraq	Abstained	Yes
Kazakhstan	Abstained	No
Kyrgyzstan	Abstained	No
Lao's People's Democratic Republic	Abstained	Yes
Madagascar	Abstained	No
Mali	Abstained	No
Mongolia	Abstained	No

Morocco	Not present	No
Mozambique	Abstained	No
Namibia	Abstained	No
Nicaragua	Abstained	Yes
Pakistan	Abstained	Yes
Russian Federation	Voted no	Yes
Senegal	Abstained	No
South Africa	Abstained	Yes
South Sudan	Abstained	No
Sri Lanka	Abstained	Yes
Sudan	Abstained	Yes
Syrian Arab Republic	Voted no	Yes
Tajikistan	Abstained	Yes
Togo	Not present	No
Turkmenistan	Not present	No
Uganda	Abstained	No
United Republic of Tanzania	Abstained	Yes
Uzbekistan	Not present	No
Venezuela	Not present	Yes
Viet Nam	Abstained	Yes
Zimbabwe	Abstained	No

Appendix B

List of Global South Countries Abstaining/Voting No and Yes/No spoke in meetings

RES A/ES-11/L.7 February 23rd 2023

Country	Abstained / Voted no / Not present at time of voting	Spoke in Meeting(s)
Algeria	Abstained	No
Angola	Abstained	Yes
Armenia	Abstained	No
Azerbaijan	Not present	Yes
Bangladesh	Abstained	No
Belarus	Voted no	Yes
Bolivia	Abstained	Yes
Burkina Faso	Not present	No
Burundi	Abstained	No
Cameroon	Not present	No
Central African Republic	Abstained	No
China	Abstained	Yes
Congo	Abstained	No
Cuba	Abstained	Yes
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Voted no	Yes
Dominica	Not present	No
El Salvador	Abstained	No
Equatorial Guinea	Not present	Yes
Eritrea	Voted no	Yes
Eswatini	Not present	No
Ethiopia	Abstained	No
Gabon	Abstained	No
Grenada	Not present	No
Guinea	Abstained	No
Guinea-Bissau	Not present	No
India	Abstained	Yes
Iran	Abstained	Yes
Kazakhstan	Abstained	No
Kyrgyzstan	Abstained	No
Lao's People's Democratic Republic	Abstained	Yes
Lebanon	Not present	No
Mali	Voted no	Yes
Mongolia	Abstained	No
Mozambique	Abstained	No
Namibia	Abstained	No

Nicaragua	Voted no	Yes
Pakistan	Abstained	Yes
Russian Federation	Voted no	No
Senegal	Not present	No
South Africa	Abstained	Yes
Sri Lanka	Abstained	Yes
Sudan	Abstained	No
Syrian Arab Republic	Voted no	Yes
Tajikistan	Abstained	No
Togo	Abstained	No
Turkmenistan	Not present	No
Uganda	Abstained	No
United Republic of Tanzania	Not present	No
Uzbekistan	Abstained	No
Venezuela	Not present	Yes
Viet Nam	Abstained	Yes
Zimbabwe	Abstained	Yes

Appendix C

List of Global South Countries Abstaining/Voting No and Yes/No spoke in meetings on RES
A/ES-11/L.4

Country	Abstained / Voted no / Not present at time of voting	Spoke in Meeting(s)
Afghanistan	Not present	No
Algeria	Voted no	Yes
Angola	Abstained	No
Armenia	Not present	No
Azerbaijan	Not present	No
Bahrain	Abstained	No
Bangladesh	Abstained	No
Barbados	Abstained	No
Belarus	Voted no	Yes
Belize	Abstained	No
Benin	Not present	No
Bhutan	Abstained	No
Bolivia	Voted no	No
Botswana	Abstained	Yes
Brazil	Abstained	Yes
Brunei Darussalam	Abstained	Yes
Burkina Faso	Not present	No
Burundi	Voted no	No
Cabo Verde	Abstained	No
Cambodia	Abstained	Yes
Cameroon	Abstained	No
Central African Republic	Voted no	No
China	Voted no	Yes
Congo	Voted no	No
Cuba	Voted no	No
Democratic people's Republic of Korea	Voted no	No
Djibouti	Not present	No
Egypt	Abstained	Yes
El Salvador	Abstained	No
Equatorial Guinea	Not present	No
Eritrea	Not present	No
Eswatini	Abstained	No
Ethiopia	Voted no	No
Gabon	Voted no	No
Gambia	Abstained	No

Ghana	Abstained	No
Guinea	Not present	No
Guinea – Bissau	Abstained	No
Guyana	Abstained	No
India	Abstained	Yes
Indonesia	Abstained	Yes
Iran	Voted no	No
Iraq	Abstained	No
Jordan	Abstained	No
Kazakhstan	Voted no	No
Kenya	Abstained	No
Kuwait	Abstained	Yes
Kyrgyzstan	Voted no	Yes
Lao's People Democratic Republic	Voted no	Yes
Lebanon	Not present	No
Lesotho	Abstained	No
Madagascar	Abstained	No
Malaysia	Abstained	Yes
Maldives	Abstained	No
Mali	Voted no	No
Mauritania	Not present	No
Mexico	Abstained	Yes
Mongolia	Abstained	No
Morocco	Not present	No
Mozambique	Abstained	No
Namibia	Abstained	No
Nepal	Abstained	No
Nicaragua	Voted no	No
Niger	Abstained	No
Nigeria	Abstained	No
Oman	Abstained	No
Pakistan	Abstained	No
Qatar	Abstained	Yes
Russian Federation	Voted no	Yes
Rwanda	Not present	No
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Abstained	No
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Abstained	No
Sao Tome and Principe	Not present	No
Saudi Arabia	Abstained	Yes

Senegal	Abstained	Yes
Singapore	Abstained	Yes
Solomon Islands	Not present	No
Somalia	Not present	No
South Africa	Abstained	Yes
South Sudan	Abstained	No
Sri Lanka	Abstained	No
Sudan	Abstained	No
Suriname	Abstained	No
Syrian Arab Republic	Voted no	Yes
Tajikistan	Voted no	No
Thailand	Abstained	Yes
Togo	Abstained	No
Trinidad and Tobago	Abstained	No
Tunisia	Abstained	No
Turkmenistan	Not present	No
Uganda	Abstained	No
United Arab Emirates	Abstained	Yes
United Republic of Tanzania	Abstained	No
Uzbekistan	Voted no	Yes
Vanuatu	Abstained	No
Venezuela	Not present	Yes
Vietnam	Voted no	Yes
Yemen	Abstained	No
Zambia	Not present	No
Zimbabwe	Voted no	No