



Studienabschlussarbeiten

Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät

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India's Geopolitics – Navigating the Ukraine Russian War

Bachelorarbeit, Sommersemester 2023

Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

<https://doi.org/10.5282/ubm/epub.107305>



Münchener Beiträge zur Politikwissenschaft

herausgegeben vom
Geschwister-Scholl-Institut
für Politikwissenschaft

2023

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**India's Geopolitics – Navigating the
Ukraine Russian War**

Bachelorarbeit bei
PD Dr. Moritz Weiß
2023

Abstract

As the largest democracy in the world, India's decision to not condemn the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a democratic country by an autocratic state, seemingly choosing to stay neutral, is more than puzzling. This paper analyses the reason behind India's nonalignment stance in the Ukraine Russian war and its refusal to condemn Russian aggression. It utilizes a theoretical framework focused on the construction of state identity and its subsequent national interest. This thesis argues that a particular national identity is responsible for India choosing a non-alignment stance by determining a particular national interest based on which the Indian government made its foreign policy decision regarding the Ukraine Russian war. Other than existing research, this paper argues from an ideational approach, highlighting the importance of identity study for foreign policy decision-making.

Keywords: Weaponized Interdependency, India, Russia, Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity, Non-Alignment, National Interest, National Identity, Geopolitics

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List of Abbreviations

BJP

Bharatiya Janata Party

INC

Indian National Congress

IO

International Organization

NATO

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

UN

United Nations

1. Introduction

Cross-border economic activity, increasing political and cultural interdependence, flow of people, information and investment, these are all terms coined by globalization to seemingly foster international cooperation by helping to create a safer and more peaceful environment. Whilst that is true, globalization and more specifically interdependency also have its disadvantages, especially in an asymmetrical setting (cf. Keohane et al., 1973). As globalization is progressing at an ever-accelerating pace, research is increasingly focusing on the negative effects of interdependency. Farrell et al. 2019, go even a step further and suggest the concept of weaponized interdependence (WI). The authors observe that global economic networks are indeed power sources for those who control them, if the network is a monopoly – that is, if there is a lack of an easy substitute – and if the states possess both the capabilities as well as credibility. Their finding not only accounts for global economic networks such as SWIFT, but holds important implications for all types of interdependency – that is interdependency can and is weaponized, for e.g. as a form of coercive strategy, if opportunity arises and the state possesses the necessary means (Farrell et al., 2019). While Farrell et al.'s research focuses on WI in an “embedded network”, the concept can also be applied to a state-to state level if the international system in itself is viewed as such. This leads to the assumption that states can not only weaponize interdependency by leveraging their power in international organizations (IO) if an asymmetrical power setting exists, but also instrumentalize existing dependencies of other states on them.

This assumption has significant implications and consequences for the current international system, as well as the study of geopolitics. It implies that a state's scale of dependency plays an integral part in its political decision-making. Subsequently, state's possessing for e.g., scarce raw materials such as oil or hold positions of power, puts them into a position where they can “discover and exploit vulnerabilities, compel policy change, and deter unwanted actions”(Farrell et al., 2019). This completely changes the set-up of the international system in so far as it allows actors in a position of power to steer decision-making of both IO's as well as sovereign states into a direction favorable to their own position. The necessity of incorporating interdependencies into the political decision-making process makes navigating the international system even more complex than it already is. This becomes even more

difficult in a situation where two polar political systems clash, and a state is trapped in-between, forced to align with either side. One of the recent examples of such a case is the Ukraine Russian war and India's nonalignment stance.

Over the past decade, India has continuously moved away from a strategy of non-alignment towards a new approach of multi-alignment, seeking diversification and cooperation with a multiplicity of states. Nevertheless, India has largely avoided being drawn into unwanted international conflict. This perceived unwillingness to participate and comment on issues with international relevance has been continuously criticized by the international community. Most recently, with the invasion of Ukraine, India faced many backlashes on the international level, primarily from the United States, who voiced their frustration over India's behavior and its lack of support for the liberal international system. The U.S. Congressional Research Service describes the position of the United States on India's neutral disposition by saying that it is "disappoint[ing] and dismayed many American and other observers who had anticipated a more principled stand from the world's largest democracy" (Kronstadt, 2022, p. 1). While India does offer some understanding for critiques on their approach to the conflict, they stay firm on their nonalignment strategy. In a statement in August 2022, foreign minister Meenakashi Lekhi told the parliament that "India has close and friendly relations with both the U.S. and Russia [and] that they stand on their own merit" (Das, 2022) clarifying once again India's unwillingness to pick a side in the conflict. Numerous statements by Indian government officials, similar to Lekhi, leave no doubt about the rigidity of India's position. However, the question arises why India has chosen a non-alignment stance in the Ukraine Russian war in the first place. As the largest democracy in the world, India's decision to not to publicly condemn the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a democratic country by an autocratic state and seemingly choosing to stay neutral is more than puzzling.

This paper analyzes this research question and, similar to other papers, concludes that India is simply trying to protect its national interest and navigate the war. However, in contrast to other papers, this thesis goes a step further, viewing national interest not as exogenously given but as an endogenous element to Indian politics. It makes the argument that a particular national identity is responsible for India choosing a non-alignment stance by determining a particular national interest based on which the Indian government made its foreign policy decision regarding the Ukraine Russian war.

To give an adequate explanation, the thesis begins with providing a detailed overview of the research question and hypothesis. It then reviews existing literature on the topic before explaining the theoretical framework used in this paper. Afterwards, the exact terminology of norms, national interests and identities as utilized are defined. This is followed by the methodology of the thesis, which focuses mostly on the correct conceptualization of the norms territorial integrity and sovereignty as well as the two identities of Indian and Hindu nationalism including its subsequent national interests. The next part implements the theoretical framework explaining how the two norms constituted each identity and national interest. In the final part, the thesis looks at what policy outcome each identity would expect based on their national interest. It concludes that Hindu nationalism has to be the underlying identity behind India's decision to stay nonaligned, which is additionally supported by the analysis of statements from Indian government officials.

2. Theoretical Framework

The research question for this paper is as follows: Why does India as one of the major democracies does not condemn Russian aggression in Ukraine and instead chooses a non-alignment stance. Non-alignment is conceptualized as India's efforts to stay neutral in the Ukraine Russian conflict – that is, to refrain from picking a side. The hypothesis is that by choosing to do so, India is able to protect its national interest, more specifically the realization of a Hindu nation. Responsible for the formation of this particular interest is the underlying identity of Hindu nationalism, which is constituted by the norm of territorial integrity. The following section reviews existing literature on India's nonalignment stance and introduces the theoretical framework for this paper.

2.1 Literature Review: Interdependency and National Interest

While the consensus within the international community seems to be that India is trying to protect its national interests, the approach scholars, journalists, and policymakers choose to explain India's behavior differs.

