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India's Foreign Policy Toward China and the United States: an example of hedging?

Auteur : Amélie CHALIVET

Sous la direction de Pr. Jean-Vincent HOLEINDRE
et Pr. Justin MASSIE

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Amélie CHALIVET

Master Relations Internationales (Paris 2 Panthéon-Assas – Sorbonne Université)

Under the supervision of Pr. Jean-Vincent HOLEINDRE (Paris 2 Panthéon Assas) and Pr. Justin MASSIE (Université du Québec à Montréal)

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Summary

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEW	Airborne Early Warning
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUKUS	Australia – United Kingdom – United States
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
BECA	Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geospatial Intelligence
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CBM	Confidence Building Measures
CFA	Correspondence Factor Analysis
CISMOA	Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement
COMCASA	Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
DCA	Defense Cooperation Agreement
DRDO	Indian Defence Research and Development Organisation
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FGFA	Fifth-Generation Fighter Aircraft
FONOP	Freedom of Navigation Operation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSOMIA	General Security of Military Information Agreement
IAF	Indian Air Force
IOR	Indian Ocean Region
IP	Ideal Point
IRaMuTeQ	Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaire
JIMEX	Japan-India Maritime Exercise
JME	Joint Military Exercise
LAC	Line of Actual Control
LEMOA	Logistic Exchange Memorandum of Agreement
MCE	Military Capabilities Enhancement
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MoD	Ministry of Defense
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ORF	Observer Research Foundation
PLAN	People’s Liberation Army Navy
RIMPAC	Rim of the Pacific Exercise
RSC	Regional Security Complex
SCS	South China Sea
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SOP	String of Pearls
TAIPEI Act	Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative
TIV	Trend-Indicator Value
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WHA	World Health Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

On April 11, 2022, Indian Foreign and Defence Ministers, S. Jaishankar and Rajnath Singh, held a 2+2 dialogue with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. Together, they reaffirmed their "shared vision for a free and inclusive Indo-Pacific," and R. Singh argued that he does not think that "Russia will affect India-U.S ties[1]." President Modi asserted that both countries, "as two democracies that are the world's largest and oldest, are 'natural partners'[2]." The fact that President Modi used the term 'partners' is indicative because, despite growing military cooperation, both countries are not yet official allies.

This episode reflects how India has become a key actor in the Indo-Pacific region in general and for the United States' Pivot to Asia in particular. Indeed, since 2011, the U.S "realized that without India's involvement in the region, the Indo-Pacific concept promoted by Washington would not be fully effective[3]." India is undoubtedly a significant regional power within Buzan and Wæver's model of regional security complexes[4]. Nevertheless, it is not a U.S ally, even though, according to the realist theory[5], it should have been a logical step when dealing with the rise of China. Indeed, when facing a threat, a state should either balance or bandwagon, and India has done neither. Therefore, it is crucial to understand its foreign policy better from a Western perspective.

The advent of the Quad that was reborn at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Manila in November 2017 could have been a sign of alignment from India. Beijing even called the organization a "small NATO to resist China[6]." However, India constituted the "weakest link" of the Quad[7] because it was reluctant, wishing not to antagonize

[1] "Rajnath Singh Says US Is India's Natural Ally, 2+2 Dialogue 'Very Meaningful,'" *Hindustan Times*, April 12, 2022.
[2] "As Largest and Oldest Democracies India, US Are Natural Partners: PM Modi," *ThePrint* (blog), April 11, 2022.
[3] Jakub Zajączkowski, "The United States in India's Strategy in the Indo-Pacific Region Since 2014," *Polish Political Science Yearbook* 50, no. 1 (December 31, 2021): 107.
[4] Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[5] Anindya Batabyal, "Balancing China in Asia: A Realist Assessment of India's Look East Strategy," *China Report* 42, no. 2 (February 1, 2006): 179–97.
[6] David Brewster, "The India-Japan Security Relationship: An Enduring Security Partnership?," *Asian Security* 6, no. 2 (May 18, 2010): 98.
[7] Derek Grossman, "India Is the Weakest Link in the Quad," *Foreign Policy* (blog), July 23, 2018.

China. On the contrary, Japan[8] and Australia[9] shifted to a balancing strategy. More recently, the creation of AUKUS, a military alliance between Australia, the U.S, and the U.K, has reinforced the idea that India would not, in the short term, be the central actor in the U.S' Indo-Pacific strategy. AUKUS changed the expectations weighing on the Quad, allowing it to deal only with security matters and not defense issues. The creation of AUKUS has even created a strategic opportunity for India. It could enable New Delhi to develop cooperation with other countries and enhance the diversification of its defense partnerships.

This ambiguous position is crucial because one cannot exclude the possibility of a conflict between China and the U.S anymore. The question that emerges is the following: what to expect from India in the case of a great-power conflict?

The war in Ukraine has taken this question to another level as India abstained during all the votes on the topic at the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council. Staying neutral after the invasion of Ukraine constituted a "tricky balancing act for India[10]." Despite this disagreement, the U.S has been prone to accommodate its partner. The $500-million arm-aid package project is the last example to date of this "initiative by President Joe Biden's administration to court India as a long-term security partner, despite its reluctance to criticize Russia for its invasion of Ukraine[11]."

I.R scholars such as Rajagopalan believe that India's strategy is another form of balancing, such as evasive balancing or soft balancing. Evasive balancing is "a policy of balancing while attempting to reassure the target that one is not doing so[12]." It would mean that India balances against China while deploying reassurance strategies to avoid confrontation with its northern neighbor. However, I argue that this is not India's current strategy, especially regarding threat assessment, because China is perceived as a risk and not yet as a threat.

I.R scholars have used other concepts to analyze India's foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. Firstly, according to Harsh V. Pant and Julie M. Super, "India has [since 1947] been in pursuit of strategic autonomy, a quest that in practice has led to semi-alliances fashioned

[8] Kei Koga, "The Concept of 'Hedging' Revisited: The Case of Japan's Foreign Policy Strategy in East Asia's Power Shift," *International Studies Review* 20, no. 4 (December 1, 2018): 655.
[9] Maxandre Fortier and Justin Massie, "Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition," *Research Project*, 2021, 5.
[10] Artyom Lukin and Aditya Pareek, "India's Aloof Response to the Ukraine Crisis," *East Asia Forum*, March 5, 2022.
[11] "US Seeks to Wean India From Russia Weapons With Arms-Aid Package," *Bloomberg.Com*, May 17, 2022.
[12] Rajesh Rajagopalan, "Evasive Balancing: India's Unviable Indo-Pacific Strategy," *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 81.

under the cover of non-alignment and shaped by regional dynamics[13].” Strategic autonomy can be defined as a “policy aiming at gaining or preserving a large degree of independence in fields identified as strategic[14].” It is widely used in International Relations when referring to India. I believe it is a form of internal balancing as it supposes that a state “builds by its own efforts the military capabilities needed for deterrence[15].” In that case, it means that the state has already officially established one of the great powers as an imminent threat and that it can mobilize its internal industry to improve its military capabilities rapidly. Even though India is building its indigenous capabilities, I believe that it cannot yet claim strategic autonomy. Since autonomy would equal internal balancing, it would present a risk that New Delhi is not ready to take. Therefore, another concept seems needed to analyze the Indian strategy in its complexity.

Secondly, India could be practicing multi-alignment. Ian Hall describes it as a combination of an “emphasis on engagement in regional multilateral institutions, the use of strategic partnerships, and what is termed ‘normative hedging.’[16]” Multi-alignment is very pertinent as it draws both a continuity and a rupture with India’s “strategic culture” and the non-alignment strategy during the Cold War. On top of it, it reflects that New Delhi secured nineteen defense agreements between 2000 and 2008, “a staggering change from the seven total agreements secured in the first 53 years of independence[17]”. However, it seems to ignore strategic constraints and India’s security dilemma. Indeed, with the polarization of the Indo-Pacific region and the rise of China, India could not simply multiply partnerships. I believe that multi-alignment does not reflect the trade-offs that India has to manage when it comes to strategic relationships.

If India is neither balancing nor bandwagoning, the question remains: what strategy is India implementing? Throughout this thesis, I will wonder whether India could be hedging. Hedging is a behavior that aims at engaging with both sides to avoid the costs of alignment by “signaling ambiguity over the extent of shared security interests with great powers’[18].” The

[13] Harsh V. Pant and Julie M. Super, “India’s ‘non-Alignment’ Conundrum: A Twentieth-Century Policy in a Changing World,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 91, no. 4 (2015): 747.
[14] Guillem Monsonis, “India’s Strategic Autonomy and Rapprochement with the US,” *Strategic Analysis* 34, no. 4 (June 23, 2010): 612.
[15] Lionel P. Fatton, “‘Japan Is Back’: Autonomy and Balancing amidst an Unstable China–U.S.–Japan Triangle,” *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 5, no. 2 (2018): 266.
[16] Ian Hall, “Multialignment and Indian Foreign Policy under Narendra Modi,” *The Round Table* 105, no. 3 (May 3, 2016): 272.
[17] Brian Kenneth Hedrick, *India’s Strategic Defense Transformation: Expanding Global Relationships*, Letort Papers, no. 33 (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009), 42.
[18] Darren J. Lim and Zack Cooper, “Reassessing Hedging: The Logic of Alignment in East Asia,” *Security Studies* 24, no. 4 (October 2, 2015): 698.

concept of hedging has been thoroughly discussed in I.R. theory, but there is no consensus on the definition.

In several occurrences, it has been used, or implied, to analyze India's foreign policy. For example, Harsh V. Pant and Yogesh Joshi wrote in 2015 that "India would not like to choose sides in this great game, at least before the dust settles[19]." Ladwig has portrayed India'sstrategy as hedging as New Delhi "develops economic linkages and security cooperation with key states in the region wary of Beijing's power while maintaining mutually beneficialeconomic ties with China[20]." In most studies, as in Ladwig's, the definition of hedging includesa financial and a strategic aspect. However, as I use Lim and Cooper's[21], Haacke's[22] , and Fortier and Massie's[23] definitions, I will focus on the strategic and diplomatic aspects, where India faces serious trade-offs. Conversely, economic issues do not represent an existential threatto national interests, and therefore, I do not include them in my hedging analysis[24].

My research begins in 2003 and ends in 2022. It seemed necessary to maximize the timespan for the study because, as Goh puts it, "in the short term, hedgers may seem like they are leaning more one way; however, they will continue to preserve viable strategic options in the other direction. […] The implication for analysts is to refrain from drawing short-term conclusions and to study hedging strategies across a time frame sufficiently significant for aggregating these adjustment trends[25]."

In 2003, India became a "responsible nuclear weapons state by declaring a policy of no first use, unilateral moratorium on testing and credible minimum deterrence reflecting the defensive posture of the nuclear program[26]." From 2003 onwards, India has been perceived as a significant power in the region and a *de facto* nuclear weapon as the 2005 Indo-US treaty "testifies to the transformation of India's nuclear identity from a violator of the non-

[19] Harsh V. Pant and Yogesh Joshi, "It's Hedging All the Way," *Naval War College Review* 68, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 61.
[20] W. C. Ladwig III, "Delhi's Pacific Ambition: Naval Power, 'Look East', and Indian's Emerging Influence in the Asia-Pacific," *Asian Security* 5, no. 2 (2009): 90.
[21] Lim and Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging."
[22] Jürgen Haacke, "The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia: A Critique and a Proposal for a Modified Conceptual and Methodological Framework," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 2019): 375–417.
[23] Fortier and Massie, "Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition."
[24] Lim and Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging," 696.
[25] Evelyn Goh, "Southeast Asian Strategies toward the Great Powers: Still Hedging after All These Years?," *The Asan Forum* (blog), February 22, 2016.
[26] Smita Singh, "The Dynamics Of India's Nuclear Identity," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 20, no. 1 (2016): 104.

proliferation regime to a unique exception to it[27].” I thought it pertinent to start in 2003 because India’s status change is not directly related to the U.S or China. On the contrary, beginning in 2005 or 2008 would have included an element of India’s relationship with the U.S (the nuclear treaty or the perception of U.S decline). Therefore, starting in 2003 allowed me to analyze an independent variable throughout a timespan that should not influence the results. Even though 2003 is a pertinent starting point, it would have been interesting to start sooner, maybe at the end of the Cold War, which I would have gladly done if I had more time.

Throughout the following pages, I will argue that, since 2003, India has been hedging between China and the U.S rather than balancing China or bandwagoning. Firstly, an analysis of India’s threat assessment shows that New Delhi considers China to be a risk and not a threat. Secondly, India’s diplomatic position remains ambiguous, especially on contentious issues such as Taiwan and the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Finally, and maybe most importantly, India has boosted military cooperation and diversification in arms imports and joint military exercises. Therefore, I hypothesize that India is hedging.

