RESEARCH NOTE

India and South Asia in the world: on the embeddedness of regions in the international system and its consequences for regional powers

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Abstract

Regions and the regional powers that characterize them stand in multiple inter-relations with the world system. Yet, theories of International Relations struggle with the conceptualization of this global-regional nexus. This article introduces an analytical tool that allows for the evaluation of the 'embeddedness' of regions into the international system and its consequences for a regional power in 'its' region. The theoretical tool shows in particular that regional powers do not necessarily have an inherent interest in 'their' region and its stabilization or, in general, the provision of public goods. Instead, global interests can prevail. Thus, the decision to engage positively in the region is one that does not automatically follow from relative preponderance as it is assumed by many analysts of regional powerhood in the case study chosen here,

South Asia, and across the globe. The applicability of this analytical tool is illustrated with the help of two specific examples – India's conflict management in Sri Lanka and its role in the democratization process in Nepal.

1 Introduction

India's foreign policy within its South Asian region has often been described as 'confusing', 'inconsistent', 'plain absent', or 'ironic' (Sharma, 2009, p. 36; cited from Malone, 2011, p. 126f.). Empirical instances that are cited in support of this assumption are manifold, among them India's reluctance to intervene in Sri Lanka's civil war despite the willingness and active demand by the Sri Lankan government for India to do so and despite the imminent threat of a closer involvement of external forces, above all China, in Sri Lanka. Another example is India's lack of support for Nepal's democratization process and its lack of a clear positioning against the authoritarian tendencies of the King Gyandendra in a time, when much of India's global reputation rested on its status as democracy in a region characterized by internal stability and unrest. Yet, while much descriptive work has been published on specific case studies within South Asia as well as India's more general outlook on South Asia (Ayoob, 1989; Mohan, 2002; Mitra, 2003; Muni, 2009) and its growing linkages with East and Southeast Asia and the world (Jaffrelot, 2003; Paul, 2006; Das, 2010), political scientists or International Relations scholars seem to, for the most, shy away from theory-oriented studies of the subcontinent and its complicated relationships.[1]

There are obviously exceptions to this rule, and attempts have been made to explain India's regional policy by reference to hegemony or other theories that built on the asymmetrical distribution of power prevalent among South Asian countries. This literature also at times looks at the history of relations, patterns of 'amity and enmity', and so forth (e.g. Buzan and Waever, 2003; DeVotta, 2003; Destradi, 2008; Frazier and Stewart-Ingersoll, 2010). Indeed, the specific pattern of big-state–

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[1]   This of course excludes India–Pakistan relations that also, clearly, have a very strong bearing on the rest of the region (Ganguly and Hagerty, 2005; Wolpert, 2010).

small-state dynamics that occur between India and 'the rest' portrays some remarkable features from which, arguably, a lot could be learnt in terms of 'hierarchical relations' among state actors within the international system, in general, and at a regional level of analysis in particular. This article advances one particular aspect of regional hierarchical relations that is often overlooked in the existing literature: the impact of what is introduced here as the 'embeddedness' of regions into the international system. The ambition is not to discard other explanations, particularly those building on historical, domestic, and cultural factors, as South Asian politics – as politics in any region – are too complex to be narrowed down to a single explanatory factor. Instead, the aim was to introduce an analytical tool that helps explain some particularly puzzling instances of, first, India's role in South Asia and, second, regional power behavior, in general, which remains unaccounted for in-existing approaches.

Subsequently, this article will discuss in brief what is meant by embeddedness and its possible consequences for our understanding of Indian's foreign policy as well as, potentially, of other regional powers' behavior. The key argument is that both examples show that states – such as India – that are considered to be regional powers, do not necessarily demonstrate an inherent 'interest' to extend their influence on their regions. Hence, whether a regional power invests in enhancing stability or economic growth in the region is not *only* a consequence of its material power potential to do so. This is also based on other factors, such as the regional power's ambitions in global politics in combination with domestic and regional politics, that need further exploration. The central empirical focus of the article lies on the illustration of embeddedness as useful concept to analyze these two case studies: India's engagement or nonengagement in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, particularly in the year 2000, but also afterwards; and India's involvement in the international effort to avoid state failure in Nepal between 2001 and 2006. These are two important episodes in South Asian conflict management from which one can make statements about what kind of regional power India is and explain its specific outlook on the region and the international system.

2 Regional powers and their embeddedness in the international system

The theme of 'regional power' has received growing attention in the literature. Regional powers feature prominently in research on regional integration institutionalization (Ikenberry and Kupchan, 1990; Hurrell, 2005; Acharya and Johnston, 2007; Capling and Nossal, 2009; Kubicek, 2009), as important veto players in international organizations (Nolte, 2010; Godehardt and Nabers, 2011) and, for example, as providers or spoilers of regional stability, democratization, and peace (Lake and Morgan, 1997; Buzan and Waever, 2003; Adler and Greve, 2009). In almost any piece on the role of regional powers, however, a specific range of expectations is set on regional powers, particularly in empirical studies. Cases include South Africa, India, Australia, and Brazil, all of whom have been expected either to serve, for example, as engines of growth in their region or to play an active role in bringing peace and stability to often frail neighborhoods. Whether or not these expectations are fulfilled varies across cases; the case discussed here, India, is, however, not the only state that has puzzled political and academic observers with its lack of engagement with the region. As it will be shown later, the political and military conflicts in Nepal and Sri Lanka gave India ample chance to 'proof' its regional power stance. Yet, it has for the most failed to do so.

In order to capture regional power behavior theoretically, the argument made here is that we need to ask where these expectations are coming from and whether they are justified. In the existing studies, often implicitly or explicitly, hegemony theories are applied to study the regional powers. These powers have been analyzed as 'emerging middle powers' (cf. Van der Westhuizen, 1998; Jordaan, 2003; Schoeman, 2003), pivotal states (Landsberg, 2004, p. 1), regional great powers (Østerud, 1992), regional leaders (Frazier and Stewart-Ingersoll, 2010; Nolte, 2010), or indeed regional hegemons (Destradi, 2008).[2] All of these concepts are linked to the assumption of some form of 'regional responsibility', regional public good provision, or regional role model function – or in general, hegemonic behavior, which is assumed to arise

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2 The existence of multiple concepts applied to basically the same group of states is a serious in the pursuit of a common research agenda and hinders theoretical and conceptual advances.

directly or indirectly from regional material preponderance alone. The absence of such behavior thus challenges some of the central theoretical assumptions prevailing in the literature. Hence, according to this literature, states defined as regional powers or regional hegemons appear weak and unwilling to use their material preponderance to achieve the goals of stability, economic development, or peace within the region.