Chintamani Mahapatra's paper "India's Approach to the War in the Ukraine" (Mahapatra, 2021) published in 2021 in the Indian Foreign Affairs Journal is very typical in the way she explains India's incentive behind its non-alignment approach. Rather than focusing on one specific factor, Mahapatra argues that geopolitical pressures from

China, Pakistan, and Russia as well as concerns for India's energy and economic security in combination, and its open commitment to "peaceful resolutions through dialogue and diplomacy" (p.107) which together produce the non-alignment strategy we observe the war in Ukraine. Again, as many other scholars have pointed out, the protection of India's national interest is at the center of her argumentation.

Christoph Jaffrelot's "Indian Debates on the War in Ukraine: All Roads Lead to a Consensus" (Jaffrelot, 2022), on the other hand, focuses much more on India's historical relationship with first the Soviet Union and then Russia. He argues that Russia is vital for both India's arms and energy security and, as such, India's stark dependence prohibits it to outrightly condemn Russian aggression. Jaffrelot builds up his argument further by pointing out that India's multi-alignment foreign policy approach and its refusal to view the international structure as coherently driven by power politics leads to India favoring a multilateral world over a bilateral – encompassing China and the United States as the leaders of each power bloc. As a result, India favors "a strong Russia (...) because it adds a pillar to the world order" making the world less bilateral and tilting it further towards a multilateral system. Additionally, he briefly touches upon identity and value as another possible reason by outlining western hypocrisy in dealing with violations of territorial integrity and India's dissatisfaction with such demeanor.

In both these articles the main argument is that, due to India's complex web of dependencies on external actors, it is choosing a non-alignment stance. It simply tries to protect its national interest. That sounds very plausible. However, what seems very intuitive in the beginning does not offer much explanation. In today's literature, the term national interest is applied very loosely. It is often applied hastily as the explanatory factor for a state's behavior without proper conceptualization. What exactly is the national interest of a state? What factors does it encompass, and how do these national interests come to exist in the first place? These questions are often neglected in research, as it is in the case with Mahapatra and Jaffrelot. Both lack a clear definition of national interest and instead encompass everything from national security to economy to energy and military, as well as India's role in the international system as an increasingly global power. While this diversification allows the authors to offer a comprehensible explanation for India's behavior, the explanatory strength for each factor is limited. Additionally, they fail to elaborate why these national interests exist in

the first place. Both authors treat India's national interests as exogenously given. Whilst there is nothing wrong with regarding interests as exogenously given, this assumption does not offer deeper understanding as to why India chose to stay nonaligned in the Ukraine Russian war. To put it short, this approach does not explain the causal relationship "between what actors do and what they are" (Wendt, 1992, p. 424).

2.2 The Influence of Norms and Identities on a State's Interests

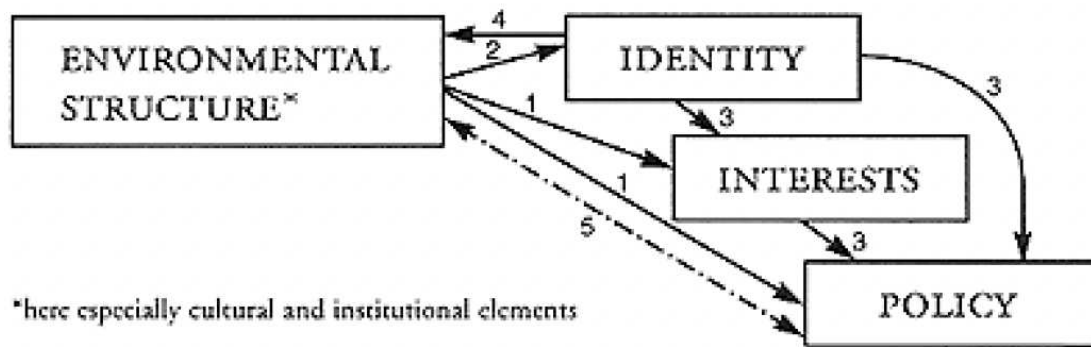
Rather than explaining India's behavior with the help of economic or political factors, this paper chooses another pathway by focusing on an ideational approach. Thereby, this thesis utilizes Katzenstein et al. developed framework in their paper "Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security". The authors argue that in the field of security studies both realists and liberals lack the explanatory strength of norms, identity and interests. That is because the security environment, as they put it, is not just simply material but influenced too by institutional and cultural elements. Katzenstein et al. summarize these elements with the umbrella term cultural environment. They argue that this umbrella term has three distinct effects on a state identity. This paper only focuses on the last effect: "the variation on the character of a statehood within a given international system" (Katzenstein et al., 1996, p. 9) caused by the cultural environment. It is important to note that in all their approaches the authors assume a state's properties, meaning identities, interests and capabilities, to be endogenously given rather than exogenously given, which is found in other theoretical approaches such as realism and neorealism would assume.

While the argument stands that cultural environments affect a state's identity, the question arises through which pathways that happens. The authors lay out three basic pathways in which the effect takes place. The environment can affect a state by

- 1) Only affecting its behavior
- 2) Affecting the contingent properties of an actor
- 3) Affecting the existence of an actor

This paper focuses on the second part by looking at how a cultural environment affects a state's property, more specifically a state's identity and subsequently their interests. To help visualize the causal effects of norms, identities and interests on policy decisions, in Katzenstein et al.'s case national security policy, the authors came up

with a graphic, depicting the five pathways in which cultural and institutional elements effect policy.



Source: (Katzenstein et al., 1996, p. 18)

The first part of the key argument of this paper is shown by the second pathway. This shows the effect of norms on a state's identity. Katzenstein et al. argue that "cultural or institutional elements of states' global or domestic environments – [...] most of often norms – shape state identity" (Katzenstein et al., 1996, p. 17). Subsequently, as depicted in the graphic, this either results in a direct change of policy or, what is of interest for this paper, a change in the national interest of a state which in turn results in a change of state policy. As such, pathway number three depicts the second part of the argument by displaying the effects of identity on first a state's interest and then consequently on policy. As depicted, identity can also directly result in a change of policy without affecting the interests of a state first, however this is not subject of this study. It is important to note that since the analytical framework of Katzenstein et al. bases on a constructivist perspective, recursivity is existent within this whole process. Not only do cultural and institutional elements change and influence state policy, but *vice versa*, state policy influences and changes the cultural environment.

A justified criticism of this selected approach is the argument, as shown by the graphic, that cultural and institutional elements do not necessarily have to influence identity first but can impact either interest or even policy directly as shown by the first pathway. Katzenstein et al. justify the existence of the third pathway by arguing that "actors cannot decide what their interest are until they know [...]-- 'who they are'" (Katzenstein et al., 1996, p. 21). This is also the line of thinking followed in this paper. Despite the selectiveness of the process with which the paper is engaging the research question with, the direct influence of other pathways as cannot be completely excluded. This is

due to recursivity which is intrinsic in constructivist theory and should be kept in mind while reading this paper.

2.3 Defining State Identity, Norm and State Interest

Before concluding the theoretical section, the terms of identity, interest, and norms must be defined first in order to avoid misunderstandings throughout the paper. That is because there is such heterogeneity within the terminology of these concepts that, depending on the definition, would affect the outcome of the paper.