More specifically, there has been an evolution in the extent of this hedging strategy over time. For example, after 2008, the Great Recession triggered a perception of U.S. relative decline because “the waning of U.S. power and the rise of the “rest” made hedging an attractive strategy for states facing an uncertain future[28].” Despite the 2014 election and Modi’s rise to power that Harsh V. Pant believes has “led to a shift in Indian strategy from hedging to an active partnership of managing power transition in Indo-Pacific,[29]” I argue that hedging, rather than bandwagoning or balancing, remains India’s favored strategy. The scale of hedging might decrease in the short term, but in the long term, ambiguity and engagement with both sides remain central to India’s strategic behavior.

My first part will be a literature review of the concept of hedging and its links with the Indian historical heritage of non-alignment. Despite the lack of consensus on a definition of hedging, I will clarify which definition and criteria I will be using throughout the text. My second part will analyze India’s risk assessment of China to conclude whether India perceives China as a threat or a risk. My third part will be a diplomatic assessment of India at the United

[27] Singh, 109.
[28] Fortier and Massie, “Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition,” 3.
[29] Harsh V. Pant, “The India–US–China Triangle from New Delhi: Overcoming the ‘Hesitations of History,’” *India Review* 18, no. 4 (August 8, 2019): 398.

Nations General Assembly and its position on two contentious issues: Taiwan and the South China Sea. My final part will be a military assessment to see whether India diversifies its defense partnerships and arms imports while cooperating with China and the U.S.

Chapter 1: What is hedging?

When writing about hedging and applying it to analyze a particular country's behavior, it is crucial to rigorously determine the definition, criteria, and conditions for hedging. Indeed, as stated by Koga, the concept of hedging "without these clarifications, […] suffers from a low analytical utility because it will be difficult to distinguish from the concept of 'waiting for balancing'[30]."

Firstly, I will focus on the concept of hedging, the theoretical framework within which it was created, and the elements that differentiate it from bandwagoning and balancing. Secondly, I will explain why I believe that this concept could apply to India, a middle power with a heritage of non-alignment. Finally, I will describe the definition I have chosen, my method, and the datasets and case studies I will use.

1.1 The concept of hedging

There is no real consensus on "hedging," its definition, the motives behind such a strategy, the conditions of implementation, or even the formulation of criteria to identify it. It is even difficult to differentiate it from "balancing" in some cases. Therefore, I will begin with the theoretical framework of hedging and a literature review of this concept. Then I will explain how it is different from balancing and how it is theoretically pertinent.

1.1.1 A realist framework

Structural realism states that a secondary power dealing with a hegemon and a rising power could implement one of two strategies: either balancing or bandwagoning (internal or external). However, this assumption is valid only for a state that faces a direct threat. The strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific renders such a dichotomy empirically inconsistent as states are left with some strategic leverage to minimize risks and another possibility: they can hedge. According to Liff, states are expected to hedge "when conflictual dynamics exist between two great powers, it has a potential divergence of security and economic interests, and there is significant uncertainty about future trends[31]."

[30] Koga, "The Concept of 'Hedging' Revisited," 634.
[31] Adam P Liff, "Unambivalent Alignment: Japan's China Strategy, the US Alliance, and the 'Hedging' Fallacy," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 2019): 457.

Some scholars are critical of the realist framework when it comes to hedging because, as Kuik stated, "in circumstances where states' security is not directly at stake […] neo-realism has lost much of its explanatory strength[32]." For Korolev, the different versions of realism are incompatible with "the double-sided nature of hedging and the simultaneous presence of two opposing sides in it.[33]"

However, the distinction between risk and threat could answer this theoretical impasse: according to Ciorciari and Haacke, risk and threat "exist along a spectrum, differing according to their immediacy and perceived certainty, as well as the responses they demand[34]." Hedging is a risk management strategy, when balancing and bandwagoning are usually more associated with threat[35]. In this sense, Van Jackson argues that "hedging will cease, and balancing will arise as soon as a clear threat is identified[36]."

Another theory essential to understand the emergence of hedging is the regional security complex theory that Buzan and Wæver presented in *Regions and Power* in 2003[37]. According to the authors, the new international system structure was, at that time, neither "unipolar" nor "multipolar." Instead, it was becoming necessary to analyze security at a regional level, especially with "the changing nature of the system since 2003, namely the closing of the gap between the U.S. and the rest, coupled with the U.S.' fatigue with being an omnipresent international sheriff[38]". Therefore, a regional security complex (R.S.C.) was introduced as a new framework to analyze security trends. It refers to "a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another[39]." If Buzan and Wæver initially "treated East Asia and South Asia as separate R.S.C.s with distinct histories and dynamics[40]," Barry Buzan has argued in a more recent article for an "Asian supercomplex[41]" that links both regions and enhances the interlinkage of security issues. Buzan also asserts that "the general

[32] Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's Response to a Rising China," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 30 (January 1, 2008): 179.
[33] Alexander Korolev, "Systemic Balancing and Regional Hedging: China-Russia Relations," *SSRN Scholarly Paper* (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, September 17, 2016), 10.
[34] John Ciorciari and Jurgen Haacke, "Hedging as Risk Management: Insights from Works on Alignment, Riskification, and Strategy," *SSRN Scholarly Paper* (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, March 10, 2022), 18.
[35] Haacke, "The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia," 377.
[36] Van Jackson, "Power, Trust, and Network Complexity: Three Logics of Hedging in Asian Security," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 14, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 348.
[37] Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*.
[38] Nicholas Smith, "Strategic Hedging by Smaller Powers: What Can Neoclassical Realism Add?," Prepared for the Workshop: *Re-Appraising Neoclassical Realism, London School of Economics*, 29 November 2018, 6.
[39] Barry Buzan, "Asia: A Geopolitical Configuration," *Institut Français des Relations Internationales*, 1.
[40] Buzan, 1.
[41] Buzan, "Asia: A Geopolitical Configuration."

pattern in this game was to avoid becoming too entangled with either against the other and to try to reap individual advantage by playing both against each other[42]," which I understand as strategic hedging. He explains that the context of "China's turn to a harder line policy since 2008 and […] U.S. linkage of its role as an intervening external power in South and East Asia[43]" have accentuated this tendency.

1.1.2 A debated concept

I will now present the concept of hedging, which "captures important nuances in international relations [but which] use remains loose and, as a consequence, also unclear in some important respects[44]." Therefore, it is crucial to detail the genesis of this concept and the academic debates that it generated.

It is interesting to come back to the initial meaning of "hedging," which comes from the financial vocabulary and describes the action of diversifying one's portfolio. Hedging does not mean insurance because the strategy can fail, and there is no guarantee that there would not be any loss for the state. Therefore, hedging is not a costless strategy. Ciorciari analyzes the failures of hedging strategies because their successes are hard to measure since they are "non- events." These strategies "fail when it neither prevent the possible harm nor facilitates protective countermeasures to soften the blow[45]." Ciorciari claims a failure can happen becauseof a "lack of means" in military capabilities or a "risk miscalculation." Therefore, a coherent hedging strategy should assemble "adequate risk assessments, a willingness to bear costs to mitigate them, and above all the availability of protective options[46]."

Now that we have traced back to the economic roots of the concept, the definition of hedging itself still requires clarification. According to Haacke and Ciorciari, there are roughly four different approaches to this concept[47].

Firstly, some scholars consider hedging a "mixed strategy" that consists of engaging with another state "while adopting fallback security measures as a form of insurance[48]." Meideros even suggests that hedging is a strategy adopted by both the U.S. and China to

[42] Buzan, 2.
[43] Buzan, 2.
[44] John D. Ciorciari and Jürgen Haacke, "Hedging in International Relations: An Introduction," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 2019): 368.
[45] John Ciorciari, "The Variable Effectiveness of Hedging Strategies," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19 (September 1, 2019): 529.
[46] Ciorciari and Haacke, "Hedging in International Relations," 372.
[47] Ciorciari and Haacke, 368.
[48] Ciorciari and Haacke, 368.

"prevent a geopolitical rivalry[49]." This definition of hedging is extensive and even encompasses great power strategy. Kuik also analyzes hedging in economic terms with a cost-benefit analysis. He sees hedging as "a behavior in which a country seeks to offset risks by pursuing multiple policy options that are intended to produce mutually counteracting effects under the situation of high uncertainties and high-stakes[50]." The main challenge with Kuik's definition, according to Koga, is to determine the meaning and the extent of "high-uncertainties" and the conditions for such a strategy might be "too restrictive[51]."

The second category includes scholars who think of hedging as a "security strategy for small states and middle powers to navigate triangular relations with China and the U.S.[52]" For example, Goh describes hedging as "a set of strategies aimed at avoiding (or planning for contingencies in) a situation in which states cannot decide upon more straightforward alternatives such as balancing, bandwagoning, or neutrality[53]." Here, hedging is a strategy that mixes "engagement policies" and "balancing policies," and that keeps "open more than one strategic option against the possibility of a future security threat[54]." Even though Goh does not include great powers in this definition, Koga also considers these analyses as too expansive because "any mixed strategies [can be] identified as hedging[55]." However, Goh's conception (one of the firsts chronologically) is accepted by many scholars who agree on the fact that it is about "maintaining equidistance between great powers to keep its options open[56]."

Another branch of studies on hedging focuses more on the economic point of view. It examines "how states address specific strategic and economic vulnerabilities, such as the danger of a curtailment of energy supplies[57]." Tessman, for example, introduces a long-term risk that could foster the implementation of a hedging strategy: "the potential loss of public goods or subsidies currently being provided by the system leader[58]." Koga also believes that a hedger strengthens "economic cooperation while preparing for diplomatic and military confrontation by increasing military capabilities - to temporarily avoid an explicit confrontation

[49] Evan S. Medeiros, "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-pacific Stability," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (December 1, 2005): 146.
[50] Kuik, "The Essence of Hedging," 163.
[51] Koga, "The Concept of 'Hedging' Revisited," 638.
[52] Ciorciari and Haacke, "Hedging in International Relations," 368.
[53] Evelyn Goh, "Meeting the China Challenge: The U.S. in Southeast Asian Regional Security Strategies," *East-West Center* (2005): 8.
[54] Denny Roy, "Southeast Asia and China: Balancing or Bandwagoning?," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27, no. 2 (2005): 306.
[55] Koga, "The Concept of 'Hedging' Revisited," 638.
[56] Fortier and Massie, "Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition," 2.
[57] Ciorciari and Haacke, "Hedging in International Relations," 368.
[58] Brock F. Tessman, "System Structure and State Strategy: Adding Hedging to the Menu," *Security Studies* 21, no. 2 (April 1, 2012): 204.

with a potentially adversarial state[59].” Hoo argues that India does have a hedging “prong.” He includes the economic aspect to support his views. His analysis is very pertinent, and I will come back to it throughout the following pages, but I believe the economy should not be a criterion when studying hedging.

Indeed, including an economic element in hedging has been criticized. Fortier and Massie argue that, when using this definition, “most states qualify as hedgers by cooperating and competing in multiple domains[60].” The authors believe that this makes it impossible to distinguish hedging and the alternatives: balancing and bandwagoning; therefore, hedging would lose “its analytical usefulness[61].”

There are limitations when one decides to suppress the economic aspect of the analysis. Rajagopalan argues that “though such economic and political engagement is often the result of non-security-related calculations, it can also sometimes be an aspect of security policies[62].” He believes that it is an element that applies to India. In the end, I chose not to include the economic aspects, agreeing with Lim and Cooper on the idea that “hedging behavior should not include costless activities that do not require states to face trade-offs in their security choices[63].”

Beyond the issue of the economic criterion, Rajagopalan criticizes the use of hedging because it “would require [India] either to take an equidistant position between the United States and China or at least to stop balancing against China[64].” I believe that hedging should not require equidistance, and I will further develop the difference between balancing and hedging in the following pages.

Finally, a group of scholars agrees on hedging as pursuing “limited or ambiguous alignment vis-à-vis one or more major powers[65].” According to Liff, the best recent definition of hedging is arguably Lim and Cooper’s. The authors analyze it as the “sending [of] signals which generate ambiguity over the extent of their shared security interests with great powers, in effect eschewing clear-cut alignment with any great power, and in turn, creating greater uncertainty regarding which side the secondary state would take in the event of a great power conflict[66].” In Figure 1.1 (see below), they show how hedging is not just a “middle ground”

[59] Koga, “The Concept of ‘Hedging’ Revisited,” 634.
[60] Fortier and Massie, “Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition,” 3.
[61] Fortier and Massie, 3.
[62] Rajesh Rajagopalan, “Evasive Balancing: India’s Unviable Indo-Pacific Strategy,” *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 81.
[63] Lim and Cooper, “Reassessing Hedging: The Logic of Alignment in East Asia,” 696.
[64] Rajagopalan, “Evasive Balancing,” 92.
[65] Ciorciari and Haacke, “Hedging in International Relations,” 368.
[66] Lim and Cooper, “Reassessing Hedging,” 724.

between balancing and bandwagoning, it entails another dimension "based on the intentional ambiguity[67]." One must be careful with the term of ambiguity since it "does not prevent any signal of shared security interests; rather, the state shares security interests with both great powers and avoids conduct which would clearly situate it with one power against the other[68]."