In this article, I argue that it is not a failure of the states to act as a regional power. Rather, our conceptual and theoretical tools are either unsuitable or incomplete to analyze the varieties of regional power types and regional power behavior that we encounter in the real world. Current applications instead tell us little about how regional powers use their predominance and help us even less to understand the obvious differences and their more subtle commonalties. Instead, regional power initially is broadly defined as a 'materially preponderant actor, relative to other actors from within the same region' (Prys, 2012, p. 17).[3] Within this group of state, different forms and different features of regional powers can occur – as regional powers do not, *ceteris paribus*, act in an uniform manner. What is of importance here is that we take into account the specificities of the regional level at which the phenomenon of regional powers is placed. Regional powers may, for instance, prefer to interact

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3   A first step in the definition of a 'regional power' obviously needs to be a rather clear understanding of what we meant by a region, a concept that embraces all the features of a 'contested concept'. Some of the more useful and recent deliberations on the concept have moved the debate an eclectic or 'staged' approach to regions (Hurrell 1995, p. 73; Ayoob 1999, p. 111ff; Hettne and Söderbaum, 2002, p. 39ff; De Lombaerde et al. 2010). This includes a clear view on the territorial foundation of regions, yet, there is no determinism about *which* territorial boundaries are significant. Instead, specific boundaries become relevant through a process of definition by both actors internal and external to a potential region. Within these regional spaces, different levels of 'regionness' can occur, nourished by regular co-operation or conflict, or even by both types of interaction (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2002, p. 38). Yet, all of these factors are politically contingent in different ways, and thus, the 'drawing of lines' is a political act that is frequently used 'to hold down the fluid elements of global life in the general interests of [a] "region" ' (Allen and Cochrane, 2007, p. 1163). From this approach – and despite its relative openness – this article draws two common characteristics or patterns that exemplify the significance of 'regionness': first, geographic proximity and, secondly, the fact that the region is less than the whole or, in other words, there are 'insiders' and 'outsiders' to a region. These factors give rise to the concept of embeddedness as understood here. Regions are embedded into the international system and therefore, can be classified as open systems with permeable borders. Embeddedness makes regions and even their most powerful states vulnerable to external impacts, yet also provides additional opportunities for regional powers to pursue external partnerships or other forms of interactions, which in turn can alter regional dynamics.

and engage with actors outside its region that are economically more developed and, simultaneously, to treat the region with neglect. Benevolence should therefore not be taken for granted. In summary, this understanding of regional powerhood presumes a conceptualization of regional power as a 'variable'. In this form, it remains at a level of abstraction that allows for different types of regional powers to emerge. The concepts offered here were defined and discussed in previous studies (Prys 2010, 2012). There, three categories of regional powers have been conceptualized by means of a theoretically and methodologically informed conceptual analysis: dominant regional powers, regional hegemons, and detached regional powers.

Domination, in brief, is used in situations where force prevails over consensus, where relations are highly asymmetrical and private good provision dominates over public goods provision by the regional power. Another clear characteristic of domination is its one-sidedness. The state at a center of such constellation commands and extracts involuntary tributes from the secondary states under a constant threat of force. At the regional level, this has implications for secondary states' relations with both the regional power and outside actors; in particular, relations with outsiders are expected to be much more intense as a counterbalance to the regional dominator is sought. Hegemons, or more precisely regional hegemons, create a 'political order in which the hegemon's mode of thinking becomes dominant without a regular reference to violence' (adapted from Showstack Sassoon, 1982, p. 94). In contrast to dominators, they undertake to make a disproportional contribution in solving challenges and providing stability in the region. In this way, they ensure, at least partly, the pursuit of common goods for all or most members from within its sphere of influence. Detached regional powers, a status induced either by the absence of adequate resources or by the lack of identification with the region, are states that focus largely on domestic and/or on global politics, instead of their regional roles. The introduction of this last category is vital if we would like to overcome the over-determinism that characterizes the studies of regional powers. It is, in other words, not to be taken for granted that a regional power, as defined above, will automatically strive for control, whether benevolent or coercive, over the region. Instead, it might as well attempt to disentangle itself from the potential costs and constraints arising from a regional role. Thus, rather than assuming that all regional powers have an interest

in influencing their regional neighbors in one way or the other, variance in regional power attitudes and behavior exists. As an analytical tool, the three ideal types of regional powerhood are assumed to capture a fairly complete spectrum of different roles a regional power can play. Regional powers also may, for instance, evolve over time from one type to the other; yet, no linear development in one or the other direction should be expected from this.

In addition to this three-fold categorization, we introduce the concept of *embeddedness of regions in the international system* to further capture how the integration of regions into the global world system affects our understanding of regional power roles, their capacity to act within and to influence their region, and also their behavior toward 'secondary powers' (Flemes and Wojczewski, 2010). Regional powers, for instance, have to operate within an overarching international system determined by the global distribution of power and by international institutions. In addition to the management of the internal regional order, a differentiation from, as well as an accommodation within, the international environment has to be established. This potentially alters expected regional dynamics and puts limits on the level of control by the regionally preponderant state. It also has an influence on how regional powers see themselves and how they, consequently, use their power. For our analysis, this implies that regions and the pursuit of localized regional power politics cannot be assessed independently from the international system and vice versa.[4] This implies that relations to external actors are significant in determining the actions of regional powers, both as facilitating but also constraining factors. On the one hand, we therefore need to look at direct interventions of the so-called great powers within the region, not only in military term, but also in terms of trade agreements established with states from within the region. On the other hand, the international arena offers various chances for regional powers to enhance their scope for action, such as its ability to represent the region in international bodies such as the UN Security Council.

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4   The literature offers approaches that deal with one side of this equation: the impact of great powers onto regions. This includes the concepts of 'overlay', 'penetration', or 'porousness of regions' (especially Buzan and Waever, 2003; Katzenstein, 2005). Overall, most of these approaches neglect, however, the 'inside-out' part of 'embeddedness'.