Prior to defining the term identity, the question needs to be answered whether a state can have an identity in the first place. This is because identity for an individual as outlined by Katzenstein et al. means “the images of individuality and distinctiveness (‘selfhood’) held and projected by an actor and formed (and modified over time) through relations with significant ‘others’”(Katzenstein et al., 1996, p. 14). The problem now is that a nation is not an individual, but a conglomerate of people. Regardless, nations can and do “construct and project collective identities, and states operate as actors”. Important to notice here is the distinction the authors make between state and nation. While a nation is a group of people with shared culture, common language, history and, in most cases, shared territoriality, a state, on the other hand, is defined as a political entity with clear geographical borders. In most instances, state and nation fall together, forming what political scientists call a nation state, but rarely there are states without nations and nations without states. With that being said, according to Katzenstein et al. the term identity is bound to the nation, while the state is the one acting on the subsequent interests. In this paper the term identity means “the basic character of a state” consequently the nation.

Earlier, while explaining the analytical framework, the term culture environment was extensively used without illustrating the underlying constitutions. What constitutes cultural and institutional elements are norms. Contrary to the popular usage, there is a huge heterogeneity within the definition of norms. This paper relies on the two definitions as put forth by Katzenstein et al., of norms being both constitutive and proscriptive. Norms which constitute identities “define identities in the first place [and] generate (...) expectations about the proper portfolio of identities for a given context” (Katzenstein et al., 1996, p. 19). Proscriptive norms “regulate behaviors for already constituted identities (generating expectations about how those identities will shape

behavior in varying circumstance” (Katzenstein et al., 1996, p. 19). Norms are in constant competition with each other for defining a state’s identities. Old ones might reemerge while new ones are constituted, and others are constant. While it is possible for just one norm to nurture a state’s identity, it is more likely that norms coexist, informing either one or more basic characteristics of a state simultaneously.

The process of states developing their identities and which role norms play has been sufficiently explained. What has been left unanswered, so far, is the way identities shape a state’s interest. Katzenstein et al. describe the development of a state’s interest as the process of “enacting, sustaining, or developing a particularly identity”(Katzenstein et al., 1996, p. 22). As such, a change in a state’s identity or a set of identities subsequently results in the change of states interests.

The analytical framework provided by Katzenstein et al. as utilized here, assumes that norms define a state’s identities resulting in specific interests derived from these formed identities. It is not the scope of the paper to analyze why and how these norms were formed in the first place. They are viewed as exogenously given. Neither are the other pathways observed by the authors subject of this paper, even though each of them certainly possesses valid explanatory power. What is of interest to this paper are identity and interest, which are viewed as endogenous elements.

3. Methodology

As already established, a state can possess multiple identities at the same time. Sometimes these identities converge, but other times they diverge. The results are conflicting interests. Nevertheless, policy decisions need to be made despite conflicting interests being at play. The question arising is how one can determine the underlying identity dictating a state’s interest and consequently its behavior. In the scope of this paper: How can we determine that Hindu nationalism and not Indian nationalism prevailed as the key identity in India’s decision to stay nonaligned in the Ukraine Russian war? To answer this question, the paper looks at what each identity would expect as India’s subsequent behavior, thereby utilizing and reviewing statements from government positions crucial to policy decision-making since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine.

This thesis not only relies heavily on the concepts of Indian identity and Indian national interest, but more importantly on the correct conceptualization. Both concepts are

extremely fluid in their definition. To preserve as much explanatory power as possible, this paper will focus on the conceptualization of two Indian identities constituted by two norms.

3.1 Norms Affecting Identities: Territorial Integrity and Sovereignty

The Katzenstein et al. framework establishes the nation and not the state as the defining element of a state's identity and subsequently a state's interests (Katzenstein et al., 1996). As such norms impact the nation, which then is acted on by the state. In this paper, the territorial integrity and sovereignty norm act as a constitutive norm defining Indian identity. Both of these norms have been a key pillar to the Indian state. They helped to secure acceptance, political independence, the right to self-determination as well as autonomy for the Indian state to exist after its independence in 1947.

3.1.1 Territorial Integrity Norm

The norm of territorial integrity is an important pillar of the current international order. Similar to other core principles of the international system, its existence is not natural, but rather a product of historical experience, internalized by states and as such accepted as an international norm. From the beginning, the development of the territorial integrity norm is striking because, statistically speaking, wars have been fought to the majority over issues of territory. Mark W. Zacher argues in his paper "The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force" that the development of the norm can be contributed to both instrumental and ideational factors. Multilateral accords and the intervention of international organizations in the past have helped to manifest this norm on an international level. However, as the example of the recent violation of Ukraine's territory by Russia shows, territorial integrity is by no means a "natural", but a highly institutionalized norm protected and advocated by international organizations such as the UN. Contestation of this norm by other countries cannot be ruled out completely. Its status as an institutionalized international norm might deter most states from contesting it, however, not every state. Especially not authoritarian states such as Russia or arguably China, which view both the current international order and its institutions as inherently default.

Territorial integrity as defined by the UN Charter Article 2(1) – (5) means the refrainment of its members

...in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. (United Nations, 2021)

In this form, the norm of territorial integrity has a few implications. It not only “guarantees the continuing existence of a state in its current borders and renders unilateral changes of the territory by forceful means of third states a violation of international law” (Marxsen, 2015, p. 9f), but connects it to the right of every state to political independence. That is because territory presents “the spatial framework” and “necessary condition” for the execution of political independence aka statehood. Consequentially, “territorial integrity can be seen as synonymous with territorial inviolability” (Oppenheim et al., 1952). (Marxsen, 2015)

3.1.2 Sovereignty Norm

Similar to territorial integrity, the sovereignty norm too is highly institutionalized and presents to be one of the key concepts of the international world order. Nevertheless, its terminology is ambiguous and lacks a clear definition. It is most frequently defined as the “supreme authority within a territory”. What exactly this definition encompasses depends on the structure within it exists. Barkin et al. for example, conclude in their analysis on the changing of norms and rule of sovereignty, that sovereignty as an institutionalized norm encompasses two different forms, each differing in its legitimization. (Barkin et al., 1994, p. 107f)

State sovereignty [...] stresses the link between sovereign authority and a defined territory, and national sovereignty [...] emphasizes a link between sovereign authority and a defined population (Barkin et al., 1994, p. 108).

As such, these two forms of institutionalized sovereignty encompass both territorial as well as a personal jurisdiction. Despite its unclear terminology, the sovereignty norm represents the primary constitutive rule of the international order, including it as the pivotal principle of the United Nation. Nevertheless, the UN Charters only mention and guarantee sovereign equality, defined as

...the relationship between the conditions and attributes of statehood or the principles of territorial or personal jurisdiction, immunity, and non-intervention, on the one hand, and considerations of sovereignty, on the other. (Besson, 2011)

This example shows that even though the sovereignty norm is highly institutionalized presenting the most fundamental principle of the modern international order, its perpetuity is somewhat astounding. (Besson, 2011)

This paper understands sovereignty alongside the lines of Barkin et al.'s definition, including the notion of self-autonomy and self-determination. That is, the norm does not only understand sovereignty as the link between a sovereign and a defined territory or/and people, but also the right to self-determine and act on its own interests and values.