Koga also insists on "strategic ambiguity[69]" to allow the state to keep its options open, especially in a multipolar world. In a bipolar world, it is difficult for secondary powers to keep this ambiguity, which has led to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement, for example[70]. In this sense, hedging could be a new strategy in a different international structure that provides India with greater leeway and resources. This last category seems to be the most rigorous and pertinent as it stresses the importance of ambiguity in hedging, provides clear indicators, and does not include an economic analysis. Therefore, it is the one I have chosen to draw from for my research.

[67] Lim and Cooper, 712.
[68] Lim and Cooper, 712.
[69] Koga, "The Concept of 'Hedging' Revisited," 638.
[70] Koga, 639.

Figure 1.1: Conceptualizing East Asian Security Options

Darren J. Lim and Zack Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging: The Logic of Alignment in East Asia," Security Studies 24, no 4 (2015): 712.

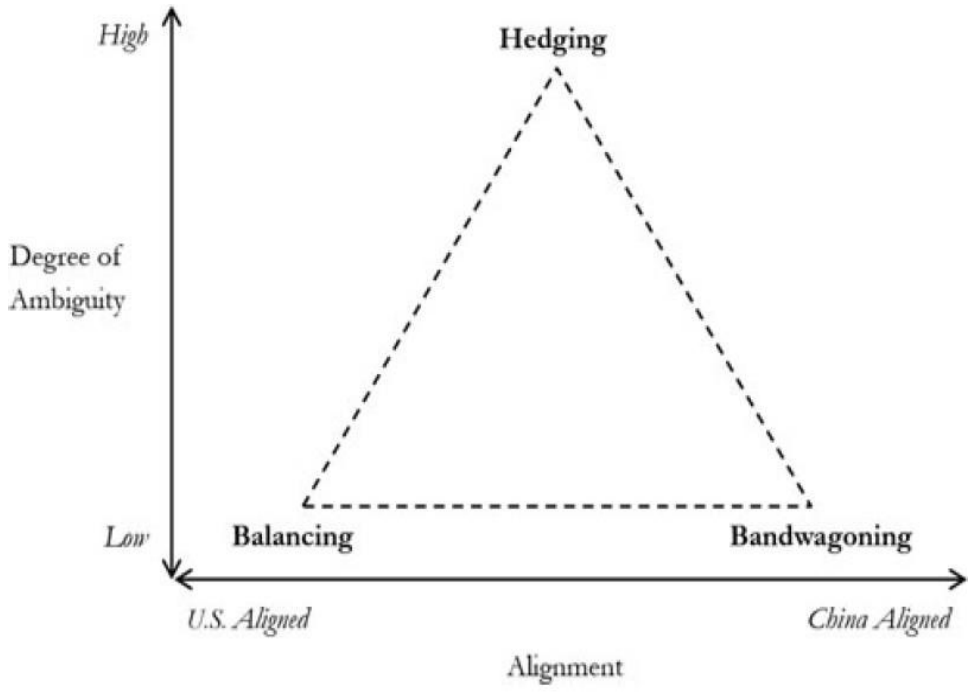

FIGURE 1 Conceptualizing East Asian Security Options.

1.1.3 Southeast Asian nations and hedging

In the literature, hedging has been chiefly used to analyze the behavior of Southeast Asian nations between the American hegemon and the rising Chinese power. According to Foot, "hedging behavior has long been the preferred approach for most states in the [SoutheastAsian] region, and they remain ready to resist any moves designed to undercut their ability to operate that approach.[71]" Caroline even argues that it is the "recourse for Southeast Asian countries caught amid the USA-China rivalry[72]."

However, all scholars do not agree on which Southeast Asian states hedge. Haacke warns us against "easily over-diagnosing hedging behavior[73]." I will not go into too much detail

[71] Rosemary Foot, "China's Rise and US Hegemony: Renegotiating Hegemonic Order in East Asia?," *International Politics* 57, no. 2 (April 1, 2020): 161.
[72] Edna Caroline, "Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum: From Hedging to Underbalancing," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* (September 22, 2021): 17.
[73] Haacke, "The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia," 410.

about the different conclusions of the authors I mentioned earlier. However, I believe that it is pertinent to underline the results of some of the authors I agree with on the definition of hedging.

For example, Haacke analyzes Malaysia's behavior as a hedging strategy "because it seems primarily focused on mitigating perceived security risks[74]," especially in the South China Sea conflict. He also believes that Singapore is balancing against China, which counters the previous assessments of this country's behavior[75]. On the other hand, Lim and Cooper have concluded that four Southeast Asian countries have been hedging: Singapore, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Brunei. These four states are refusing "the security benefits of aligning with the United States[76]" in opposition to staunch allies such as the Philippines, reserved allies such as Thailand, or emerging partners such as Vietnam and Malaysia.

These differences in the results show the importance of selecting a definition of hedging and rigorously applying it to the case study. Furthermore, the use of hedging has since expanded to analyze European powers and other Asian powers. I will also examine how India's partners in the Indo-Pacific region, Australia and Japan, have once been perceived as hedging and now as balancing.

1.1.4 How does it differ from balancing and bandwagoning?

I hypothesize that India is hedging rather than balancing or bandwagoning in the international system. The main element that raises criticism when defining hedging is the similarity with the concept of balancing and especially "soft balancing." Haacke and Ciorciari raised this issue as the "line between hedging and balancing behavior has been particularly blurry[77]."

Balancing is one of the two behaviors expected of a state confronted with the rise of a revisionist power. It equals "participat[ing] in a balancing coalition in order to weaken the military power of a militarily superior state[78]." Balancing can be internal or external. Internal balancing means for the state to enhance its military capabilities and strategic resources. External balancing is the constitution of alliances and the deepening of military cooperation with other states. Balancing, according to Waltz, is the "behavior induced by [a] system"

[74] Haacke, 409.
[75] Haacke underlines that Evelyn Goh (2005), Kuik Cheng-Chwee (2008), Chen and Yang (2013), Lim and Cooper (2015), and Murphy (2017) have argued that Singapore was hedging. See Haacke, "The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia," 387.
[76] Lim and Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging," 709.
[77] Ciorciari and Haacke, "Hedging in International Relations," 369.
[78] Haacke, "The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia," 390.

constituted by two coalitions because "the first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system[79]." This behavior concerns secondary states that, "if they are free to choose, flock to the weaker side; for it is the stronger side that threatens them[80]."

More specifically, hedging has been criticized for being easily conflated with soft balancing. Indeed, soft balancing is also "a viable strategy for second-ranked powers to solve the coordination problems they encounter in coping with an expansionist unipolar leader[81]." As T. V. Paul and Robert Pape have theorized it, soft balancing entails "actions that do not directly challenge U.S military preponderance, but that use nonmilitary tools to delay, frustrate, and undermine aggressive unilateral U.S military policies[82]." It can also apply to China's military preponderance.

I believe that the critical distinction raised by Haacke is the one between risk and threat. When studies have been criticized for using hedging as a synonym for balancing, it is often because the link between risk and hedging was lost. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, "hedging is a response to a security risk, rather than a clear and acknowledged security threat, and that hedging thus is conceptually and theoretically distinct from the conventional security strategies of balancing and bandwagoning[83]." This is also the reason I am skeptical of the idea of a "continuum" of behaviors[84] between "pure" balancing and "pure" bandwagoning where hedging would be a middle ground because it is a mix up of "concepts that are normally both associated with threats, not risk[85]." This is precisely where hedging finds its theoretical pertinence. Therefore, "if we accept that hedging is about responding to risks, and balancing and bandwagoning are responses to threat, we should also not aim to define the one in terms of the other[86]." Now the question is how can we measure this risk perception? Haacke gives us the beginning of the answer as, "in contradistinction to security threats, security risks are probabilistic and usually assessed both in terms of their likelihood and potential magnitude[87]." This risk perception (or assessment) is what I will try to examine in my second chapter.

[79] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1st edition (Long Grove, Ill: Waveland Press, 2010), 126.
[80] Waltz, 127.
[81] Robert A. Pape, "Soft Balancing against the United States," *International Security* 30, nº 1 (2005): 15-6.
[82] Pape, "Soft Balancing against the United States," 10.
[83] Haacke, "The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia," 389.
[84] Kuik, "The Essence of Hedging," 181.
[85] Haacke, "The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia," 389.
[86] Haacke, 393.
[87] Haacke, 394.

Finally, hedging has also been criticized for being too similar to bandwagoning, even though it has been less common. Bandwagoning refers to "cooperation with a great power to benefit from its success, whether willingly or out of resignation to an inexorable force[88]." Ciorciari and Haacke underlined that "blurry lines also currently separate hedging from bandwagoning, which would scarcely exist if hedging were deemed to encompass any strategy that mixes cooperative and self-protective elements[89]." In this sense, I believe that it is crucial to emphasize ambiguity. Indeed, I agree with Lim and Cooper that an essential difference (in the essence of the terms) between bandwagoning and hedging is the degree of ambiguity that the state maintains (see Figure 1.1).

1.2 Apply hedging to India

Now that I have presented the different understandings of the concept of hedging and explained which ones I believe are more pertinent, I will present my case study: India. The following paragraphs will enable me to explain why India is a compelling hedging case study. Firstly, I will come back to the theoretical foundations of India's foreign policy: non-alignment. Secondly, I will show that, although the first hedging analyses mainly dealt with small Southeast Asian powers, hedging can also (and maybe even more) be a middle power strategy. Thirdly, I will focus on the polarization of the Indo-Pacific region and how it affects the likelihood that a state hedges. Finally, I will discuss previous hedging analyses of India's main partners in the Indo-Pacific area: Japan and Australia.

1.2.1 The heritage of non-alignment

For most of its existence as an independent country, since 1947, India's foreign policy has followed the Nehruvian principle of non-alignment. Therefore, it seemed logical to choose this as a starting point.

Non-alignment was born with the Republic of India as it was first used by Nehru in one of his first official speeches as Vice-President of the Interim Government on September 7, 1946. He recommended India "[kept] away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to world wars, and which may again lead to disasters on an even vaster scale[90]." It evolved into a global forum, the Non-Aligned Movement, with the Bandung Conference in April 1955. For the member states, the goal was to have an enhanced

[88] Fortier and Massie, "Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition," 4.
[89] Ciorciari and Haacke, "Hedging in International Relations," 370.
[90] Jawaharlal Nehru, *New India Speaks,* (Calcutta: A. Mukherjee, 1947), 26.

room for maneuver in the Cold War era and to use "the strength of their numbers to navigate their way through these blocs, in order not to get pressurized into actions by one bloc or the other[91]."

Non-alignment differed from neutrality because Nehru believed that India's status as a newly independent state on the international scene allowed it to take stances. Therefore, India could get closer with one of the two blocs without aligning because Nehru believed that "where freedom is menaced or justice threatened or where aggression takes place, [India] cannot and shall not be neutral[92]." Non-alignment differs from equidistance because it involves compromises. Instead, it is a "freedom to take decisions in foreign policy which may not be equivalent relations with both sides[93]." In this sense, I believe that hedging is very similar because it does not entail neutrality or dictate equidistance, contrary to Rajagopalan's understanding of the concept[94].

In practice, India shifted away from non-alignment quite soon, after a "sudden American rapprochement with China[95]" and its support to Pakistan in the 1971 war. The 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty marked a turning point. This document stated that if either U.S.S.R or India was attacked or threatened, both should "enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such a threat and to take appropriate, effective measures to ensure peace and security of their countries.[96]"According to Pant and Super, this "equivocal language allowed India to maintain a semblance of non-alignment, but the treaty in effect created deterrence against any form of a U.S-China-Pakistan *détente* and rendered India increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union for its defence capabilities.[97]" This element is still relevant today, even if India's relationship with Russia is very different from the one with the U.S.S.R because it includes almost exclusively military transfers of arms and technologies. The war in Ukraine and India's abstentions to all U.N.G.A. and U.N.S.C. votes brought this relationship to light, especially regarding arms transfers.

Interestingly, this shift away from pure non-alignment during the Cold War is that "even at the zenith of relations with the Soviet Union, India retained space for leverage by reaching

[91] P.S. Raghavan, "The Making of India's Foreign Policy: From Non-Alignment to Multi-Alignment," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 12, no. 4 (2017): 327.
[92] Speech by Prime Minister Nehru at the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) on 8 March 1949. *Independence and After: A collection of the more important speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru from September 1946 to May 1949* (Delhi: The Publication Division, 1949), 239.
[93] V. N. Khanna, *Foreign Policy Of India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 2018), 56.
[94] Rajagopalan, "Evasive Balancing," 92.
[95] Pant and Super, "India's 'non-Alignment' Conundrum," 753.
[96] Pant and Super, 753.
[97] Pant and Super, 753.

out to the West.[98]" This is precisely my hypothesis regarding India's relationship with China nowadays, and hedging enables us to theorize this element of India's policy.