The international arena, however, could also represent a constraint for regional action by 'consuming' resources that could be targeted at regional problem-solving strategies, for example. These and other related processes bring about interlinkages between the global and the regional level of analysis. Therefore, the resulting double role for regional powers necessarily creates a need for concepts and theories that can accommodate this. What is argued here more specifically is that by implicitly or explicitly building on theories, such as the Theory of Hegemonic Stability, most approaches imply that regional powers like India demonstrate *per se* an automatic and inherent interest to 'lead' the region – and, in consequence, the failure to do so is puzzling and demands for explanation. In other words, an often nonreflective transfer of theories from the global level provides for inaccurate standards and benchmarks to assess the 'real' Indian strategies and roles in the region.

In summary, this paper takes the following approach: first, a lack of influence on the region should not be automatically associated with 'regional power failure'. Secondly, explanations that refer to the apparent 'veto power' of smaller states in South Asia with regard to India's leadership position fall short in face of powerful factors at the 'global-regional nexus' that impact on India's choice of regional strategies and their success (Mitra, 2003, p. 400f.). The empirical examples in the following section will demonstrate these nexuses, where Indian regional policies will be outlined with the help of two case studies: Nepal and Sri Lanka.

3 India in South Asia and the world

Domestic and regional conflicts in the South Asian region are often considered a major source of threat for both regional and global peace and stability. Aside from the clear tensions between India and Pakistan that top the list of potential threats due to both states' nuclear potential, we further need to consider that, in 2009, five of eight members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, featured among the Top 25 of the Failed State Index.[5] Even though the challenging situations within each of the countries, clearly, need to be traced

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5   Bhutan (Rank 48), India (Rank 87), and Maldives (Rank 81). The Fund for Peace (2009): Failed State Index Scores: http://www.fundforpeace.org (3 August 2009).

back to a complex set of domestic, regional, and international origins, India frequently has been criticized for not living up to its appropriate share of responsibility in this regard.[6] This criticism extends, for instance, to India's reluctance to actively support a peaceful resolution of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, particularly in the 1990s and early 2000s (Gunatilleke, 2001; DeVotta, 2003); and to its apparent neglect in playing a more influential role in preventing state failure in Nepal throughout the past decade (Destradi, 2012). Extraregional actors such as the United States or the European Union (EU) and its Parliament, too, have disapproved of India's reluctance to engage more actively in promoting regional stability and peace (European Parliament, 2003, 2006; Vaughn, 2008; Muni, 2009).

Attempts to explain the 'deficiency' of Indian influence in the region often fall back on the conflict between India and Pakistan (cf. Ganguly and Hagerty, 2005; Sridharan, 2005; Paul, 2006). Likewise, China is often considered to be a major obstacle in India's attempt to consolidate its status as the sole regional power within its own region (cf. Garver, 2001; Frankel and Harding, 2004; Malik, 2006). Only a minority of researchers make emphasis on the generally difficult relations that India entertains with smaller neighboring states. DeVotta (2003), for instance, argues that a lack of recognition and legitimacy of Indian leadership should be regarded as the main obstacle in the pursuit of an Indian hegemony within South Asia. Likewise, Mitra (2003) emphasized the lack of positive recognition of India by other South Asian states. He further argues that India's enormous material resources cannot be translated in actual influence because of its incoherent regional strategies. In summary, a plethora of good arguments is offered for India's 'failing regional leadership' within the existing analytical frameworks.

What is argued here, however, is that this appraisal of Indian regional politics is incomplete. The argument is that the origins of the apparent benchmarks, according to which India's regional policies are 'judged',

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6   Obviously, no simple statements can be made about South Asian politics; both at the regional as well as at the domestic level. For instance, the question of national integrity and identity is a challenge in all South Asian states, a problem that has a strong influence on regional interactions, in particular when it comes to bilateral relations between India and its smaller neighbors; moreover, domestic problems such as access to water, demographic changes, unemployment, or health care in all states of the region have an impact on the regional cohesion.

are unclear. In other words, how do we really recognize 'failure' in regional policies when we see it? As it will be shown in the sections below, political scientists need to assume a much broader perspective when analyzing regional powers than is commonly done; a perspective that allows for the consideration of all kinds of structural constraints and incentives that arise from the embeddedness of regions and their regional powers into the international system. For India, particularly since the end of the Cold War, its international engagement has shifted from a position of – even if incomplete – nonalignment to an engagement in all kinds of international institutions and coalitions, such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, the G-5, the BASIC coalition within the climate change regime and the G-20 where it has assumed leading positions (among many others Bajpai, 2010; Stephen, 2012). At the regional level, tensions with neighboring states – above all Pakistan, but also Bangladesh – remain high. Despite an at least rhetorically increased significance for Indian foreign policy-making, cooperation within the main regional institution – the SAARC, founded in 1985, has not brought any considerable advances, neither in the field of economic integration nor in the improvement of relations with neighbors in general – (Malone, 2011, p. 127; Behuria et al., 2012; Rao, 2012). Together with on-going domestic strives (ranging from the need for poverty eradication, securing economic development, corruption, and internal destabilization by, for instance, the Naxalite movement), a strong need emerges to balance out preferences and interests that arise on the 'multiple playing fields' (e.g. Malone, 2011, p. 296f.; Mukherjee and Malone, 2011).[7] The absence of the theorization and acknowledgement of the inseparable linkages of levels and, above all, the simultaneity and coequality of causal variables located on these levels, it is not surprising that India's regional power status takes on an ambivalent status in the literature. There, it is, for instance, sometimes described as 'obvious' and, sometimes, however,

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7 One may even recognize a fourth level of analysis that may need to be integrated into a full assessment of India's regional power role and its linkages with these other levels: India's ambitions at the regional level beyond South Asia, such as its participation within ASEAN or other instances of a deepening engagement with wider Asia. This, however, is beyond the scope of this article, and a specific discussion of these instances is not likely to change the core of the argument. Nevertheless, I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this.

questioned due to its apparent 'inability' to provide stability and democracy in the region (Mohan, 2007a; Destradi, 2008).

To illustrate the alternative argument made here, this paper uses two cases of crisis management in South Asia, an issue area in which a regional power, conventionally defined, should pay great attention to. Crises management, indeed, is an arena in which high expectations are directed at regional powers. Various approaches, including hegemony theories, that have stability and peace at their core raise the expectation for India to support stability and democracy in the region for both material and/or idealistic purposes. In the cases discussed here, Nepal's democracy crisis and Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, this did not happen. They therefore constitute interesting cases for assessing the plausibility of my argument.