3.2 Conceptualization of Identity: Hindu Nationalism and Indian Nationalism

Katzenstein et al. conceptualize identity as “a label for the varying construction of nationhood and statehood”. In this instance, they differentiate between “the nationally varying ideologies of collective distinctiveness and purpose” which they treat synonymous with the term nationalism and ideology as a label of statehood, defined as the “country variation in state sovereignty, as it is enacted domestically and projected internationally”. This paper prioritizes the first definition of state identity as synonymous with nationalism. (Katzenstein et al., 1996)

Conceptualizing Indian identity is no easy task. Not only due to the sheer size of its population, but also due to its demographic heterogeneity, defining just one or two national identities is nearly impossible. What can be done is identifying the two underlying main forms of nationalism, which have been present at the latest since India's independence in 1947. The two forms distinguish themselves by identifying the nation in nation-state differently. While Indian nationalism defines the nation as “essentially territorial and civic, identifying as Indians all inhabitants of the British Empire”(Swamy, 2003, p. 1), Hindu nationalists, on the other hand, opt for a much narrower and exclusive definition with at its core the “belief that Indian national identity and culture are inseparable from the Hindu religion”(Petersen, 2022). Both Hindu and Indian nationalism are products of the territorial integrity and sovereignty norm. The difference is the utilization of these norms and the subsequent national interests deriving from these identities. Hindu nationalist claims of the nation are heavily infused

with religious notions of Hinduism, while Indian nationalism is closely tied to the imperial legacy. That is not to say that Hindu nationalism does not include anti-imperialist sentiments as part of its identification, or that Indian nationalism does not encompass religious elements as well. As laid out in the theoretical part, this impossibility of clear separation between these two forms is due to the inherent recursivity of the analytical framework as well as the constructivist theory itself. Despite territorial integrity and sovereignty influencing both identities, this paper assigns the territorial integrity norm to Hindu nationalism and the sovereignty norm to Indian nationalism. While reading this paper, the reader should take into account that this clear distinction of pathways as embraced here is not conform to reality but serves as a simplification for the purpose of conceptualizing and analyzing the role of identity and subsequently interest.

3.2.1 Hindu Nationalism: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

In his article “Contested Meanings: India's National Identity, Hindu Nationalism, and the Politics of Anxiety” Ashutosh Varshney describes the BJP as a product of the desire to revive Indian national pride during the time of the British rule. This “revival” of national pride eventually resulted in the creation of “the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, National Voluntary Corp) (...) the institutional core of Hindu nationalism” (p.232) in 1925. However, Hindu nationalism was unable to dominate either the independence struggle throughout the second half of the 20th century nor significantly influences political decision-making in the years following India’s independence. Neither Nehru nor Gandhi, both vital figures in the creation of the Indian national states, were Hindu nationalists. Nehru, India’s first prime minister, was an absolute devote to secularism opposing any form of religious involvement in politics and Gandhi’s practice of Hinduism was too tolerant and too inclusive to be assimilated with Hindu nationalism in any kind. It was not until the late 1980’s that Hindu nationalists in form of the BJP gained foothold in Indian politics by receiving over a tenth of the national votes during the national election. In the following election in 1991, these votes increased to an astonishing 51%. Published in 1993, Varshney was not able to further assess the influence of Hindu nationalism on the Indian state. However, he did present the reader with four possible scenarios for India’s political future:

- 1) A continuation of Congress rule, though with a changed, promarket economic ideology (with or without a revived organization);
- 2) the rise of the BJP to national power with the center Right in command;
- 3) the rise of the BJP with the right wing in command;
- 4) a non-Congress coalition, or a coalition of the Congress with other anti-BJP parties

In 2014, with the election of the right-wing conservative coalition National Democratic Alliance headed by the right-wing BJP and Modi as the country's prime minister, the third option presented itself to become true. At last, Hindu nationalism found its way into Indian politics. "The end of India as we know it civilizationally (and perhaps also territorially)" (Varshney, 1993, p. 225) is how Varshney describes the outcome of the third scenario owing it to the "bigoted, communal, and exclusionary" nature of the BJP's right wing faction. (Varshney, 1993)

3.2.2 From Territorial Integrity to Hindu Nationalism

The main concern of a Hindu nationalist is the protection of India's territorial inviolability alongside its "political commitment towards Hinduism"(Varshney, 1993, p. 228) which manifests itself in the goal of realizing a Hindu nation.

Hindu nationalism opts for a much narrower and exclusive definition of nation, with at its core the "belief that Indian national identity and culture are inseparable from the Hindu religion" (Petersen, 2022). *Hindutva* (literally 'Hindu-ness') as the dominant form of Hindu nationalism in India is conceptualized by the South Asia Scholar Activist Collective (SASAC) as

...a modern political ideology that advocates for Hindu supremacy and seeks to transform India, constitutionally a secular state, into an ethno-religious nation known as the Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation). (SASAC, 2023)

As a result, Hindu nationalism in India is characterized by strong anti-Muslim sentiments, "purist racial elements (...) and its association with intolerance of minorities" (Petersen, 2022) which has been the BJP's platform for years, slowly finding its way into the Indian public sphere.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace describes the entrance of Hindu nationalism into the Indian public in their article “Religious Nationalism and India’s Future” by saying that

The BJP’s electoral resurgence of late has once more brought an alternative nationalism to the fore, one based not on secular principles, but rather on the premise that Indian culture is coterminous with Hindu culture. (Vaishnav, 2019)

Secular nationalism promoted by the Indian National Congress (INC), which has been the predominant form of nationalism since its independence in 1947, is being replaced by Hindu nationalism which gained foothold in Indian politics for the first time since 1998 through the election of the BJP in 2014.

3.2.3 Hindu Nationalist Interest: Hindu Rashtra

Territoriality plays a key role in realizing the dream of Hindu *Rashtra*. That is because it not only corresponds with the core meaning of what it is to be Hindu – in the Hindu national sense to be Indian –, but it also provides the necessary political independence to achieve a Hindutvan Indian state. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar definition not only gives a clear definition of whom to identify as Hindu by stating that,

To be a Hindu means a person who sees this land, from the Indus River to the sea, as his country, but also as his Holy Land (Varshney, 1993, p. 230),

but simultaneously provides a clear description to what geographically speaking is to be considered India. For him, territory belonging to India reaches from “the Indus River to the sea”. Due to the partition of India, the Indus River nowadays falls into Pakistan territory, practically dividing what Hindu nationalists view as ‘sacred’ land by the Pakistan border. Subsequently, the regions of Jammu and Kashmir, India’s only majority Muslim states, are being contested by both India’s and Pakistan’s claims of sovereignty over these territories.

Hindu nationalists have long sought to restore the sacred land of Hinduism by reintegrating Kashmir and Jammu back into what they view as integral parts of India. Since *Hindutva* is the underlying ideology of the BJP, the party has had long-standing plans of taking back control in the region. Whether the BJP has formulated this policy objective under the pretext of security concerns due to militant insurgencies as well as the underdevelopment and subsequently the need for a central government in

the region, as they officially state, or whether this objective was really motivated by ideological factors is unclear (Lalwani et al., 2020). In 2019, by amending article 370 and 35a the Indian government successfully revoked the constitutional autonomy of both Jammu and Kashmir, taking a step closer in realizing a Hindu *Rashtra*.