After the Cold War, the non-alignment strategy lost the rest of its pertinence as one of the blocs has crumbled, and the U.S became a unipolar power. Efstathopoulos explains how the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (the actual Prime Minister's nationalist party) between 1998 and 2004 led to the emergence of a "strategic realist culture[99]" in India. However, according to him, even if "in the post-Cold War era, India has undergone a process of international socialisation into realist politics […], this process has remained incomplete as the Indian worldview continues to be shaped to a considerable degree by the normative assumptions of neutrality.[100]" Pant and Super also consider that there is a fundamental continuity in Indian foreign policy as "India has been in pursuit of strategic autonomy, a quest that in practice has led to semi-alliances fashioned under the cover of non-alignment and shaped by regional dynamics[101]."

Without going as far as saying that India's current foreign policy is a new form of non-alignment, I believe that some elements of this "strategic culture[102]" remain pertinent today and are an integral part of the hedging strategy.

1.2.2 A middle power

A particular dimension of hedging has been that it was initially used in the case of small Southeast Asian nations, and "in the view of some Indian analysts, hedging is the 'domain' of smaller powers which does not square with India's big power position[103]." However, following Fortier and Massie's and Lim and Cooper's frameworks, I believe that hedging is also a middle power's strategy.

The middle power theory is usually used in reference to Canada and Australia. Carr underlines how "moving beyond determining what middle powers are not (neither big nor small), to identify what they are, has proven difficult[104]." He presents three main approaches to

[98] Pant and Super, 754.
[99] Charalampos Efstathopoulos, "Reinterpreting India's Rise through the Middle Power Prism," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 19, no. 1 (April 1, 2011): 80.
[100] Efstathopoulos, 80.
[101] Pant and Super, "India's 'non-Alignment' Conundrum," 747.
[102] Harsh V. Pant, "Indian Strategic Culture: The Debate and Its Consequences," in *Handbook of India's International Relations* (Routledge, 2011), 20.
[103] Tiang Boon Hoo, "The Hedging Prong in India's Evolving China Strategy," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 101 (September 2, 2016): 799.
[104] Andrew Carr, "Is Australia a Middle Power? A Systemic Impact Approach," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 71.

define whether a state is a middle power: the position, the behavior, and the identity. The "position approach" draws upon several economic, military, and demographic indicators to quantify the state's ranking. The advocates of the "behavior approach" believe that the middle power status cannot be reduced to the G.D.P. growth, the military capacity, or the geographical size. Cooper et al. define a middle power mainly in relation to its behavior on the international stage. They underline "their tendency to pursue multilateral solutions to international problems, their tendency to embrace compromise positions in international disputes, and their tendency to embrace notions of "good international citizenship" to guide their diplomacy[105]." Finally, some scholars believe that a middle power status is "a deliberately constructed 'political category,' developed by policymakers[106]."

According to the "position" approach, India has the material and economic capabilities to access the middle power status. However, as stated by Efstathopoulos, "material capabilities are certainly important in identifying middle-ranking powers, but do not constitute a sufficient indicator of a middle power orientation[107]." He shows that India answers to the three criteria showcased by Cooper et al. According to Das, who studies the behavior and the alliance structure in which middle powers are embedded, India and Australia are "great powers within their respective regions and middles powers on the global platform[108]." C. Raja Mohan also wrote in 2006 that India was "emerging as the swing state in the global balance of power" and that "in the coming years, it will have an opportunity to shape outcomes on the most critical issues of the twenty-first century[109]."

Das also studies the possibility of a coalition of "middle powers" in the region and believes that "the major concern of middle powers is to maintain a multilateral partnership in the Indo-Pacific region to balance both China and the U.S.A. and the regional countries that may become a place for proxy wars between the great powers[110]." Therefore, hedging is also a middle power's strategy. Sana Hashmi even argues that this has been their "most preferred modus operandi[111]."

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[105] Andrew Fenton Cooper, Richard A. Higgott, and Kim Richard Nossal, *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order* (UBC Press, 1993), 19.
[106] Carr, "Is Australia a Middle Power?," 76.
[107] Efstathopoulos, "Reinterpreting India's Rise through the Middle Power Prism," 76.
[108] Shubhamitra Das, "Middle Power Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: India and Australia at the Forefront," *International Studies*, November 17, 2021, 515.
[109] C. Raja Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 4 (2006): 17.
[110] Das, "Middle Power Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific," 514.
[111] Sana Hashmi, "Waiting in the Wings — Will This Be the Decade for Middle Powers?," *Observer Research Foundation*, December 28, 2020.

Therefore, India ticks the relevant boxes established by the middle power theory. Moreover, it fits with Lim and Cooper's framework of the hedger as "a secondary state that lacks the capabilities to prevail alone in a conflict against either great power but can offset its weakness by aggregating capabilities[112]." Hence, it is possible to apply hedging to the Indian study case.

Finally, Jones and Jenne believe that hedging is likely when the middle power lacks a grand strategy. According to them, hedging is "a distinctive, but not uncommon form of diplomacy by states lacking the military resources or the capacity of system leaders to formulate or pursue a grand strategy[113]." This idea is another argument in favor of India fitting the hedging framework because, according to Pant, "Indian grand strategy continues to be marked by its absence[114]."

1.2.3 Polarization in the Indo-Pacific

The strategic environment in which the state operates matters in determining the probability of a hedging strategy. According to Fortier and Massie, "the intensification of great power rivalry does not per se make hedging less likely. Hedging rather depends on the threat perceptions resulting from how it is playing out regionally[115]." Tessman believes that hedging "is most prevalent in systems that are unipolar and in the process of power deconcentration[116]." Korolev also states that "the room for hedging available to smaller states shrinks as great powers become more competitive and attempt to balance against one another[117]."

The rising tensions between the U.S and China have led to the polarization of the Indo-Pacific as "the region has no outright hegemon and is instead shaped by competing great powers in open strategic competition[118]." The Trump administration has probably accelerated this trend, but the new Biden administration does not seem inclined to resist this evolution. Young underlines Biden's "ongoing emphasis on competition with China, his framing of it as 'democracy versus autocracy' and the administration's efforts to rally friends, partners, and allies[119]" as indicators of the will to perpetuate the power struggle. According to the previously

[112] Lim and Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging," 704.
[113] David Martin Jones and Nicole Jenne, "Hedging and Grand Strategy in Southeast Asian Foreign Policy," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 22, no. 2 (May 1, 2022): 207.
[114] Pant, "Indian Strategic Culture," 20.
[115] Fortier and Massie, "Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition," 4.
[116] Tessman, "System Structure and State Strategy," 193.
[117] Alexander Korolev, "Shrinking Room for Hedging: System-Unit Dynamics and Behavior of Smaller Powers," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 2019): 419.
[118] Jason Young, "US–China Competition and Small Liberal Democracies: New Zealand and the Limits of Hegemony," *Political Science* 73, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 49.
[119] Young, 52.

exposed hypothesis, hedging is less likely in a polarized environment with the middle powers lacking leeway. Therefore, the current state of great power relations in the Indo-Pacific region shows that India is less probably hedging than it could have been a few decades back.

Finally, Lim and Cooper believe that, in a polarized environment, there are two types of states "for whom hedging involves higher costs or reduced benefits[120]." Firstly, some states already have an alliance with one of the great power and fear abandonment. Therefore, it is easily understandable that hedging comes with higher costs for those states. Secondly, for "states facing major and active security disputes with a great power[121]," it is less beneficial to hedge and less costly to align with the "friendly great power[122]." This typology is interesting because India could belong to the second category considering the border disputes with China in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh. However, despite the importance and the currentness of this dispute, I do not believe it is *presented* as "major" by the Indian government. Yet, it is this assessment that matters in terms of hedging, as we will see in Chapter 2.

1.2.4 Australia, Japan, and the Quad

Finally, I will examine the conclusions of other scholars that have studied whether Australia and Japan (India's regional partners) were hedging.

In 2014, Rory Medcalf and C. Raja Mohan argued in favor of a coalition of middle powers between India and Australia to "build regional resilience against the vagaries of U.S-China relations[123]." However, times have changed for Australia and Japan as well.

Matsuda believes that Japan is hedging with a "traditional effort of above-mentioned approaches strengthening the Self Defense Forces and U.S.-Japan alliance[124]." He criticizes this strategic choice which could be a "self-fulfilling prophecy," as "it would be tantamount to declaring that Japan was preparing for the possibility that China might become its adversary[125]." However, Liff has argued that Japan's "alignment signals from the past decade are hardly ambiguous[126]." He believes that "balancing and tightening security alignments with Washington and U.S. security allies and partners while simultaneously bolstering its own indigenous capabilities have been, and continue to be, the dominant trends in Japan's China

[120] Lim and Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging," 709.
[121] Lim and Cooper, 709.
[122] Lim and Cooper, 710.
[123] Rory Medcalf and C. Raja Mohan, "Responding to Indo-Pacific Rivalry: Australia, India and Middle Power Coalitions," *Lowy Institute*, August 8, 2014.
[124] Yasuhiro Matsuda, "Engagement and Hedging: Japan's Strategy toward China," *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2012): 113.
[125] Matsuda, 115.
[126] Liff, "Unambivalent Alignment," 483.

strategy[127]." Koga also believes that Japan has been balancing against China even though he argues that the degree of balancing has changed in the 2010s because Japan recognized that "significant security reliance on the United States was not a feasible option at that point[128]." At that time, Japan had employed an internal balancing strategy and improved relations with its other regional partners, India and Australia. As a result, Japan has more often been referred to as a balancing state against China rather than a hedging state. Furthermore, Oren and Brummer underline that there has been a "profound change" in the Japanese government's perception of China with "since 2013, a complete shared perception of threat [that has] emerged across Japanese institutions[129]." It indicates a change in perception from risk to threat regarding China and a shift in strategy from hedging to balancing.

Australia has followed a similar pathway. In 2012, Dittmer argued that Australia was "keep[ing] allying with the U.S [while] actively engaging China,[130]" a strategy that he understands as hedging. Fortier and Massie agree on the fact that, between 2010 and 2016, Australia's perception of China was optimistic, listing "great power relationships in the Indo-Pacific" in the "future strategic risks [it] need[ed] to 'hedge against[131]" in the 2013 White Paper. However, since 2016, "China is no longer viewed as a distant security risk, but increasingly as an immediate threat[132]." From an Australian perspective, the authors argue that "diplomatic hedging and military cooperation with Beijing are thus no longer appropriate[133]."

Those two examples are particularly instructive because the Australian and Japanese positions share similarities with India's. These three countries are middle powers in the Indo-Pacific, an "inclusive multilateral grouping,[134]" and have been developing cooperation relationships. The most obvious expression of this tendency has been the creation of the Quad 2.0 at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Manila in November 2017 with the U.S. For the first time, the three countries took part in the Malabar exercises in 2020. However, India has been perceived as the "weakest link[135]" of the Quad and as an impediment to the evolution of the dialogue into a more military organization. I argue that this

[127] Liff, 459.
[128] Koga, "The Concept of 'Hedging' Revisited," 655.
[129] Eitan Oren and Matthew Brummer, "Threat Perception, Government Centralization, and Political Instrumentality in Abe Shinzo's Japan," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 6 (November 1, 2020): 731.
[130] Lowell Dittmer, "Sino-Australian Relations: A Triangular Perspective," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 47 (December 1, 2012): 672.
[131] Fortier and Massie, "Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition," 6.
[132] Fortier and Massie, 7.
[133] Fortier and Massie, 8.
[134] Das, "Middle Power Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific," 522.
[135] Grossman, "India Is the Weakest Link in the Quad."

is precisely because India has been hedging instead of balancing. The creation of AUKUS has changed the expectations for the Quad, and it allowed India to prioritize other issues besides the military.

Das argues in favor of a "middle-power communion," "a group to 'check and balance' both China and the U.S.A in maintaining a 'free, open, inclusive and peaceful Indo-Pacific'[136]." However, the Quad included the U.S, and now, AUKUS is a clear proof of balancing on the part of Australia. We have the answer to Daniel's interrogation about the "assessment of the costs and benefits of working against and with both China and the United States[137]" when it comes to Australia or even Japan. However, the question remains for India, and this is precisely what I will assess throughout this paper.

1.3 How to measure hedging?

Now that we have presented the current state of the literature on the concept of hedging and why India can be analyzed through the hedging framework, I want to detail the definition I will use throughout the text. I will also present the criteria I have chosen for my analysis, the methods, and the data sets I have used.

1.3.1 A definition and scientific criteria

Throughout this work, the definition of hedging that I will use is the following: hedging is a strategy that consists of producing ambiguous diplomatic signals, diversifying one's military partnerships, and developing risk assessments (as opposed to threat assessments) to avoid the demonstration of an alignment on either great power.

I drew my criteria from Haacke's and Fortier and Massie's to analyze whether India is hedging. They entail three different assessments: risk, diplomatic, and military.

