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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.

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