The question whether or not the incentives behind taking back control in Jammu and Kashmir were ideological or indeed geopolitically is irrelevant. What is important is that both from an ideological and geopolitical standpoint, protecting India's territorial integrity is the main national interest for Hindu nationalism.

3.2.4 Indian Nationalism: The Indian National Congress

In contrast to Hindu nationalism is Indian nationalism or secular nationalism, which has been the prevailing form of nationalism since at least the 1880's when the Indian independence movement first started emerging. This form of nationalism has its foundation in the Indian National Congress. Originally founded in the 1880's as an important agent to the British Empire, the INC acted in the beginning as a "permanent loyal opposition" (Soikham, 2019, p. 27) to the British Raj. Their task was to familiarize themselves with the parliamentary system and support the British in their colonial rule over India. However, due to the stark political change in the Indian environment in the 1920's, the INC established itself as a real opposition to the British Raj, evolving from an agent promoting British colonial interests to a "social movement for freedom" (Soikham, 2019, p. 28) to the Indian National Congress Party. For a long time, the INC was regarded as the dominant party within the Indian political system. Especially during the first few decades after India's independence, the party completely dominated the political and electoral sphere until 2009. During this time, the INC experienced a decline in electoral dominance due to stronger emerging competition from parties forming on ideological lines, such as the BJP with their Hindu nationalism. Finally, in 2014, the Indian National Congress Party was forced into opposition due to the electoral win of the BJP and has stayed there ever since. (Soikham, 2019, pp. 1-34)

3.2.5 From Sovereignty to Indian Nationalism

The transformation of the INC from an agent for British colonial interests to a political party was fueled in itself by the desire to “self-autonomy, self-determination” and independence combined with anti-imperial sentiments. The norm of both state and national sovereignty constituted the identity of Indian nationalism socially inclusive in its definition coined by the INC by stating that,

multiplicity of ethnic and religious groups that call the country home should find a place within its sovereign boundaries without being subject to any discrimination or prejudice (Vaishnav, 2019).

While Indian nationalism is also often coined as secular nationalism, the term secularism is not to be confused with the western notion. While western states mean the “strict separation between church and state to foster civic peace and equal rights for all citizens”(Vaishnav, 2019), the same terminology refers in India to a “principled distance between religion and the state”(Vaishnav, 2019). What that means is that Indian nationalism, unlike Hindu nationalism ‘maintains a safe distance’ to religion by promoting religious inclusivity. (Vaishnav, 2019)

3.2.6 India’s National Interest: The Protection of Its Sovereignty

The whole development of Indian Nationalism is owed to its experience as a colonial subject to the British Empire. As such, anti-imperialist sentiment is central to understanding India’s national interests. In his book “A Dictionary of Politics and International Relations in India” Chris Ogden defines anti-imperialism within the confines of Indian politics as “a term (...) denoting an opposition to, and a desire for emancipation from, imperial rule or domination by an external country or hegemon”. He goes on stating that it is an “entrenched principle within Indian politics, (...) particularly underpin[ing] the self-reliance and autonomy” principle within Indian politics (Ogden, 2019).

As such, India’s interests define themselves according to Indian nationalism as: the protecting of its sovereignty from external actors. What makes this a national interest deriving from sovereignty norm and Indian nationalism has to do with the historical and political context in which it emerged. The definition of the modern sovereignty did not come about until the end of the second World War in 1945, which was a time in which

many former colonial states acquired their independence (Abi-Saab, 1962). For these states

...sovereignty is the hard won prize of their long struggle for emancipation. It is the legal epitome of the fact that they are masters in their own house. (Abi-Saab, 1962, p. 103)

The norm was institutionalized on an international level, allowing India to exercise supreme authority within its territory by giving it the right to political independence, self-determination and autonomy.

However, it is important to note that, as mentioned earlier, despite the sovereignty norm in itself being integral to the maintenance of order in the international system, neither the UN nor most international organizations as well as international law mention the sovereignty norm by itself. Subsequently, a state's sovereignty is not *per se* protected. It is "only" internationally institutionalized by states and structures which have internalized this norm. However, as the example of Ukraine shows, the internalization of the sovereignty norm is not equally strong in every state. It becomes especially ineffective when a state such as Russia views the framework, in which it exists and which it legitimizes, as inherently wrong by default.

Despite India not viewing the international system as particularly favorable, it is interested in at least mediating for an orderly, chaos absent transition towards a new order. That is why India is not seen as a revisionist but as an accommodationist power, with India being described as a bridge between the old and the new order (Tellis, 2021, p. 5). This self-perception stems from the core objective of the Indian nationalistic identity in preserving its own sovereignty. Since there is no "real" protection of sovereignty through means of the international system, India has to do its best in assuring the continuous existence of sovereignty norm since the international system relies on the mutual respect of the sovereignty norm. That is the only way for India to protect its own national sovereignty in the international framework, by making sure the others do the same.

To do that, India has to participate in the international system despite its clear anti-imperial sentiments, which shows itself in the manner India conducts itself in the international system. A common argument in international relations is that the current liberal democratic world order is a western-centered order favoring western nations by

allowing for and even facilitating western dominance through the help of international organizations such as the World Bank, the United Nations, and the International Monetary Fund, all of which have all been founded on the basis of European principles decisively setting the post-war conditions in stone. Post-colonial states like India as well as less developed states like Brazil and many African nations are consequentially underrepresented in the current international framework, possessing only a marginal role in agenda setting for global affairs. In the eyes of India, the international system is 'dominated' by an external actor. Consequently, India chooses to limit its commitment to the liberal international system (HappyMoon, 2022). Since India perceives the international system as inherently "unequal, discriminatory and unrepresentative" the question arises why they do not completely cease their participation. The answer is that secular India prefers

... a multipolar international order, underpinned by international law, premised upon respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, resolution of international disputes through peaceful negotiations, and free and open access for all to the global commons. (Shringla, 2021)

In order to protect their sovereignty, India has to participate in the international system. However, as the analysis of India's behavior in the Ukraine-Russian war will show, this participation is limited.

3.3 Moving Forward: Hindu Rashtra vs. Sovereignty Norm

The aim of the next section is to determine which identity is behind India's political decision to remain non-aligned in the Ukraine Russian war. This is complicated by two things:

- 1) Both identities exist simultaneously within Indian culture and politics
- 2) The definitional fluidity of the concepts of identity and subsequently its national interests

To better illustrate the existing conflict of interest, each identity has been assigned to one political party. Hindu nationalism to the BJP, the incumbent party and Indian nationalism to the INC. It is important to note that while the BJP holds the ultimately political authority, both identities are equally present in Indian culture and politics. Despite the BJP's electoral success in 2014 and its political dominance ever since, its

support within the population is anything, but dominant. Hindu nationalism primarily manifests itself within the party, shaping its political agenda and decisions. Indian nationalism, on the other hand, resonates with a much larger part of the population.