First, I will analyze the Indian government's risk assessment. As pointed out by Haacke, "official policies or remarks from within the security and foreign policy executive suggesting that particular developments could affect state security interests would normally point to a government approaching these developments as security risks.[138]" Even if the voice of one policymaker does not reflect the risk assessment of an entire state, it is safe to say that the words of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs should

[136] Das, "Middle Power Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific," 522.
[137] Thomas Daniel, "Rise of the Rest?," *ISIS Focus*, November 12, 2017, 20.
[138] Haacke, "The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia," 394.

convey the government's position on a matter. As Fortier and Massie stated, those statements should not openly voice one of the great powers as a direct threat because hedging should entail "murky threat perception[139]." In this sense, I will analyze whether India's official threat assessment reflects "the uncertainty of the balance of power, the complexity of its implications for the middle power's national interests, and broad and vague threats[140]."

Second, I believe that hedging also includes a diplomatic aspect. In multilateral fora where India faces a choice between China and the U.S, it should "signal ambiguity regarding the future security alignment vis-à-vis this and other major powers[141]." The diplomatic element also appears in Lim and Cooper's work which underlines the importance of ambiguity "regarding which side the secondary state would take in the event of a great power conflict[142]." This strengthens the idea that studying India's foreign policy is essential when analyzing the possible consequences of an open conflict between China and the U.S. Fortier and Massie also underlined that a nation that hedges should have "ambiguous positions […] on hotly contested international security issues between great powers[143]." These must be issues that have been documented enough and that "entail a clear zero-sum logic that pressured middle powers to side with one great power against another[144]." If India sided with one great power on the matter, it would mean that it is either bandwagoning or balancing and would be a clear sign that India does not hedge.

Finally, for the military aspect, the hedging state should not side in an obvious manner with either great power because "engaging in limited defense cooperation with both powers would be evidence of hedging[145]." These relationships do not have to be equal because hedging does not necessarily mean seeking equidistance. However, the middle power should maintain a defense cooperation relationship with both, whether with Defense Cooperation Agreements, Joint Military Exercises, or arms transfers. Moreover, a nation that hedges should seek to enhance its military capabilities because it recognizes that there is a risk. It should do so by seeking to diversify its strategic partnerships and arms suppliers.

[139] Fortier and Massie, "Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition," 4.
[140] Fortier and Massie, 4.
[141] Haacke, "The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia," 395.
[142] Lim and Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging," 709.
[143] Fortier and Massie, "Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition," 5.
[144] Fortier and Massie, 5.
[145] Edward Hunter Christie, Caroline Buts, and Cind Du Bois, "Demand for Military Expenditures and Security Alignment Choices in the Indo-Pacific," *Defence and Peace Economics* (May 11, 2022): 5.

1.3.2 Method and data sets

1.3.2.1 Threat assessment

To study India's threat assessment, I will need to identify redundant general topics qualified as threats in official statements and Annual Reports using the software IRaMuTeQ. Then, I will employ Oren and Brummer's classification[146] to measure threat assessments related to China over the years. Finally, I will focus on two particular issues regarding China (its links with Pakistan and the Line of Actual Control at the border) to see whether India's official position has evolved in those cases.

1.3.2.1.1 Method

I will use the software IRaMuTeQ to analyze the vocabulary used in those texts. It allows for a broad approach to the corpus with lemmatization that aggregates words sharing thesame root. Then, Descending Hierarchical Analysis (Reinert Method) assembles text segmentswith similar vocabularies and distributes them in a graph according to their frequencies[147]. It provides a global assessment of the terms that are linked with "threat" or "concern," and it "allows to report the content of all contributions, without randomly picking or letting our own bias intervene[148]." This software analyzes the content of the text through its structure. The hypothesis behind this textual analysis is that one can understand the signification of a text by studying repetitions and sequences of words[149]. My thesis is that none of the two great powers will appear among those imminent threats since 2003.

However, this method also presents limitations. First, it is a statistical method, and it always raises the risk of objectivation of the text and statements. Second, some words can be assembled with lemmatization when they do not have a similar meaning.

Then, I will use Oren and Brummer's method to have a more precise idea of the evolution of the threat assessment related to China between 2003 and 2022[150]. The authors established the following typology of threat assessment intensity (Figure 1.2) to study the evolution of Japan's threat assessment throughout the years and the role of the different

[146] Oren and Brummer, "Threat Perception, Government Centralization, and Political Instrumentality in Abe Shinzo's Japan."
[147] "Iramuteq — IRaMuTeQ," http://www.iramuteq.org/.
[148] Pascal Marchand and Pierre Ratinaud, "L'identité Nationale : Un 'Grand Débat' Loin d'être Clos," *IRaMuTeQ*.
[149] Pierre-Marc Daigneault and François Pétry, *L'analyse textuelle des idées, du discours et des pratiques politiques* (Presses de l'Université Laval, 2017), 128.
[150] Oren and Brummer, "Threat Perception, Government Centralization, and Political Instrumentality in Abe Shinzo's Japan."

governmental institutions in this assessment. Each threat assessment is given a score from 0 to 5 according to the words that are used to describe it:

Figure 1.2: A typology of threat perception intensity

From Oren, Eitan, and Matthew Brummer. "Threat Perception, Government Centralization, and Political Instrumentality in Abe Shinzo's Japan." Australian Journal of International Affairs 74, no. 6 (November 1, 2020): 721–45. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2020.1782345.

Following this typology, I will calculate the threat levels associated with China yearly between 2003 and 2022. An average value between 0 and 2.75 on the threat continuum would mean China is perceived as a risk rather than a threat. However, if the threat level reaches three or higher, it would mean that Indian officials assess China as a threat, and therefore, I would conclude that India is not hedging.

1.3.2.1.2 Data set

To bring to light the threats that India assesses, I will use several data sets. Annual Reports from the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of External Affairs are helpful because their context of production is homogeneous since they are released every year. They provide

precious information on the vision of the two central Ministries related to India's foreign policy. On the Press Information Bureau website, I will also gather all statements from the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of External Affairs that were related either to China or the U.S.

I will also take into account two Reports from the Standing Committee of the Ministry of Defence at the Lok Sabha (2014 and 2015). The Lok Sabha is the lower house of the Indian Parliament; therefore, these documents provide information about the MPs' vision which can be different from a higher level of power in the Ministries. However, only two of these Reports have been published; therefore, this aspect is limited.

Finally, I will use the Indian Maritime Doctrine (2007, 2009, 2015), the Basic Doctrine of the Indian Air Force (2012), the Indian Army Land Warfare Doctrine (2018) as well as the Joint Doctrine (2017) to integrate the military's perspective.

This corpus is varied and entails most of the Indian government's official perspectives. Nonetheless, this corpus has limitations since I will only use sources in English to analyze them through IRaMuTeQ. Because most of the Prime Minister's speeches are in Hindi, I will use the official translation when available, which is not always the case.

1.3.2.2 Diplomatic assessment

The second part of my analysis will be a diplomatic assessment of India's position on the international stage. Therefore, I will study India's votes at the United States General Assembly using the Ideal Point indicator in the first part. In my second part, I will analyze India's position on two contentious issues that are sources of divisions between China and the U.S: Taiwan and the territorial dispute in the South China Sea.

1.3.2.2.1 Method

This part will assess whether India is voting closer to the U.S or China at the UNGA. Therefore, I decided to use the Ideal Point (I.P) indicator because other dyadic indicators such as the Affinity scores or S-scores "assume a straightforward relationship between how often two states vote together and preference similarity[151]." According to Michael A. Bailey, Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten, who developed the Ideal Point estimator (IP), it is also essential to pay attention to the subject of the vote when studying UNGA votes primarily because of the

[151] Michael A. Bailey, Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten, "Estimating Dynamic State Preferences from United Nations Voting Data," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, no. 2 (February 2017): 432.

overrepresentation of the Palestinian question. The I.P. indicator is a "dynamic ordinal spatial model that measures preferences by estimating points along a preference spectrum, which changes based on the content of the resolutions introduced each year[152]." The authors used identical or comparable votes to compare and build "bridge observations" over the years. This method allows to "lessen the influence of idiosyncratic votes on preference estimates,[153]" which means that more importance is given to votes that can reveal the state's preference. This is precisely what I want to assess: whether India's preference changes over time towards either great power.

1.3.2.2.2 Data

For this assessment, I will use the ideal point data for India, China, and the United States from Michael A. Bailey, Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten's "Estimating dynamic state preferences from United Nations voting data." I will also use raw U.N. data from Erik Voeten's "Data and Analyses of Voting in the U.N. General Assembly[154]." The database is Erik Voeten's "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data," *Harvard Dataverse,* and it is available at https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/LEJUQZ. The years on the x-axis correspond to the opening of the U.N. session (votes often continue after January of the following year).

1.3.2.3 Military assessment

The final part of my analysis will be a military assessment of India's engagement with both the U.S and China and the diversification of its partnerships. Firstly, I will study India's cooperation through strategic partnerships, Defense Cooperation Agreements, and Joint Military Exercises. Secondly, I will turn my attention to India's military acquisitions and analyze the volumes, the type of weapons it acquired, and the partners it received them from.

[152] Aparajita Das, "A Fine Balance: India's Voting Record at the UNGA," *Observer Research Foundation*, no. 192 (2017): 145.
[153] Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten, "Estimating Dynamic State Preferences from United Nations Voting Data," 435.
[154] Erik Voeten, "Data and Analyses of Voting in the UN General Assembly," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, July 17, 2012).

1.3.2.3.1 Cooperation

To study cooperation, I will explore India's participation in Joint Military Exercises. A Joint Military Exercise (J.M.E.) consists in "more than one state interact[ing] in such a way as to enhance their ability to carry out military operations[155]." Firstly, I will calculate the number of J.M.E.s the two dyads (India-China and Indian-U.S) have participated in between 2003-2022 to analyze the evolution over time. I will also distinguish between bilateral and multilateral exercises (appendices 9 and 10). Secondly, I will focus more on the types of military exercises that these countries have participated in, mainly whether they entailed combat training. To have a complete database on J.M.E.s, I used Military Balance + data that aggregated all J.M.E.s between 2014 and 2021 and the activities that each entailed[156]. For the previous years (2003-2014), I used Jordan Bernhardt's dataset[157] , which provided other details about the J.M.E.s, such as where it took place or the activities performed. To complete this set, I used data from the Press Information Bureau of the Indian Ministry of Defense[158].

In a second part, I will compile all the Defense Cooperation Agreements (D.C.A.s) signed by the Indian Ministry of Defence with China and the U.S and those signed with other partners such as Russia or France. It will also be interesting to pay attention to the evolution in time, the type of D.C.A.s, the period of those agreements, and what they entail. I will use data sets from the Correlates of War database[159] and Brandon Kinne's Defense Cooperation Agreement Dataset[160]. The only issue with these datasets is that they only go as far as 2010. Therefore, between 2010 and 2022, I will build my dataset.

1.3.2.3.2 Acquisition

To study acquisition, I will analyze the amounts of arms imports, the evolution over time, and the countries from which India has bought weapons and military equipment. I will mainly use data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (S.I.P.R.I.) and Military Balance +. The S.I.P.R.I. often uses Trend-Indicator Values (T.I.V.) to measure "the

[155] Vito James D'orazio, "International Military Cooperation: From Concepts to Constructs" (Pennsylvania State University, 2013), 59.
[156] Military Balance +, "Exercises 2014-2021," January 2022.
[157] Jordan Bernhardt, 2021, "Joint Military Exercises Dataset", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/HXQFHU, *Harvard Dataverse*, V1, UNF:6:l6IWV3Smr1r4TIkCDYBtIg== [fileUNF].
[158] Ministry of Defence, Government of India, "Joint exercises with the U.S 2003-2006," *Press Information Bureau*, August 23, 2007.
[159] "Data Sets — Correlates of War," Folder, https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets.
[160] Brandon J. Kinne, "The Defense Cooperation Agreement Dataset (DCAD)," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 64, no. 4 (2020): 729–55.

volume of deliveries of major conventional weapons and components[161]." I will also distinguish weapons according to their type, mainly along the spectrum of heavy/light armament. It will be pertinent to see from whom India buys these different categories of weapons to analyze diversification and the level of cooperation with its partners.

[161] Paul Holtom, Mark Bromley, and Verena Simmel, "Measuring International Arms Transfers" *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute* (December 2012), 1.

Chapter 2: Threat assessment

The first indicator I will study is India's threat assessment between 2003 and 2021. Fortier and Massie wrote that "middle powers hedge to reduce the likelihood of a threat materializing by keeping the doors open for productive engagement with a *potentially* threatening state[162]." This chapter will mainly (but not exclusively) focus on China because the U.S is never mentioned as a 'concern' or an 'issue,' and even less as a 'threat' in the different foreign policy documents I analyzed. Moreover, it is evident that China is not an ordinary neighbor. As the current Minister of External Affairs, S. Jaishankar, suggested, "[India's] relationship (with China) is not normal, given the presence of a large number of troops in contravention of the 1993-96 agreements[163]."