4 India's Nepal policy: failed states and the promotion of democracy and stability

This first example discusses India's role during the political crisis in Nepal between 2001 and 2006. The crisis began during the summer of 2001 with the assassination of almost the entire royal family by Prince Dipendra. On this day, King Birendra, Queen Aiswarya, and the King's brother Dhirendra died. The crisis ended, at least temporarily, in 2006, when mass protests forced King Gyandendra to resign. Of particular interest is how India reacted to this process of destabilization in its immediate neighborhood. This study thus specifically looks at the phase ahead of the so-called 'Royal Coup' on 1 February 2005 during which democracy and stability in Nepal were seriously damaged, and an escalation of the Maoist insurgency was imminent.

India's relatively low profile is surprising, when we consider that, historically, it has often tried to exert influence in Nepal on its foreign policy and its relations with China in particular (Bhasin, 2005; Mohan, 2007b; Nayak, 2009). Friendship and trade agreements in various forms have been implemented since 1950. Likewise, India attempted to manipulate different aspects of Nepal's domestic policy more or less successfully.[8]

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8 An important event was, for instance, the end of the Rama regime in 1951, which India triggered through the 'Delhi-compromise' (for a more detailed description see Ashtana, 1999, p. 100ff.). Almost all Nepalese governments have attempted to instrumentalize the relation with India for securing their own political survival. The creation of an anti-Indian

The relevance of Nepal's internal developments for India increased with the onset of the 'People's War' of the Nepalese Maoist Movement on 13 February 1996, mainly, but not only, because of India's own struggles with Maoist rebels. Indeed, Prime Minister (PM) Manmohan Singh repeatedly defined the insurgency of the so-called 'Naxalites' as India's major security threats (Ramesh, 2006; The Economist, 2006; Gupta, 2007).

After the assassination of the King, Prince Gyandendra, who was probably the most unpopular member of the Royal family, took over the Nepalese throne in June 2001 (Crossette, 2005, p. 71). While previous Nepalese governments have been reluctant to use military force to combat the Maoists, King Gyanendra initiated military attacks in provinces controlled by the Maoists, which killed nearly 13 000 people, above all civilians (Cottle and Keys, 2007, p. 172). Moreover, during this critical period, the King gave the order to arrest numerous politicians and party leaders on 1 February 2005 (Ganguly and Shoup, 2005, p. 129). He himself took over all government business, with the alleged objective to restore multiparty democracy. The King's grip to complete the power was completed by the proclamation of a state of emergency. Constitutional freedoms were constrained by this move, and all telephone and internet connections were disrupted as well as all air flights to other countries. On 10 February, the King appointed a Council consisting of 10 Ministers under his own chairmanship and declared that he would reign for at least three years or until peace and democracy were restored. As a reaction, the seven opposition parties founded an alliance (the Seven Party Alliance), supported by the Maoists. This alliance staged mass protests and demanded the end of the monarchy in Nepal (Destradi, 2012). Finally, in April 2006, it succeeded in forcing the King to reinstate Parliament. At the same time, the Maoists continued their violent fight until a ceasefire was agreed in June 2006.

India's reaction to these developments can be summarized as follows. Initially, the government attempted to mediate between the three conflicting parties: the monarchy, political parties, and the Maoists. In November 2005, India played an important role in negotiations between the Seven Party Alliance and the Maoists, which ultimately led to an agreement

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atmosphere was deemed necessary for the establishment of a stronger basis of Nepalese nationalism, which in turn guaranteed a certain regime stability (Upreti, 2006, p. 262).

about the necessity of ending monarchy and the subsequent proclamation of a Nepalese Republic. Yet, at the same time, the Indian government only exerted very moderate pressure on the official head of state, King Gynandendra, to end his infringements of democracy. For instance, Special Envoy Dr Karan Singh was dispatched in early 2006 to 'talk sense to a monarch intent on hiding from the anger of his people behind the guns of the RNA' (Royal Nepalese Army) (Hilton, 2006). The talks culminated in the relatively meager offer by the King, on 21 April 2006, to hand over some power to a PM and a new Council of Ministers. The deal failed to accommodate the key demands of the Nepalese opposition, such as the reinstatement of Parliament and the withdrawal of the King's control over the army. India's immediate welcome for the King's offer caused great irritation among the democratic movement in Nepal (ibid.). Such deviation from the projection of India's own democratic principles has also raised doubts about India's willingness and/or capacities for hegemonic projection in South Asia.

> I wish I could make out India's policy on its neighbors. At best, it is a reaction to what they do or not do. Where we have exposed ourselves the most is in Nepal […]. Do we want the king or not? We cannot make up our mind (Nayar, 2006).[9]

Indeed, one could argue that the Indian government was probably more concerned about a possible spillover effects of a Maoist takeover in Nepal on the Naxalite insurgencies in its own country than about a possible end of the democratic movement in the mountain kingdom (Cottle and Keys, 2007, p. 173, Malone 2011, p. 117). Instead, India has been willing to support the traditional two-pillar structure of constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy, which characterized the Nepal's political system for a long time as long as this guaranteed the continued exclusion of Maoists from the political process.[10]

The Maoists' success in the democratic elections of 2008, which were generally considered fair and free, suggests in fact that India struggles to

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9 Kuldip Nayar is a former member of the Rajya Sabha.

10 The following statement made in the Rajya Sabha supports this argument: 'India has consistently held the view that the problems confronting Nepal, including the Maoist insurgency, can be addressed effectively only on the basis of a national consensus between the two constitutional forces, namely multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy' (Rajya Sabha, 2005).

reach its goals in South Asia. As it was said above, outcomes such as these are, understandably, often characterized as failures in need for explanation. The main contender as explanations in the existing literature is a 'lack of followership' by neighboring states, such as Nepal. This finding, in the case at hand, is underpinned by evidence derived from anti-Indian statements in Nepalese media and anti-Indian statements by some Nepali government members (DeVotta, 2003; Destradi, 2008). Yet, a closer look at the methods used to pinpoint a lack of followership reveals the potentially weak foundations of this claim.