4. India's Response to the Ukraine Russian War

India's decision to respond to the Ukraine Russian War by choosing a non-alignment stance was striking for the international community for numerous reasons. First, in the past decade, India has increasingly abandoned the non-alignment strategy, dominant in the decades after India's independence coined by Nehru, India's first prime minister, who saw non-alignment as necessary "to retain the independence of judgment and freedom of political action" (Alam, 2017, p. 276). Instead, it has gradually moved to an approach of international relations characterized by multi-alignment. One might argue that now that India has achieved 'independence of judgment' and 'freedom of political action' it no longer has to rely on non-aligning but is able to increase its activity and dominance in the international community. This is only partly true. India's change towards multi-alignment stems from the goal to

...give India maximum options in its relations with the outside world – that is, to enhance India's strategic space and capacity for independent agency – which in turn will give maximum options for its own internal development. (Khilnani et al., 2012)

The current Minister of External Affairs Jaishankar justifies this need for a multi-alignment approach in his book "The Indian Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World" (Jaishankar, 2020) by pointing out the changing international system from a uni- to bi- to multipolar world, amplified by the United States continuous withdrawal from the international system and the stepping up of players such as the European Union, China and India itself. With that being said, India's main goal still is "the purposeful pursuit of national interests" (p.73) as it has been during the time of non-alignment. The only aspect that changed is that India now, in contrast to the decades after its independence, is in a position, where it has to exploit "opportunities created by global contradictions" (p.11). With a multipolar world becoming more evident, the only option to pursue its national interest is to "extract as many gains from as many ties as possible" (p.9).

Second, India, as the world's biggest democracy, was expected to side with the West in condemning Russian aggression. As a democratic country, India has certain responsibilities to protect (R2P). This principle (R2P) is a political commitment with at its basis the idea that,

...states have a fundamental responsibility to protect their own citizens, and in most cases the citizens from other states, from gross human rights violations and other mass atrocities. (Silander et al., 2013, p. 1)

It is important to note that India's approach to the R2P principle can be labeled as cautious and reluctant. This skepticism stems from its post-colonial past viewing the R2P as an "intervener's charter" (Bellamy, 2009, p. 84) with the purpose "to legitimize the western interferences in the domestic affairs of developing states" (Chandra, 2021, p. 191). Despite these reservations, India agreed to adhere with a few concessions. From an Indian standpoint,

the R2P cannot be used to address all social evils, including violations of human rights and humanitarian law. Rather, it must only be confined to the four identified crimes, that is, genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. (Puri, 2012)

Furthermore, India views the use of force, which the UN Charter acknowledges it as a measure of last resort, critically and shows a clear "preference for peaceful political [approaches including] preference for political and diplomatic means". (Chandra, 2021)

The Indian role in the Ukraine Russian war has not been reduced to nothingness. In April 2022, in a statement by External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar on the "Situation in Ukraine" (Dr. S. Jaishankar, 2022), he urged both Russia and Ukraine to "return to the path of diplomacy" calling "for the immediate cessation of violence and hostilities". He, furthermore, emphasized the role of "global order (...) anchored on international law [and the] UN Charter" as well as highlighting both the importance of "respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of states". In another statement a few months later on the United Nations Security Council Meeting regarding the Ukraine, India again emphasized the importance of territorial integrity and states sovereignty, calling for upholding these principles without any exception (Dr. S Jaishankar, 2022). Specifically, they argued that,

politics should never ever provide cover to evade accountability. Nor indeed to facilitate impunity. Regrettably, we have seen this of late in this very Chamber, when it comes to sanctioning of some of the world's most dreaded terrorists. (Dr. S Jaishankar, 2022)

This statement by the Indian government does not seem to be directed towards the UN's decisions concerning the Ukraine Russian War, but Pakistan based cross-terrorism. This criticism of the UN Security Council's impunity towards respect for territorial integrity and state sovereignty contradicts India's abstention "from successive votes in the UN Security Council, General Assembly, and Human Rights Council that condemned Russian aggression in Ukraine" (Tellis, 2022).

While India refuses to openly call out Russia as the "instigator of this crisis" (Tellis, 2022) it is continuously voicing its concerns over the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. India even offered to provide "both humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and economic support to some of our neighbours under economic distress"(Dr. S Jaishankar, 2022). However, its assistance to Ukraine does not extend beyond humanitarian aid, refusing financial aid as a possible non-intervention approach opted for by many other countries which do not want to get directly involved.

This ambiguous, somewhat confusing behavior of the Indian government leaves the question of why it chooses a non-alignment stance. The Indian government has made clear that all its foreign policy decisions are made in the pursuit of its national interests. As this paper aims at answering the question from an identity approach, the key lays in determining which underlying identity prevailed in the decision for India to stay nonaligned. For this purpose, the next sections will analyze the expected behavior from the Indian state if a) Indian nationalism or b) Hindu nationalism is the core identity for this policy decision. The conclusion is that for India to choose a non-alignment, the identity of Hindu nationalism has to be prevalent. Otherwise, one could have observed a clear condemnation of Russian aggression or even critical remarks towards the West on the bases of Indian nationalist identity.

4.1 Indian Nationalism: Pro West or Pro-Russia?

As Indian nationalism has shown, the protection of its sovereignty is India's highest national interest. As such, one would assume that if the Indian nationalistic identity had prevailed, India's behavior would not have been one of non-aligning, but one of

condemning Russian aggression. This has three reasons: 1) the violation of sovereignty as an institutionalized norm, 2) Ukraine's fight for independence similar to India's against the British Empire and 3) India's commitment to the R2P principle.

First, in order for India to secure and protect its state sovereignty, it has to, even if limited, participate in the international system. That is because sovereignty as a highly institutionalized norm relies on the mutual respect of states for each other's sovereignty. By invading Ukraine, Russia did not only violate Ukraine's sovereignty, but more importantly, violated international law. Through these actions, Russia, alongside other authoritarian states like China, challenge the "rule based western order" which they view as "expansive and promoting the interests of Western powers"(Remler, 2020). Russia rejects nearly all external norms following its own definition of "true sovereignty" which describes

... those few states that, in the Kremlin's view, are able to exercise genuinely independent choices – the United States, China, and Russia – plus other players with significant influence (...). Smaller states and multilateral organizations are seen as objects or instruments of great power diplomacy, rather than as serious actors with proper agendas. (Lo, 2015, p. 41f)

By contesting the current international system, more importantly, violating the sovereignty norm, Russia destabilizes the global order which India is so highly benefiting from. Sovereignty, according to Indian nationalism, is India's highest national interest. Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and its disregard for international law threatens India's sovereignty because it not only destabilizes the international system which guarantees sovereignty through the mutual respect and recognition for each other's sovereignty, but simultaneously Russia sees this as an opportunity to push forward its political agenda of an authoritarian traditionalist world order in contrast to the current democratic liberal (Lo, 2015, p. 46f). Russia's version might be one in which respect for national sovereignty and international law is absent and instead reigned by chaos and conflict.