However, the question at stake here is not whether China is a threat to India's national interests because this is another issue for I.R scholars to resolve, and it does not have much to do with hedging. I merely wish to study India's assessment of China, that is, the way Indian decision-makers choose to present their risk perception. This chapter will assess whether there has been a shift from risk to threat in India's perception of China. If this shift happened, it would mean that India sees balancing against China as the only option left. On the contrary, as Fortier and Massie argue, if India is hedging, "neither the rising nor the declining great power should be perceived as a clear and immediate security threat.[164]" I show that the assessment result shows China 'only' as a risk. Therefore, the first criterium indicates that India is hedging.

Firstly, I will analyze the concept of threat assessment (and the distinction with threat perception) and how a state assesses threat. I will also underline the limitations of this concept. Secondly, I will draw a literature review of India's threat assessment of the U.S and China and present the general results of my analysis. Then, I will focus on India's perception of China with Oren and Brummer's classification. Finally, I will develop two particularly worrying topics for India: China's relationship with Pakistan and the tensions at the Himalayan border.

[162] Fortier and Massie, "Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition," 3.
[163] Harsh V. Pant, "Wang visit: Beijing is not reassessing its India policy," *Observer Research Foundation*, March 31, 2022.
[164] Fortier and Massie, "Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition," 4.

2.1 Analyzing a threat assessment

Robert Jervis, who wrote *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* in 1976, stated in 2013 that "considering its central importance, the topic of when, why, and how states perceive others as threats is remarkably understudied[165]." It is also challenging to evaluate such a perception, as it requires entering the realm of decision-making, often referred to as a black box. Moreover, such an assessment involves several actors and opinions, especially in democratic systems such as India, and I do not necessarily have access to them.

Janice Stein underlines that, for a long time, "threat was conveniently equated to power, largely to military power, and scholars moved easily from 'objective' measures of power to threat assessment, assuming equivalence between the two[166]." This "subjective" aspect of threat assessment is precisely tough to apprehend. Stein shows that this analysis anchors itself in the security dilemma theory, which is one of five variables that complicates threat perception. Indeed, "signaling and threat perception also become more difficult when intentions aredifficult to read because of the workings of the security dilemma[167]." Coined by Butterfield andHerz, the security dilemma concept refers to a "state's uncertainty as to its neighbour's intentions[168]." It is crucial in the context of international tensions as it "makes escalation likelybecause of the difficulty of reading intentions and the tendency to prepare for the worst case[169]."India is a security seeker, which favors the advent of a security dilemma. In these conditions, itis even harder to analyze a state's threat assessment and maybe more important than ever to doso.

First, I will explain how a threat assessment differs from a threat perception and why the former is more pertinent for this research. Secondly, I will analyze the way a threat assessment is produced. Finally, I will underline the limitations that such an analysis can contain.

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[165] Robert Jervis, review of *Power, Threat, or Military Capabilities*, by Carmel Davis, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15, no. 3 (2013): 181.
[166] Janice Gross Stein, "Threat Perception in International Relations," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, by Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Levy, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.
[167] Stein, 5.
[168] Jonathan Holslag, "The Persistent Military Security Dilemma between China and India," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 6 (December 1, 2009): 814.
[169] Stein, "Threat Perception in International Relations," 6.

2.1.1 What is a threat assessment?

First, it is essential to understand what a threat assessment is, other than, as Oren and Brummer state, "a very particular aspect of the large and complex process of defence policy-making[170]."

Stein argues that "perceptions of intentions and of capabilities [are] the core elements of threat assessment[171]." However, following Oren and Brummer, I believe that it is crucial to distinguish between threat perception and threat assessment. The two authors describe threat perception as "the manner people become aware of stimuli and interpret it as threatening[172]," therefore, it is more of a process. On the other hand, threat assessment refers to the "judgment(s) regarding external threats[173]": it is the outcome of the process. The authors use the term "assessment" rather than "perception" "to reflect the possibility that a difference between policy makers' 'real' judgment of external threats and the official representation of this judgment existed.[174]" Throughout the following pages, I will choose the term "assessment" because it is the visible aspect of threat perception and, therefore, renders the analysis feasible. Indeed, focusing on the assessment is necessary in order to overcome some limitations that J. Stein underlined.

2.1.2 The production of a threat assessment

In this chapter, I drew from Oren and Brummer's 2020 article. They study the impact of centralization of power in the Japanese government on its threat assessment, especially regarding foreign-born threats. They analyze "the role of those domestic actors most actively involved in producing threat assessment as realized in the pages of the government's primary and publicly accessible strategic documents[175]."

They argue that Japan's threat assessment (and I believe that the same can be said for India), "as it is publicly articulated, may not necessarily align with individual, or even organizational, assessments of threat behind the scenes[176]." However, the official publications should reflect the official line that the government wants to display. Therefore, following Oren

[170] Oren and Brummer, "Threat Perception, Government Centralization, and Political Instrumentality in Abe Shinzo's Japan," 723.
[171] Stein, "Threat Perception in International Relations," 13.
[172] Oren and Brummer, "Threat Perception, Government Centralization, and Political Instrumentality in Abe Shinzo's Japan," 724.
[173] Oren and Brummer, 724.
[174] Oren and Brummer, 724.
[175] Oren and Brummer, 723.
[176] Oren and Brummer, 723.

and Brummer, "even if key government institutions perceive a certain foreign country as a considerable security threat, they may opt to downplay it in official documents, in order to, for example, mitigate the risk of escalating a 'security dilemma' with that foreign country[177]."

Therefore, this chapter will focus on the 'official' threat assessment, "a practice that can teach us a great deal about its political priorities and intentions[178]." Following Oren and Brummer's method, I will measure threat assessments by studying the language used, i.e., "how the security issue is described in the document and what words are used to denote the danger associated with the issue.[179]"

The two authors use a "four-layer typology of threats to denote security dangers[180]" (and one layer for the absence of threat) that I represented on the graph below (Figure 2.1) as a continuum. They justify this choice by arguing that "since threats may materialize in various forms and with widely different consequences, the perception of threat varies in intensity; therefore, it is best measured on a scale[181]." They draw a continuum between an absence of threat (provided by a security community, for example), risk, and existential or imminent threat.

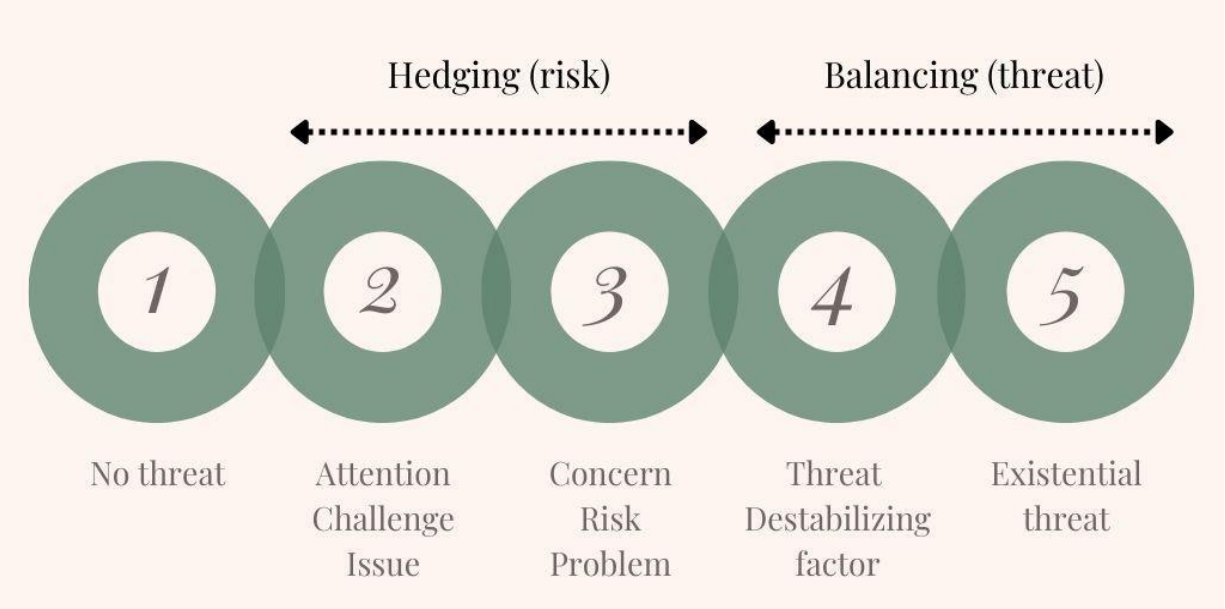
As I explained in Chapter 1, this continuum is central in differentiating between hedging and balancing. Therefore, I will use this typology (Figure 2.1) during my analysis. I consider that hedging is associated with a threat assessment that ranges from 'attention' to 'risk' or 'concern.' Beyond the third level on the scale, the state is assessing one of the great powers as a threat (existential or not) and is therefore balancing.

[177] Oren and Brummer, 723.
[178] Oren and Brummer, 723.
[179] Oren and Brummer, 729.
[180] Oren and Brummer, 729.
[181] Oren and Brummer, 724.

Figure 2.1 : Oren and Brummer's classification associated with hedging

From Eitan Oren and Matthew Brummer, "Threat perception, government centralization, and political instrumentality in Abe Shinzo's Japan," Australian Journal of International Affairs 74, nº 6 (2020): 724.

I added 'risk' in the third category and 'challenge' and 'issue' in the second.



2.1.3 Limitations of the concept

Assessing threats is not without danger. Stein mentions four non-psychological explanations to understand why threat perception is difficult to analyze (other than the security dilemma I already mentioned). She argues that a changing balance of power, institutional interests, political culture, and the violation of norms are four ways that can complicate even further the comprehension of threat perception.

Some leaders can push for a "heightened or reduced level of threat assessment[182]" to advance their interests in the institution or the government. Somehow like policy entrepreneurs[183], those individuals can seek benefits from a "threat inflation[184]" or the opposite. For example, the Ministry of Defence can gain from an increased threat assessment because it could lead to a rise in the budget's share dedicated to the military. Institutional interest is the first limitation, one that I will not be able to counter because of the nature of my sources but

[182] Stein, "Threat Perception in International Relations," 6.
[183] Marina E. Henke, "Why Did France Intervene in Mali in 2013? Examining the Role of Intervention Entrepreneurs," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 23, no. 3 (September 2, 2017): 311.
[184] Chaim Kaufmann, "Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas: The Selling of the Iraq War," *International Security* 29, no. 1 (2004): 5–48.

that I have to keep in mind. It is also the reason why I carefully used diverse sources, not only from the three main decision poles: the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of External Affairs, and the Prime Minister's Office, but also from the Army and the Indian Assembly (Lok Sabha).

Another particularly relevant limitation in this case is how the state's identity or political culture can shape the threat assessment. Rousseau argues that "identity plays a central and often determining role in the construction of threat[185]." He mentions the concept of strategic culture that I claimed was part of the hedging framework in India. When Stein suggests that "political cultures which promote militarism and hypernationalism tend to be distrustful of outsiders, prone to defensiveness and worst-case thinking[186]," I defend that the opposite is also possible; India is probably more susceptible to facing such a limitation, especially because of the heritage of non-alignment. Once again, this is an issue that I will have trouble overcoming because of a lack of time.

Moreover, Stein underlines that some cognitive biases can influence leaders when assessing a threat. One of the biases that she mentions is simplicity, as "political leaders trying to assess a threat need to make a very complex world somewhat simpler[187]." Another bias is consistency because leaders (and individuals in general) "have a strong tendency to see what they expect to see based on their existing beliefs[188]." In my case study, this can be a vital element to keep in mind because Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister from 2004 until 2014, wasa member of the Indian National Congress that has been the main party in India's political lifesince the independence. In contrast, Narendra Modi (PM since 2014) is the leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party, which rose to power for the first time without a coalition in 2014. Therefore, those "existing beliefs" regarding threat perception can be different. Once again, if I were to take this bias into account, it would require another method than the one I will be using. However, I will keep an eye on 2014, marking the transition between prime ministers. Finally, Stein also underlines the importance of loss aversion, framing, or risk propensity in threat assessments. Still, I will not go into too many details about these because they would betoo remote from my analysis. However, taking these elements into account would be an interesting approach for another take on India's threat assessment.

[185] David L. Rousseau, *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities: The Social Construction of Realism and Liberalism*, 1st edition (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2006), 6.
[186] Stein, "Threat Perception in International Relations," 7.
[187] Stein, 14.
[188] Stein, 15.

2.2 A glance at India's threat assessment

Before laying out my results, I want to analyze the production of threat assessments in India. I will also present some elements of India's perception of the U.S and China that previous studies have highlighted.

2.2.1 India's defense policy and the production of threat assessment

India does not have a National Security Strategy, in contrast to China or the U.S. Harsh V. Pant argues that there is a "lack of institutional capacity to give defence policy a long-term strategic orientation[189]" in India. This absence could complicate even more the analysis of India's threat perceptions.