First of all, the argumentation is often tautological. This is the case when a lack of followership is used to explain the India's lack of influence and, at the same time, the absence of followers serves as measurement of this lack of influence. Aside this methodological argument, three other substantial points can be raised: the lack of followership is determined by fairly superficial criteria, such as the occurrence of anti-Indian media reports. While this is, of course at least partly, a useful indicator, it neglects the deep and historically founded links between the two states and its people and the manifold expectations cast upon India by Nepal as a consequence of these geographical, historical, ethnic, and cultural interconnections. It is argued here that these profound expectations override the rhetorical, but, at their core, ineffectual resistance to Indian leadership. Instead, it is argued that anti-Indian demonstrations are motivated by the conviction that 'after all, India will help Nepal. They think it is their right to get help from India – and they don't have any duty to be friendlier to India' (ibid.).[11] The awareness of India's size and its opportunities for influencing most aspects of Nepalese existence is thus a core aspect of Nepalese–Indian relations. They also, arguably, constitute the reasons for why all three core parties to the conflict agreed that India could and needed to play a significant role in mediating negotiations among themselves. It is thus justifiable to come to the conclusion that at least significant shares of Nepalese society and its political elites accept Indian predominance. From this acceptance, expectations about India's role arise, regardless of its (un)willingness to fulfill these obligations.

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11 'For most Nepalese, India is a land of opportunity, where they find employment whether in the army, paramilitary, or police forces or as simple workers. For the young Nepalese, it is a lend where endless opportunities for higher education open up'. (Bhasin, 2005, p. liii).

The second and more serious objection refers of the evaluation of India's role in the region with the help of benchmarks that are not necessarily representative of the priorities exposed in Indian foreign policy-making. In other words, measuring India's influence in terms of goals that are of no particular interest to this country seems flawed. More concretely, India's main interest *de facto* does not seem to be an in-depth engagement with the problems of its smaller neighboring states. Instead, avoiding a spillover of crises such as in Nepal seems to be at the top of the list of priorities (Ashtana, 1999, p. 2; Muni, 2009; Malone, 2011, p. 118). The South Asian neighborhood is thus primarily regarded as a main source of threat to Indian stability and, by extension, it is considered a major obstacle in the pursuit of global status.[12] Thus, internal dynamics – in this case the concern of rising internal instability through a Maoist threat in its own territory – need to be taken much more seriously in an assessment of India's goals and preferences.[13] In this research, I argue that Indian claims about its interest in a peaceful and flourishing Nepal need to be interpreted in this light. A stable Nepal does not necessarily imply a democratic Nepal; an insight, which might make much of Indian policy-making between 2001 and 2006 a lot more understandable. Seen from this light, the absence of a democratization 'plan' for South Asia appears as a well-planned and deliberate strategy, rather than a puzzling omission. Indeed, it can be demonstrated that India has a strong foreign policy preference in pursuing its 'appropriate place' (Ministry of External Affairs, 2001) in the world, and that the manifold trouble spots of South Asia are, for at least two reasons, generally viewed as

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12 The pursuit of global status and an aspiration for major power status is among the central guiding principles of Indian policy-making since independence (Cohen, 2001, p. 62f.). This citation from Indian former PM I.K. Gujral entails the core and background of this aspiration, which shines through many – if not all – of India's foreign policy acts: 'To understand India's goals and aspirations, and her eventual destiny, one must consider the currents of history that have shaped here and molded her character. India, for the largest part of her history […], has been a living thriving civilization […]. Ideas and ideologies, any many of the world's great religions, have originated in the fertile soil of India to be propagated far beyond its shores. Scientific learning, statecraft, the arts, flourished as did all manner of economic activity […]. This tradition, this history has gifted India, even in the lessened circumstances of today, with a global vision and a holistic view (Gujral, 2004, p. 2)'. There is thus a 'sense of entitlement' for global stature and recognition that – colloquially – seems to make the region a fairly 'unsatisfactory' arena to play in.

13 Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for making me emphasize this vital point even more.

unnecessary obstacles in the pursuit of this goal. First, the vulnerability of the region has a negative effect on the status and reputation of India as a responsible regional power. Secondly, these conflicts consume important financial and personal resources, which otherwise could be used to pursue other foreign policy that aims outside South Asia (Ganguly, 2006).

If we take embeddedness seriously, a third argument can be made to show the inaccuracy of simply assessing India as a 'failed' regional power that lacks influence in Nepal. The next section will show that India indeed fulfilled a core interest by taking a rather 'symbolic' stance in the Nepalese state crises as it was able to both enhance its international profile by collaborating with international actors while at the same time reducing the costs of its engagement significantly. With regard to the first aspect, the achievement of international recognition, we first need to consider the interests of India in South Asia as well as the perceptions of India by the relevant external actors. The most important external actors for Nepal are the United States, the EU and its member states, and Japan, which provide development aid, as well as China, which is a direct neighbor to Nepal and main rival to India. During the Cold War as well as during most of the 1990s, Nepal's interactions with external actors were limited to one between donors and recipient of development aid. Hence, the deteriorating political and social situation in the country received relatively little attention (Khadka, 1997). This dynamic shifted with the events on 9/11 as it was feared that a failed Nepal could become a safe haven for 'international terrorism'. Nepal's appearance on the international agenda has been reflected by a multitude of high-rank state visits in quick successes between 2002 and 2004. The former US foreign minister Colin Powell visited Nepal in the beginning of 2002, offering the Nepalese government military and economic aid for combating the Maoist insurgency (Thapliyal, 2006, p. 51). A Donor Conference convened to discuss measures by which to avoid state failure in Nepal was held in London on 18th and 19th June 2002. The attendees – Australia, China, India, Russia, the United States, and several European States – rallied around the notion that 'Nepal's struggle against Maoist insurgents should be seen as part of the wider war against terrorism' (BBC News, 2002). Moreover, military aid from the UK was boosted from a mere £700,000 in 2001 to £7million in 2002. The United States gave military and security assistance to Nepal worth US $17 million in

2003 in order to enhance Nepal's ability to cooperate in the global fight against terrorism (Kronstadt, 2003, p. 3).

The royal coup of 1 February 2005 forced international actors to rethink their strategies. Almost in unison, foreign governments condemned the power grab by King Gyanendra (European Union, 2005; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2005; US Department of State, 2005). Whereas the United States held back from punitive actions, the governments in London and New Delhi imposed sanctions on the flow of military hardware (The Washington Times, 2005). Overall, however, the concern that Maoist domination would lead to greater destabilization in the region prevailed over concerns about authoritarian rule by the Nepalese monarch (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2006). China considered the coup a domestic affair and, despite their potential ideological solidarity with the Maoists, the Chinese Government consistently denied any contact with the Nepalese rebels (The Economist, 2006). Consensus at the international level precipitated the additional involvement of the UN. The first step was made with the establishment of an office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Kathmandu in May 2005, addressing the human rights situation involving abuses from both Maoists and Nepal's security forces. Following this, in January 2007, the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) came to support the peace process and to prepare for free and fair elections (Crossette, 2005, p. 73; United Nations Mission in Nepal, 2008).