Despite India's shared criticism with Russia and its limited support for the current liberal international system due to its "historical experience of colonialism" (Tellis, 2022) where still "many aspects of liberal internationalism still provoke disquiet in India" (Tellis, 2022) it does value sovereignty. Consequently, for the sole purpose of the

protection of its own sovereignty, clear condemnation of Russia for its invasion of Ukraine or at least the violation of Ukraine's sovereignty would have been expected.

Secondly, similar to Ukraine now, India too has fought long for its independence from an imperial power. Dr. Marnie Howlett describes Ukraine's situation as a

war of independence (...) not necessarily in the traditional sense of the term, as Ukraine's statehood is already recognised by the international community, but more as the state's expression of its autonomy, agency, and ability to decide its own future: a future where Ukraine is always seen for what it is: a sovereign country. (Howlett, 2022)

This struggle against an external actor with the aim of safeguarding its sovereignty is an endeavor India should be able to resonate with strongly. Consequently, as a sign of its continuous commitment to the sovereignty norm, it too would have been expected of India to at least condemn Russian aggression against Ukraine's sovereignty.

Third, India in connection with its dedication to and the protection of its sovereignty has committed itself, albeit in a limited manner, to the R2P principle. From India's standpoint, the "international community does not have a legitimate right to intervene in the internal affairs of a state, except for in exceptional situations" (Chandra, 2021) with exceptional situations being genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Russia has been accused of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, backed by a U.N investigation (United Nations, 2023). Subsequently, the assumption would be that India condemns Russia for the atrocities committed in Ukraine as this would set a clear signal of its commitment to and value of the sovereignty norm internationally, which is crucial for the protection of its own sovereignty.

4.1.2 Pro Russia

Even though most arguments of Indian nationalism as the underlying identity point towards India siding with the West, there are a few points which would expect a pro-Russian stance from India. That is first and foremost, Russia's accusation of NATO's enlargement into its sphere of influence against its promise to cease any eastward expansion. Already in the 1990's, the NATO expansion was already a highly debated issue, with many voices opposing to it due to a lack of understanding of its necessity.

Opposition to this undertaking feared especially the retaliation from Russia. George Kennan wrote in 1997,

Such a decision may be expected to inflame the nationalistic, anti-Western and militaristic tendencies in Russian opinion; to have an adverse effect on the development of Russian democracy; to restore the atmosphere of the Cold War to East-West relations; and to impel Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to our liking.(Kennan, 1997)

Over the past decades, NATO has expanded far into the former Soviet's sphere of influence, which Putin lays a special claim to. In Russia's eye the Ukraine does not possess true sovereignty and, as such, for Putin, the invasion of Ukraine is an act of defense. The argumentation is that "if Russia cannot control Ukraine, then the West will (...) [and] countries like Ukraine become platforms for invasion" (Moskowitz, 2022) which will lead to "the West (...) dismember[ing] Russia as the USSR was dismembered" (Moskowitz, 2022). For Russia, the invasion of Ukraine was a necessary means to protect its own sovereignty triggered by the eastward expansion of NATO over the past decades. This in connection with the increasing likelihood of Ukraine, with whom Russia shares a large border, joining NATO, thus bringing the military organization right to its doorsteps. (Moskowitz, 2022)

Any accusations by Moscow of NATO violating any promises of not expanding eastward and "trying to marginalise it internationally" (NATO, 2014) have been debunked by a NATO statement in 2014. It states, that NATO pursues an open-door policy "based on the free choice of European democracies" and that there never was any pledge in the first place, rendering any accusations of Russia meaningless (NATO, 2014). Nevertheless, the argument on Russia's side holds, that this was done in defense of its own sovereignty, a goal which India pursues as well. This, in combination with Russia claiming the invasion of Ukraine to be an "anti-colonial struggle with the West", could have been enough – at least in Indian nationalistic views – to condemn the West for pushing the eastward expansion of NATO and recognizing Russia's anti-imperial struggle.

Another reason why one could have expected India to speak out against the West/ Ukraine is too the R2P principle. Russia is not the only country which is accused of committing atrocities. Ukraine soldiers too have been accused of committing war

crimes. Even though this is not enough for India to build its policy decision around, especially because the accusations arose way after the war broke out, Indian nationalism would have expected a statement condemning or at least criticizing the actions of Ukrainian soldiers and not merely a show of concern from the Indian government for the humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

In summary, India has not acted in a way we would expect if Indian nationalism was the underlying identity behind India's policy decision. There were at least three reasons why India, as a protection of its sovereignty, should have condemned Russia. Condemnation of Russia not as in making Russia the "instigator of the war", but condemning Russian violation of Ukraine's sovereignty, the R2P principle and in connection to that, holding Russia accountable for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. On the other hand, there were also reasons for India to speak out against Ukraine and side with Russia. Nevertheless, this has shown that Indian nationalism is not the underlying identity behind India's policy decision, as it did not expect India's a non-alignment strategy.

4.2 Hindu Nationalism: Non-Aligned Is the Answer

According to Hindu nationalism, the realization of a Hindu state is its highest national interest. For this purpose, territorial integrity plays a key role. That is not only because Hindu nationalists pursue a clear vision of the geographical reality of a Hindu *Rashtra*, but also because this envisioned territory provides both the spatial framework and necessary condition for this Hindu nation. Subsequently, Hindu nationalism would expect India to assume a non-alignment stance in the Ukraine Russian war. That is first and foremost because of geopolitical concerns regarding China and Pakistan.

So far, the paper has assumed that the sovereignty norm informs Indian nationalism and, respectively, territorial integrity Hindu nationalism. Whilst that is true, it is important to note that sovereignty in Hindu nationalism also plays an important role. Although it does not determine India's national interest, it is an integral part of the international order in which India operates and acts. So why does sovereignty not play a key role in determining Indian national interest in Hindu nationalism if it is integral to the international order? That is because if the

...larger goal of preserving the order comes into conflict with particular Indian interests – as exemplified by the need to placate Russia despite its egregious

violations of one of the order's core rules, namely, prohibiting the use of force for territorial conquest – New Delhi will pursue its own equities because the private gains to India are judged to be more valuable than both the private losses stemming from such a choice and the larger toll exacted on the liberal order as a whole. (Tellis, 2022)

In this case, the particular Indian interest is preserving and protecting its territorial integrity for the purpose of realizing a Hindu nation. While one might argue that for India to protect its territorial integrity, it has to condemn Russia because with its invasion it violated the territorial integrity of Ukraine, this line of thinking in this specific framework is simply false. The territorial integrity norm merely informs and shapes India's national interest, which still is the realization of a Hindu nation.