Pant's analysis of the Annual Report of the Ministry of Defence in 2012-2013 is thought-provoking when reflecting on India's threat assessment. He believes that, with this document, "the military confines itself to purely professional exchanges and exercises and leaves the political dimension to be handled by the Ministry of External Affairs, or MEA[190]." Therefore, the assumption that the military could exaggerate a threat for its benefits may be false. Either way, "governmental reticence on strategic doctrine, the start point of military doctrine, is having an adverse impact on the military's function and on national security in general.[191]" This problem has been raised repeatedly by scholars and former civil servants, butdrafting a national security policy is apparently not on the agenda.

This absence of defense policy or strategy could be symptomatic of India's reluctance to articulate a clear threat assessment regarding China. Tara Kartha argues that "somewhere, [this strategy would have] to acknowledge the rise and threat from China, which means diluting to some extent the careful diplomacy that has prevailed so far[192]." Indeed, my results, as we will see later, confirm this claim to a certain extent.

2.2.2 Tensions with Washington

The relationship between India and the United States is clearly not the worst of the two in terms of concern and tensions. For that reason, I developed a lot less on the U.S than on

[189] Harsh V. Pant, *The Routledge Handbook of Indian Defence Policy: Themes, Structures, and Doctrines* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2020), 6.
[190] Pant, 116.
[191] Pant, 202.
[192] Tara Kartha, "India Needs a National Security Document Too. But Don't Do a Pakistan," *ThePrint* (blog), January 24, 2022.

China in this chapter. Nonetheless, it does not mean that Washington is exempt from tensions with New Delhi.

In particular, it is noteworthy that India's relationship with the U.S in terms of military exercises has not always been a smooth one. Indeed, "in the early 2000s, India formally protested against U.S. military survey vessels operating in its EEZ [Exclusive Economic Zone] even though UNCLOS does not restrict the conduct of military survey operations[193]." However, New Delhi later changed its position (which was becoming difficult to hold with regard to its growing relationship with Washington). It may also have been "a means of distinguishing itself from China: Beijing does not differentiate between marine scientific research and military surveys, and seeks to restrict both in its EEZ[194]."

More recently, in 2021, this disagreement resurfaced with the Lakshadweep case that Abhijit Singh considers as "not a betrayal by the U.S but a different understanding of navigational freedom.[195]" An American destroyer, the USS John Paul Jones, conducted a Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP) 130 miles west of the Lakshadweep Islands, namely in the Indian EEZ. It is a press release by the Commander of the U.S 7th Fleet that infuriated India as it underlined having "asserted navigational rights and freedoms […] inside India's exclusive economic zone, without requesting India's prior consent[196]". For the U.S, the objective of the FONOP was to show that India's maritime requirements (which demand prior consent) was against Articles 56 and 58, Part V of the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea[197]. However, India does not interpret the convention the same way, and its "domestic regulation is worryingly out of sync with international law.[198]" Abhijit Singh also notes that "such operations normalise military activism close to India's island territories that remain vulnerable to incursions by foreign warships[199]." India is particularly worried that these activities could spur China's use of its warships in the region. Nonetheless, "despite disagreements over navigational freedoms, India and the U.S have refrained from a public airing of differences.[200]"

[193] Rahul Roy-Chaudhury and Kate Sullivan de Estrada, "India and US FONOPs: Oceans Apart," *Survival* 64, no. 1 (January 2, 2022): 139..
[194] Roy-Chaudhury and de Estrada, 139.
[195] Abhijit Singh, "Not on the Same Page at Sea," *Observer Research Foundation*, April 14, 2021.
[196] "7th Fleet Conducts Freedom of Navigation Operation," Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, April 7, 2021, http://www.c7f.navy.mil/Media/News/Display/Article/2563538/7th-fleet-conducts-freedom-of-navigation-operation.
[197] Singh, "Not on the Same Page at Sea."
[198] Singh.
[199] Singh.
[200] Singh.

Despite remaining tensions between the U.S and India, it is difficult to talk about a perception of a 'risk'. Therefore, I will not deepen my analysis of this threat assessment and instead focus on China.

2.2.3 Indian threat assessmentS of China

Since the 1962 war and the subsequent annexation of Aksai Chin, the image of China has significantly changed from the second half of a potential Asian Axis (and the popular saying "Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai" *Indians and Chinese are brothers*) to a dangerous neighbor that could decide to cross the border anytime.

Hoo analyzes India's threat perceptions of China and argues that they "inform and drive the country's hedging behavior towards China.[201]" He does not only write about the official threat assessment but describes the "plurality of opinions" that coexist in India about China. He explains that "a general perception is that those in the media and defense establishments/think tanks tend to emphasize China as a problem or threat; those in the business sectors and economic establishments tend to think of China more positively, and civilian policymakers aremore likely to adopt a more balanced (though still ambivalent) perspective towards China[202]." The last one, 'civilian policymakers,' is the threat assessment which is the most interesting froma hedging perspective.

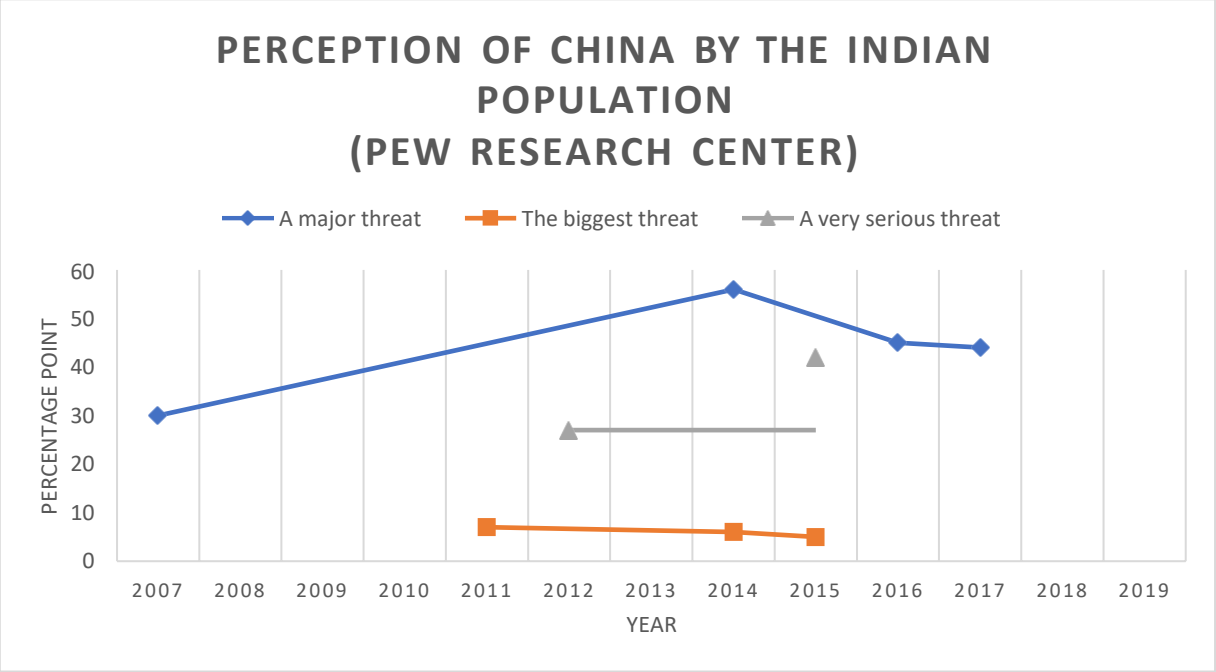
However, it might also be interesting to have an idea of the Indian public opinion on China. The Pew Research Center has published several studies over the years (even if it is not yearly), and these can give an idea of the share of the population that perceives China as a 'very serious threat,' a 'major threat,' or 'the biggest threat.' The highest proportion was reached in 2014, with 56% of the Indian population perceiving China as a major threat and 6% as the biggest threat.

[201] Hoo, "The Hedging Prong in India's Evolving China Strategy," 793.
[202] Hoo, 795.

Figure 2.2 Perception of China by the Indian population (2007-2017)

Data sets:

- *"Perceived Threats and Allies," Pew Research Center, July 24, 2007.*
- *"Pakistan Seen as India's Biggest Threat," Sprint 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q119a-d. PEW RESEARCH CENTER.*
- *"India name climate change and ISIS as top international threats," Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q22a-h. PEW RESEARCH CENTER.*
- *"Indians name ISIS as top threat," Spring 2017 Global Attitudes Survey. Q17a-h. PEW RESEARCH CENTER*



Hoo presents several issues that increase India's level of threat assessment of China. The main one, according to him, is the issue of the border (correlated with the heritage of the 1962 war and the building of infrastructures along the LAC in Tibet), and I will develop further on this issue in my last part. The second and third perceived risks are the Sino-Pakistan nexus and the nuclear threat coming from China.

Finally, he mentions "China's growing footprint in the South Asia region[203]" and "China's expanding footprint in the Indian Ocean region[204]." This last aspect encompasses several massive infrastructure projects within the 'string of pearls' (SOP) strategy. The latter

[203] Hoo, 797.
[204] Hoo, 798.

consists of building infrastructures that can have a dual-use (civilian and military), such as the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka or the Gwadar Port in Pakistan, a deepwater port that could accommodate warships in the Indian Ocean. However, Hoo mentions that some analysts believe the SOP strategy to be "largely hypothetical[205]." More broadly, it is essential to consider that "these threat perceptions do not equate to the totality of Indian views about China[206]."

Some could say that India's military modernization, especially regarding India's navy, proves a considerable threat perception of China. Indeed, "India is increasingly concerned about perceived external challenges to its primacy in the Indian Ocean (where China is potential threat number one), so the navy has dedicated the bulk of its budget to 'boost India's capacity to deal with [maritime] threats from other states.'[207]" That could be true. However, it is difficult to certify that China is the only perceived threat that motivated this modernization. Indeed, "like most militaries, the overall thrust of India's arms build-up and modernization, even its maritime capabilities, is not specific to just one country. Indian defense planners hedge against a range of perceived threats, of which China is one[208]."

Now that I have reviewed the literature on India's threat assessment, I will present the results of my analysis between 2003 and 2021.

2.3 Analysis of India's threat assessment between 2003 and 2021

Before getting to the heart of the matter, I wanted to emphasize the complexity of a threat assessment analysis. This arduousness is also the reason why I would rather use the term "assessment" instead of "perception" because "complicating the study of national threat perception is the fact that the term is a misnomer: states do not perceive threats—people do[209]."

An example of this is General Bipin Rawat's comment at the Times Now Summit in November 2021. The then Chief of Defence Staff said that China was India's "biggest security threat," "much bigger" than Pakistan[210]. This position statement was unusually trenchant, and the Chinese reaction underlined that it was unconventional. The Chinese Defence Ministry Spokesman Sr. Col Wu Qian railed against "Indian officials [who] speculate on the so-called

[205] Hoo, 798.
[206] Hoo, 798.
[207] Hoo, 803.
[208] Hoo, 803.
[209] Oren and Brummer, "Threat Perception, Government Centralization, and Political Instrumentality in Abe Shinzo's Japan," 724.
[210] "China Biggest Security Threat, Says General Bipin Rawat," *The Times of India*, November 13, 2021.

'Chinese military threat' for no reason." He condemned this as "a serious violation of the strategic guidance of the leaders of the two countries that China and India 'do not constitute a threat to each other,' [which] incites geopolitical confrontation, [and] is irresponsible and dangerous[211]."

Gen. B. Rawat's remark has caused quite a stir in India, but its significance is to be nuanced. Indeed, it was not the first time that the Chief of Staff had not followed the official line of the Indian government. In September 2021, at an event at India International Centre, Rawat warned of a clash of civilizations with China because of its "growing ties with the Islamic world vis-à-vis the West[212]." A few days later, the Minister of External Affairs, S. Jaishankar, reassured his Chinese counterpart by claiming that "India had never subscribed to any clash of civilisations theory[213]." This back-and-forth demonstrates quite clearly the toughness of assessing a country's threat perception, especially when the Army and the Ministry of External Affairs are not necessarily agreeing.

In the first part, I will provide a general overview of India's threat assessment of China. My second part includes two elements: firstly, I will detail the level of risk that India perceives in relation to China, and secondly, I will focus on two specific issues: the China-Pakistan nexus and the Himalayan border.

2.3.1 An overview of India's threat assessment of China

As I explained earlier, IRaMuTeQ is a software for lexical analysis that Alice Baillat, Fabien Emprin and Frédéric Ramel presented in Guillaume Devin's *Méthodes de recherche en relations internationales*[214]. The authors, in their example, used the software to compare Barack Obama's and George W. Bush's State of the Union Addresses. They underline the value of IRaMuTeQ "in the initial phase of exploration of large corpus to reduce the amount of information to process, to locate the thematic disruption and the content of each theme[215]."