The perceptions of external actors about India and its role in South Asia also changed over the course of the 1990s. During the early 1990s, India was regarded as the 'estranged democracy', particularly in the United States. However, its unexpected entry into the league of nuclear powers in 1998, as well as its spectacular economic growth, made it a more credible contender for a place among the great powers. This has also impacted on the expectations placed on India with regard to its 'responsibilities' in South Asia. The increasing convergence of Indian interests with those of the United States and other external actors, China aside, over the need to stabilize Nepal certainly helped India to gain acknowledgement as a key regional actor. This led to a new phase of substantial political cooperation (Mohan, 2007a, p. 110). Donald Camp, Principal Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of South Asian Affairs at the US Department of State, in 2005, stated that:

> India, in our view, plays an absolutely crucial role in all of this. India, as far as Nepal is concerned, is the major power. The United States is far away. India is right next door. India has the most influence and the most leverage on this situation (US Department of State, 2005).

Similarly, the European Parliament acknowledged India's primary position in both of its resolutions on the situation in Nepal in 2003 and 2006 (European Parliament, 2003, 2006), and it particularly praised Indian efforts to persuade the King to restore multiparty democracy and civil liberties. India, hence, was clearly regarded as the responsible, and maybe even accountable, actor when it came to finding a solution to the crisis in Nepal (US Department of State, 2005, 2006, 2009; US Government Printing Office, 2005). Its dominant role in the region is reinforced by such acknowledgement: The United States, the EU, and Japan all coordinated their Nepal policies with India, which reflected positively on its global reputation and allowed, for instance, to contribute to global decision-making, such as during the London Donor Conference of 2002. This would probably not have been possible during the 1990s.

These processes were facilitated by the way in which the Indian government adjusted its stance toward the activities of external actors in the region in the past decade. Previously, almost all external interventions in regional conflicts had been rejected with vigor. The Indira doctrine[14] and to a certain degree the Gujral doctrine[15] are representative of this attitude. In these foreign policy doctrines, South Asia was presented as the exclusive sphere of India's influence. In the case of Nepal, this, in particular, referred to limiting China's influence:

> India considers Nepal a country of direct and vital importance for its security and strategic interests, and therefore would like to ensure that

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14   The Indira Doctrine was considered as an unofficial, yet well-known guideline for India's foreign policy, which has been developed by the administration of PM Indira Ghandi. One of the guidelines has been that India promised to stay out of the internal affairs of its neighboring states, yet, in return, would not tolerate any external interventions within the region. In times of crisis, India ought to be asked for help. Hence, this doctrine is often described as the Monroe-Doctrine of South Asia (Rao, 1985, p. 63).

15   Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral shaped these inofficial guidelines in 1996, which said India will be generous toward its neighboring states on political and economic grounds. This was bound to the expectation that the neighboring states would not to allow for their territories to be used for activities harming other states within South Asia (Murthy, 2000, p. 71ff.).

no other power exerts so much influence that Indo-Nepal relations might be jeopardised (Khadka, 1997, p. 1060).

In the past decade, this notion changed due to its economic and military-technological successes and the resulting enhanced self-consciousness in the international scene and a more status-oriented foreign policy outlook. Moreover, India appears to have engaged in an attempt to reduce the costs incurred by crises in the region. In other words, the strategy of blockading and rejecting external actors has been replaced by a strategy of cooperation, especially in fields that promise to enhance the stability of the region (Singh, 2005). For instance, the presence of international organizations in Nepal has been welcomed by the Indian government. Cooperation with the United States has been described by a member of the Indian government as follows:

> We do what we think is best at the moment, and co-operation with the United States is the demand of the time. Last year [2005] we were working closely together and there was much consultation and it is a normal practice for them to ask us and for us to tell them.[16]

Overall, at least some Indian activism, with regard to the crisis in Nepal, can be interpreted as symbolic gestures targeted at the international community, to portray India as a responsible member of this community. Showing responsibility for the region has, in this vein, also become an instrument for the achievement of global goals, without, as such, being the actual objective of Indian foreign policy endeavors. This is an interpretation that is hard to capture and pursue with established theories and approaches that are conventionally used for the analysis of regional power strategies. The following evaluation made by a member of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs illustrates that this approach is not only a phenomenon that is valid for Nepal:

> There is no doubt that unless we do a good job in managing our neighbourhood that this has an impact on how we are seen in the world. So this would circumscribe our global role whether we wanted

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16 Interview with a government official on, New Delhi, 28 November 2006. A concrete example for this joint coordination is the mediation of talks between the Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance in November 2005.

it or not. Better relations [in the region] would enhance our credibility.[17]

This pragmatic approach to its own regional role is one of the main reasons why India, despite an interest in principle in a specific outcome to the conflict, neither used its own material advantages nor built on the support expressed by the international community, to significantly impact on events in Nepal, in particular between 2001 and 2006. Its rather narrow interpretation of its own interests in the Himalayan state have, from the perspective presented here, prevented a more comprehensive engagement for democracy and stability in the region. This has been apparent during the crisis itself, but also during the time period ahead of it, which was characterized by a gradual dismantling of democratic structures. Instead, rather 'symbolic' steps have been taken, for instance, in the form of coordinating international actors that mainly contribute to two objectives: first, to minimize costs incurred to India, and while at the same time, second, to be perceived as a good international citizen. To describe this strategy as a failure, and to equate a lack of followership with a lack of influence, thus seems at least questionable.

5 Sri Lanka's crisis in April and May 2000: India as a global or regional peacekeeper?

The historic shift of India's South Asian policy from the implementation of the Indira doctrine to the current 'hyperpragmatism' is also reflected in its relations to Sri Lanka in general and the Indian engagement (or rather nonengagement) in the ethnic conflict between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Singhalese majority government in particular. While India did intervene in 1987 by dispatching the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka – even if with very little success,[18] the following years were coined by much restraint and

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17 Interview with the former government official on, New Delhi 7 December 2006.