Assuming that India would indeed condemn Russian aggression, it would not only have to fear retaliation by the Russian state, but also by China. China as a containment strategy for India has in recent years opted for developing a close relationship with Pakistan by “strengthening [its] conventional, maritime, and nuclear weapons capabilities” (Parthasarathy, 2017, p. 77). Any pro-West/Ukraine strategy would likely not only lead to a potential strengthening of Chinese-Russian relations, but also of Sino-Pak as “Pakistan is, and will remain a key player in China's policies of containment of India” (Parthasarathy, 2017, p. 80). Given China's disregard for international concerns and opinions, the evolution of China-Pakistan relations to a full-blown alliance due to a trigger such as India assuming a pro-western strategy, presents a significant geopolitical concern for India. Even without this Russian connection, China alone poses a significant geopolitical risk to India's territorial integrity. Over the recent years, territorial disputes have repeatedly escalated. Only in December 2022, Indian and Chinese troops clashed at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as border tensions were high and two years prior to that, fighting occurred in the Galwan Valley leading to deaths on both sides (Rajeev et al., 2023). The results are highly militarized borders and concerns for Sino-Indian trajectory, which has significantly declined in the past couple of years.

Pakistan on its own poses significant geopolitical risk for India. Since its separation in 1947, both countries have been pursuing bilateral relations, which in recent years have been increasingly marked by a prevailing sense of animosity and hostility from both governments. Continuous border disputes in the Kashmir region as well as attacks by

Pakistan militant proxies on Indian military camps result in a further downward trajectory for both countries' relationship. Concerns over serious military confrontation between these two neighbors remain high, and Pakistan remains to be a significant security risk to India. (EFSAS, 2019)

While geopolitical risks directly from Russia are of no concern to India, Russia's extensive relationships with both China and Pakistan are. India is unwilling to sacrifice its national interest for the preservation of the international order. Risks are considered too high that a pro-western strategy could potentially result in pushing the triad Pakistan, China and Russia closer together, resulting in geopolitical consequences for India obstructing the realization of a Hindu nation.

4.3 Statements from Indian Officials on the Ukraine Russian War

Statements issued by the Indian government confirm the assumption that Hindu nationalism serves as the underlying identity behind India's policy decision in the Ukraine Russian war. Official statements and interviews conspicuously evade any mentions of Russian aggression and, instead, pivot towards concerns for the evolving humanitarian crises in Ukraine while emphasizing India's steadfast rejection of military confrontation of any kind.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi highlighted again the importance of respecting territorial integrity and sovereignty of both the Ukraine and Russia. He said that,

...India has repeatedly emphasized on the immediate cessation of hostilities and the need to resolve the ongoing conflict through dialogue and diplomacy. India's position has also been clear and consistent in so far as respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned. (Mettela, 2023)

In another statement, the External Affairs Minister Jaishankar said that "we [India] have been very clearly against the conflict in Ukraine. We believe that this conflict does not serve the interests of anybody" (Mettela, 2023). Both of these statements highlight the ambivalent stance of the Indian government. While they denounce the conflict in Ukraine, they refrain from explicitly condemning Russian aggression, avoiding direct calls for Russia to be held accountable for its actions or endorsing United Nations resolutions condemning Russian aggression.

The oddity of India's position can only be explained through the Hindu nationalistic identity. Despite Jaishankar underscoring the importance of international law by saying "that the global order is anchored on international law, [the] UN Charter" and most importantly the "respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of states" India still chooses to not hold Russia accountable (Happymoon, 2022). If Indian nationalism would really be responsible for India's policy decision, wouldn't India choose to condemn Russia, a country which clearly violated international law, the UN Charter and completely disrespects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Ukrainian state.

5. Conclusion

India's behavior in the Ukraine Russian war has shown perfectly what impact interdependencies have on a state's decision-making process. The territorial integrity norm constituted the identity of Hindu nationalism, and thus subsequently India's national interest of realizing a Hindu *Rashtra*. National security concerns regarding China and Pakistan in connection with Russia, however, resulted in India's non-alignment stance, and the absence of the condemnation of Russian aggression. Russia was able to deter India from taking any unwanted action by weaponizing, India's geopolitical security concerns towards its immediate neighbors.

A clear limitation of this thesis is the simplification of mechanisms with which it engaged to answer the research question. For one, it was assumed that identity is 'the basic character of a state', and consequently the nation. In reality, the power of the state (re)produces the idea of the nation through sponsoring national culture, indoctrination in mass education, the production and distribution of national symbols and many other practices. Nation and state are not as separate as it might have been suggested in the paper. Secondly, the constitution of state interest is not confined to the theoretical pathway utilized in this paper. The theoretical framework by Katzenstein et al. makes use of five pathways in total, which simultaneously influence the constitution of a state's interest as well as policy decision directly. Third, the assignment of the norms to one identity only. It is clear that the constitution of each identity cannot have been solely influenced by just one of the two norms. Rather, it is more likely that each norm contributed to the formation of both identities. Furthermore, for illustration purposes, each identity has been assigned to one political party. Hindu nationalism to the BJP,

the incumbent party and Indian nationalism to the INC. This also is an oversimplification. It is most certainly true that both parties possess elements of each other's identity, and that the separation of Hindu and Indian nationalism is not as clear as it was depicted in this thesis. However, what this helped to show is the conflict of interests and identities within the Indian state.

Despite these oversimplifications, this thesis has supported the assumption of existing research that a state will attempt to protect its national interest in the best way possible by pursuing a suitable strategy. In India's case, a non-alignment strategy. At first, this might come as a surprise, as India is continuously moving closer towards a multi-alignment foreign policy approach. However, this strategy choice is more than reasonable for protecting and advancing its national interest of a Hindu *Rashtra*. More than that, it is in line with its overall strategy of multi-alignment. That is because for two reasons. First, non-alignment allows India to pursue beneficial relations with both the United States and Russia at the same time. Siding with either power would rob India of that option. Second, it gives India the opportunity to advance its national interests "by identifying and exploiting opportunities created by global contradictions" (Jaishankar, 2020, p. 11), essentially making India a beneficiary of the Ukraine Russian war. India's nonalignment stance is not to be viewed as its overall approach to foreign policy issues. While it has been the official strategy for decades after its independence, it now merely presents to be a sub strategy of India's multi-alignment approach, allowing it to pursue its national interests in the most efficient way possible. India's approach to the international system evolved from non- to multi-alignment. The question whether and how sustainable this approach to the Ukraine Russian war is remains to be seen as India is increasingly pressured by the international community to pick a side and condemn Russia for its aggression in the Ukraine.

The analyses of India's behavior in the war has important implications for not only the study of global governance but also security studies. It highlights the importance of approaching a state's policy decision from a bottom to top rather than a traditional top to bottom approach. It shows that while existing power structures and political rivalries are crucial for the decision-making process in foreign policy and the behavior of a state on the international stage, so are identity and norms. They constitute national interest, which determines how a state perceives certain situations and what issues are categorized as threats to its national interest. Based on that, the state decides on a

suitable strategy. Consequently, viewing national interest as endogenously rather than exogenously given is crucial for understanding “what actors do and what they are” (Wendt, 1992, p. 424). Additionally, this paper offers insights into the workings of the Indian state. As an emerging superpower, understanding India’s behavior on the international stage as well as its attitude towards the liberal western-centered international order is crucial. Its multi-alignment approach makes India a bridge between the old and the new emerging order. Ultimately, seeing how India decides to act in the Ukraine Russian war will show the world how they think of conducting themselves in the international system in the future.

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