18 The IPKF has been stationed in Sri Lanka in order to monitor the disarmament of the LTTE after the violent phase of the conflict in 1987. At the same time, the Sri Lankan army was deployed in the South of the country in order to oppress a looming Singhalese insurgency (Pfaffenberger, 1988). The task of the IPKF was to disarm the LTTE, but they were quickly involved in violent quarrels with the rebels. The failure can be linked to a lack of intelligence and the poor preparation of the Indian army. This operation is considered the 'longest war' in which India was involved and, at times, 70,000 Indian soldiers were stationed in Sri Lanka and of which >1100 were killed. After three years, the IPKF was

reservation, despite regular escalations of violence in the island state. This again challenges the assumption that regional powers are necessarily interested in a hegemonic position within their own region. Hence, this also calls into question the way in which the notion of regional power 'failure' is entertained in the literature.

The case study in particular looks at the events in 2000, as this year provides a rather extreme, and hence useful, test case for 'regional leadership', understood in the conventional way. On 21 April 2000, the unthinkable happened. The LTTE recaptured the Elephant Pass, the decisive land route that links the Jaffna peninsula to the mainland of Sri Lanka. This capture was followed by weeks of intense battle between the LTTE and Sri Lankan forces. Soon, the Tigers threatened to capture the Northern Palay Airstrip and with it the entire peninsula, where approximately 40,000 Sri Lankan soldiers were stationed, and in danger of being overrun by the rebel group (Mehta, 2000, p. 11; Sambandan, 2000). In response, Sri Lanka appealed to 'friendly countries' for support in a conflict that it had previously considered an exclusively internal issue (Government of Sri Lanka, 2000). Even the more nationalistic and anti-Indian elements in the Sri Lankan political regime agreed with this plea by their government. Yet India, under the Government of PM Vajpayee, rejected outright their request to provide military aid to save the Sri Lankan troops. Instead, it 'continued to abide by its hands-off policy of recent years' (Government of Sri Lanka, 2000; Sambandan, 2000; Dixit, 2001, p. 272f.).

This position was vigorously debated in the academic literature and the media. Support was lent to the Indian stance by some who believed that peace negotiations in Sri Lanka were only possible if India stayed at the sidelines (Crossette, 2002, p. 25). Yet, others argued that no credible commitments to peace and negotiations could be made without India. Thus, they accused India of having let down the Government and people of Sri Lanka (DeVotta, 2003, p. 375). Eventually, in mid-June of 2000, the Sri Lankan Government ended the Tigers' string of victories, at least temporarily. The army was bolstered by military assistance from Israel, rather than India, who supplied arms to match the Tigers' initially superior weaponry (The Economist, 2000). Later that year, both sides in the

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forced to withdraw by the Sri Lankan PM (for more details, see Dugger, 2000; also: Rao, 1988; Rupesinghe, 1988; Hagerty, 1991; Muni, 1993; Bullion, 1995; Bhasin, 2001).

conflict accepted a ceasefire brokered by Norway (Steele, 2004). Violent confrontations continued despite the agreement. When the ceasefire of 2003 began to crumble and violence was on the rise, President Rajapakse asked the Government of India in December 2006 to co-chair the peace process. However, India declined again (Panneerselvan, 2006, p. 25; Saran, 2006).[19]

This pattern of restraint raises questions about the India's ability or willingness to provide stability and order in South Asia. Bemusement among observers is further created by the fact that, in the case of Sri Lanka, a more active engagement could have helped India to pursue some of its own vital interests. For instance, this would have aided terms of regulating the stream of refugees from Sri Lanka to the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. India's reluctance to actively engage in the conflict is frequently explained by pointing at its negative experiences incurred during the days of the IPKF, from 1987 to 1989. Moreover, observers highlight the trauma caused by the assassination of Indian PM Rajiv Gandhi, who was killed during an election campaign in 1992 by Tamil terrorists. DeVotta argues that, in addition, domestic restrictions and the overstretch of India's military by the Kashmir conflict and insurgencies in the North-East of the country are factors that limited India's scope for action. All of these factors certainly play a role in explaining the 'puzzle' of Indian Sri Lanka policy. Despite that, it is argued here that Indian 'nonengagement' should again not be directly equated with a perplexing 'failure' or 'inability' to engage for stability and peace in the region.

Instead, it seems plausible that India's apparent indifference[20] toward the region overshadowed the more typical regional power motivations of either 'threat' or 'responsibility'. This can be illustrated with the help of several points, first among them the virtual nonexistence of an Indian

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19 The Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE drifted into an 'undeclared war' after the explosion of a bus on 15 June 2006. Norwegian mediators suspended the peace talks, and the LTTE was added to the list of banned terrorist groups by the EU. Earlier in 2005, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar was assassinated.

20 In the absence of a better word, 'apparent indifference' is used here to describe that – while India is acutely aware of its regional context and the impact it may have on its own domestic situation – it does not appear willing to bear significant costs to ensure that its desired outcomes are in fact achieved. Instead, it rather relies on outside actors to do so. This, obviously, is linked with significant risks – for instance, with regard to an increased Chinese influence in South Asia. Yet, this seems to be a risk that India is ready to take a chance on and , thus, some degree of 'indifference' can indeed be detected.

regional security and peacekeeping policy. Unlike most other countries, there is neither documented strategy or visible outline of policy preferences in this issue area, nor could, at least in recent years, a discourse on when, how, and why to engage in any form of military and nonmilitary peacekeeping operation be detected among Indian policy-makers or the wider foreign and military policy elite. This stands in sharp contrast with India's growing engagement in UN peace-missions (Bullion, 2005, p. 198f.). A strong presence within the UN and in particular in the field of peacekeeping seems more highly valued.

India has been aware of her responsibilities and has consistently contributed to some 30 UN peacekeeping efforts. An emerging power gives indications of aspirations in many ways. A strong presence in UN missions is one of them. The activity, besides being noble, signifies a nation's destiny and capacity to play its part in world affairs (Major General V.K. Shrivastava in Bullion, 2005, p. 206). The perception of apparent regional indifference is heightened by India's rejection of the Sri Lankan government's overt and active demand for Indian support. As such, the absence of this support can thus clearly not be explained by pointing at a lack of acceptance or legitimacy.[21]

A second point to be advanced in favor of the arguments presented here is that India's attitude toward external intervention in other South Asian countries shifted significantly, a point which is clearly observable in the case of Sri Lanka. During the 1980s, external actors have been regarded as potentially destabilizing factors in the conflict, especially when it comes to the United States. Thus, the intervention of the IPKF in 1987 has often been interpreted as a means to obstruct the involvement of the United States and China. However, it also constitutes a good example of the 'Indira doctrine' in practice (ibid.). Since the mid-1990s, and particularly in 2000, rather than intervening in or at least militarily and politically supporting Sri Lanka, India encouraged Norwegian mediation and allowed actors, such as Israel and even China, to provide military supplies to the Sri Lankan troops. In addition, the

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21 The Sri Lanka attitude is well captured in this quotation: 'in the mid-1990s, the political leadership of Sri Lanka realized that India could be seen as an asset, and this also influenced the view of the larger public. Previously, an anti-Indian image was built up by politicians. Now, there is an expectation that India would actually help to guarantee the unity of the country' (Expert interview on, New Delhi, 9 November 2006). Similar in: Wickremesinghe (2006, p. 9).

United States were explicitly recognized as a 'stabilizing force', which pursued the same interests as India (Daily News, 2000b; Mohan, 2002, p. 154; Venkataramanan, 2006, p. 25). This behavior could, on the one hand, be interpreted as an Indian failure in performing its 'role' as a regional power. On the other hand, India again has been mainly interested in minimizing its own engagement and the costs arising from it. In turn, India was willing to grant other actors like the United States or China with more scope in Sri Lanka. Hence, the conclusion that India 'failed' by engaging in this type of behavior may indeed be misguided.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that, despite its off-hand policy, India's size and status on a regional and global scale nevertheless guaranteed that it was regarded as a key actor in the Sri Lankan crisis. This dynamic, in turn, constitutes a pattern that could already have been observed in the case study of Nepal. Even if India openly refused to play 'its part' in mediating or even ending the conflict, it remained the 'key partner' of virtually all external actors that engaged in conflict management in Sri Lanka, above all the EU, Japan, Norway, and the United States. All of these players have continued to emphasize that India is central to any peace process in Sri Lanka (International Crisis Group, 2008; Swamy, 2006). A statement by the Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs (2000) reads as follows: 'We believe that India is the key outside power and that any action taken by the international community must include India' (Daily News, 2000a).

In summary, at the conceptual level, the two case studies have shown that the arguments made here, about the need for considering 'embeddedness' and its consequences as a factor in regional power politics are, at least, plausible. Throughout the last decade, the presence of external actors in South Asia has been tolerated by India and at times even actively sought. A result of this change is that India assigns less-and-less significance to its own role in regional conflict prevention, but also within other issue areas. India's foreign policy thus experienced a shift in priorities from the regional to the global level, which is crucial for explaining its South Asian policies. This approach could be described as 'cautious pragmatism', which involves that India's attitude toward the region is characterized by a lack of dedication rather than by a yet to be defined hegemonic leadership ambitions. This quote by a government official is representative:

India has been straight-jacketed in South Asia for much too long. Today the Indian economy is global and India's influence is also global in strategic and economic terms. And as an emerging global player India has to get out of the jacket.[22]

A key to these findings is that India appears to lack the interest to deal with region or to even generate the followership that is so frequently assumed to be an essential part of regional powerhood. Dubey describes this as follows:

[We] believe that if there is a problem, then we as a major power, beyond a point, are not going to suffer from these problems. The tendency is to let the problems simmer because it is [sic] our neighbours who suffer (Dubey, 2000, p. 7).

More recent attempts to formulate a coherent neighbor policy, as manifested in two prominent speeches by then Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran in 2005 and 2006, have often been interpreted, especially by the neighboring states, as an expression of hyperpragmatism that characterizes India's South Asia policy (Saran, 2005, 2006). The reluctance to engage in a 'hegemonic' or benevolent way with the challenges that its neighboring states struggles with has been confirmed in statements and interviews with members of the Indian government.[23] This interpretation of India's regional policy thus stands in contrast with analyses that explain India's regional role as a result of nonexistent followership and/or leadership. The article has even shown that India does not necessarily lack followership. Instead, both Nepal and Sri Lanka have actively sought out Indian involvement! Lastly, to simply link the apparent lack of Indian influence in South Asia to the refusal of smaller neighboring states to follow puts too strong an emphasis on the ability of these states to determine the effectiveness of India's role in the region. This, I hope to have shown, 'disempowers' India in an unconvincing manner.

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22   Interview with the former government official on, New Delhi, 21 November 2006.

23   Expert interviews on, New Delhi, 7 November 2006 and 15 November 2006; see also Bhasin, 2005, p. li.

6 Conclusion

This article primarily served to introduce and illustrate the existence and significance of the embeddedness of regions into the international system. It used two case studies of Indian foreign policy within its regions that previously have caused significant bemusement among scholars and politicians alike. It has been demonstrated that this embeddedness creates theoretical and conceptional tensions, which cannot be resolved by falling back to conventional theories. Typically 'global' theories, such as the manifold theories of hegemony, are challenged by their inability to capture what it means to act on a regional level that is integrated into a broader world system. 'Regional theories', in particular those dealing with regional integration processes, limit the theorization of embeddedness as well, by reducing to an analysis of the potential impact of external actors onto regional dynamics. If we apply such theories to regional powers, it consequently makes us to assume that regional powers always and automatically have to defend an inherent interest in the region against incursions of external actors.

Instead, it is argued here that there is no such single pattern of behavior, that there also is no determinism how regional powers should be expected to behave, and that we simultaneously need to capture the mutual interactions between the global and regional levels. These two levels cannot be considered independent of each other. This implies that regional powers can become active on the global level, sometimes as a representative of the region and at other times as an independent player with interests that might counteract those of the region as a whole. This is not to neglect many other factors, in the case of India, particularly internal dynamics that guide foreign policy-making. The aim of this article was to complement this large and useful existing literature with an argument that can make some of our theoretical work more sophisticated and more applicable to the 'real world'.

As the presented case studies show that the embeddedness of the South Asian region into the international system has indeed an impact on the type of regional power role India is playing. While the provided empirical examples have been limited to essentially two exemplary case studies, they nevertheless showed that, in both instances, global factors played into regional affairs and, above all, into India's regional strategizing. It further seems feasible to reproduce a similar approach for other

'regional powers'. South Africa, for instance, equally has to balance its ambition to be a 'global player' with the requirements of its regional role. This is exemplified by its rather ambivalent stance on state failure in Zimbabwe, when it needed to reconcile Southern African demands for regional solidarity with its global aspirations as a responsible international citizen (Prys, 2009). Likewise, it could be questioned in how far states such as Brazil, Australia, or Russia locate themselves in between the poles of regional and global foreign policy objectives. Focusing on the 'embeddedness' of regions thus opens up a research agenda that may lead to a better understanding of the role of regional powers in their regions and the world.

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