Therefore, I used this software to present a broad examination of the threats that the study of these documents brought to light.

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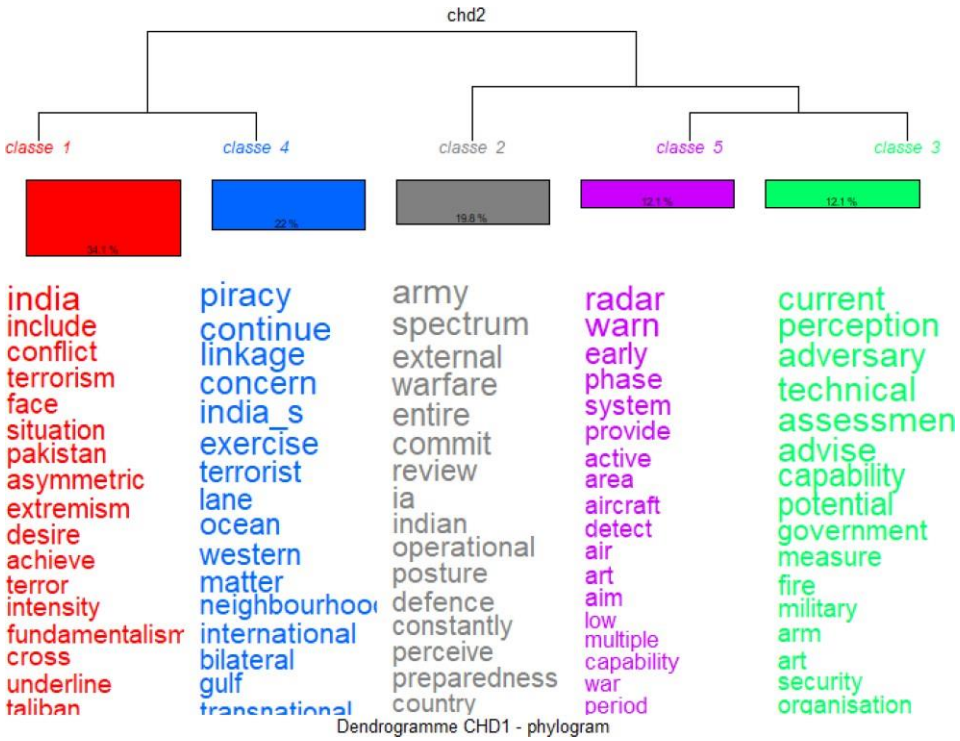
[211] Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, "Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of National Defense," November 25, 2021, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2021-11/26/content_4900241.htm.
[212] "Jaishankar Disagrees with CDS: India Doesn't Believe in Clash of Civilisations," *The Indian Express* (blog), September 18, 2021.
[213] "Jaishankar Disagrees with CDS."
[214] Alice Baillat, Fabien Emprin, and Frédéric Ramel, "Des mots et des discours," in *Méthodes de recherche en relations internationales*, ed. Guillaume Devin (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2016), 227–46.
[215] Baillat, Emprin, and Ramel, 229 (my translation).

I extracted a subcorpus with the text sequences related to "threat" in the different documents. In the Annual Reports of the Ministry of Defence (Figure 2.3), 34% of them correspond to terrorism-related issues and Pakistan and 22% to piracy-related issues (or joint multilateral and bilateral naval exercises to prevent it). Nuclear proliferation is also regularly brought to the readers' attention in the Annual Reports of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)[216]. China is not mentioned once in either subcorpora, and they do not underline any imminent threat coming from either great power.

Figure 2.3: Descending Hierarchical Analysis of segments containing the word 'threat'

IRaMuTeQ Subcorpus "threat" – Annual Report MoD (2003-2018)



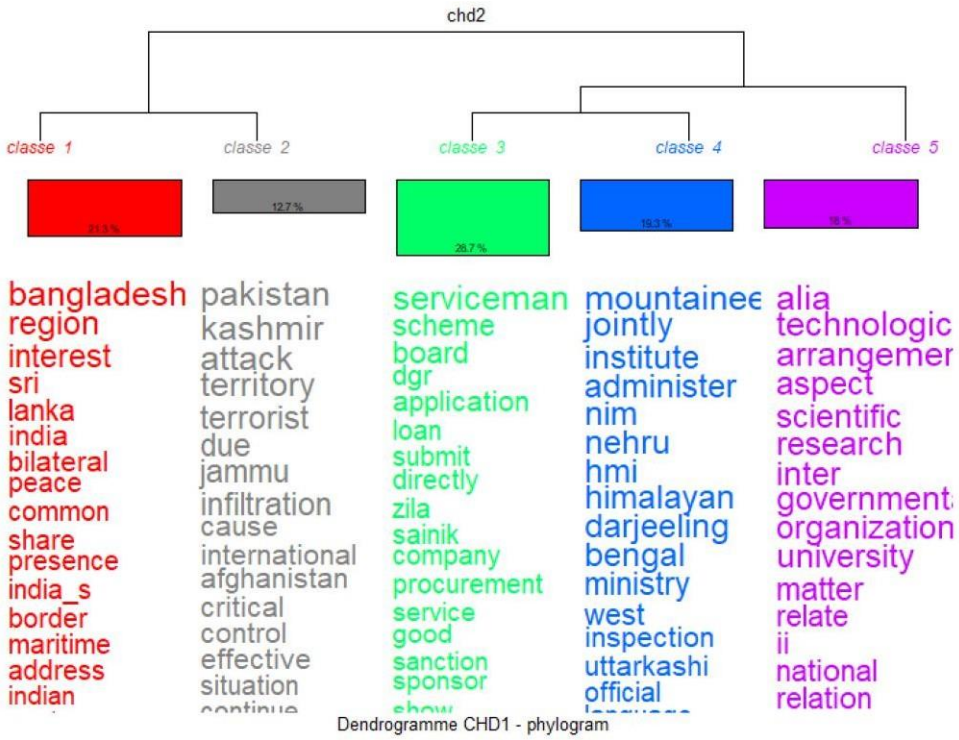
When analyzing a subcorpus with the text segments related to "concern" in the Annual Reports of the MoD (Figure 2.4), it is interesting to see that new topics emerge, such as the border with Bangladesh or the Kashmir region. Classes 3, 4, and 5 refer to preparation against potential issues, which seem to be "broad and vague threats[217]."

[216] Appendix 1

[217] Fortier and Massie, "Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition," 4.

Figure 2.4: Descending Hierarchical Analysis of segments containing the word 'concern'

IRaMuTeQ Subcorpus "concern" – Annual Report MoD (2003-2018)



In the MoD "concern" subcorpus, China was mentioned once in 2003. It was used to stress the necessity for cooperation: "notwithstanding these concerns, India continues its endeavour to seek a long term and stable relationship with China[218]." Beijing also came up twice in 2006 and 2007 concerning "Chinese assistance to Pakistan's nuclear and missile programme." In the MEA "concern" subcorpus, China is mentioned in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2018, and 2019 concerning the growing trade deficit with India. However, this is not related to hedging as defined in this work because it is an economic element. Meanwhile, the U.S is not mentioned once in both those subcorpora.

Finally, I observed the complete corpus through the similarity analysis in IRaMuTeQ, which is based on graph theory to study the connectivity between the words used and "identify the shared parts and specificities according to the descriptive variables identified in the analysis[219]." In other words, as I indicated to the software which texts corresponded to which

[218] Ministry of Defence, Government of India, "Annual Report 2002-2003, " 5.
[219] Pascal Marchand and Pierre Ratinaud, « L'identité Nationale : Un 'Grand Débat' Loin d'être Clos, » *IRaMuTeQ*, 2012, 692.

institution, the Correspondence Factors Analysis could provide me with information about the threat perception exposed by each of them. Appendices 3 and 4 show that the military (through the several Army, Navy, and Air Force doctrines) emphasized the threat ("terrorism," "threat," "neighborhood") when the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of External Affairs underline discussion and cooperation ("bilateral," "mutual," "exchange"). These conclusions are consistent with Rawat's comments and the Ministry's reaction. However, the fact remains that the Indian military "has traditionally remained outside the decision-making loop right from the early years of India's independence[220]." Therefore, the institution that could be the most virulent toward China does not really have a voice in the chapter. Hence, it hints at our conclusion on India's threat assessment.

Now that I have presented some of the general results of the threat assessment analysis, I will go further here to give a better overview of the "Chinese case."

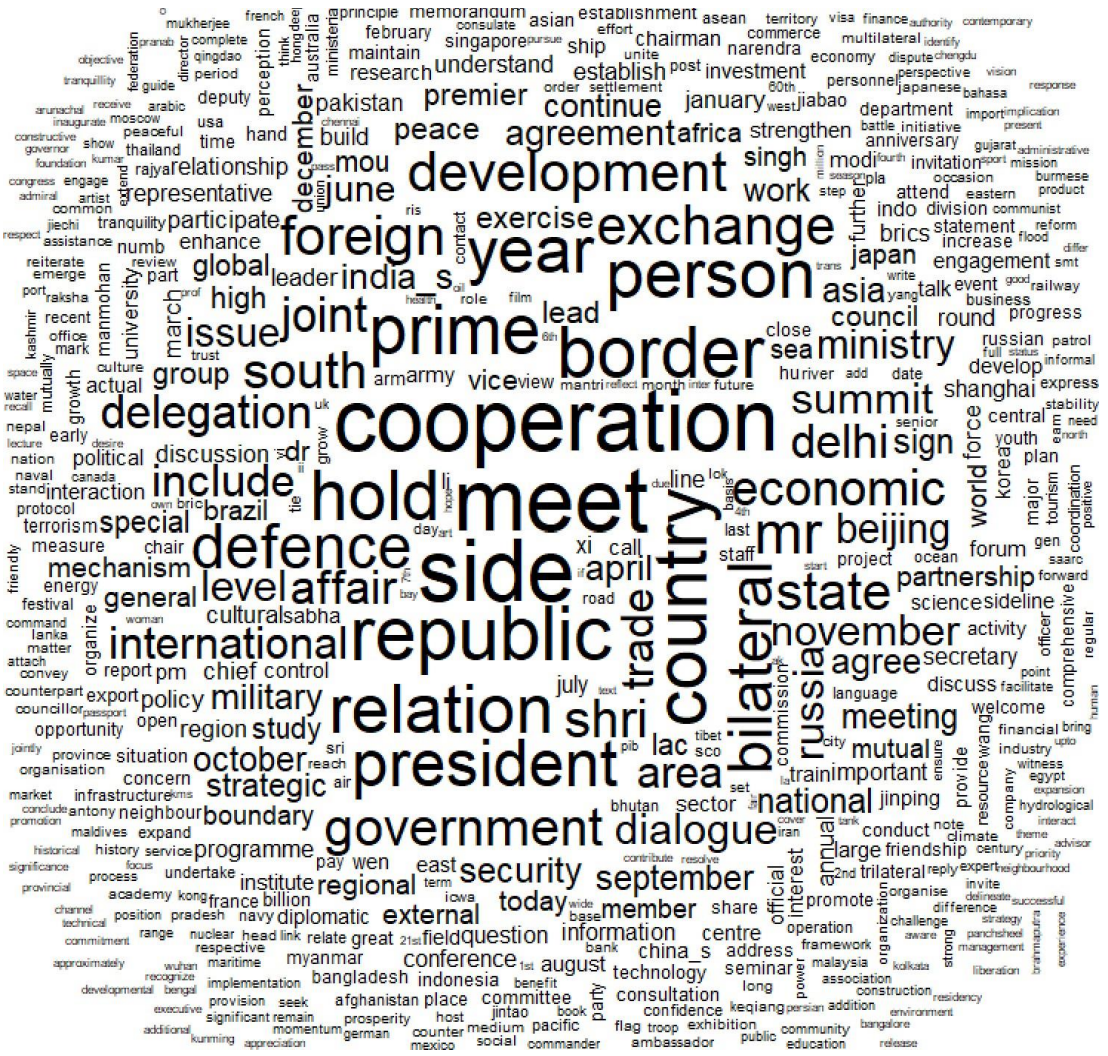
2.3.2 The assessment of a Chinese 'threat'?

First of all, I studied the entire corpus, and I selected the text segments that included "China," "Sino," or "Chinese. From a general perspective, the Indian official speeches emphasize cooperation and exchanges with China, and Figure 2.5 is a good representation of this tendency. Of course, the border issue remains an important topic, but it is mostly related to terms like "cooperation" or "dialogue."

[220] Pant, *The Routledge Handbook of Indian Defence Policy*, 117.

Figure 2.5: A general assessment of China in Indian foreign policy documents

Source: Word cloud with segments containing "China" and "Chinese, IRaMuTeQ



Therefore, I wanted to dig a little deeper to see the evolution of the assessment of China throughout the years. Firstly, I will use Oren and Brummer's classification to quantify this threat assessment. Secondly, I will focus on two main issues that divide India and China: the relationship between Beijing and Islamabad, and the border issue.

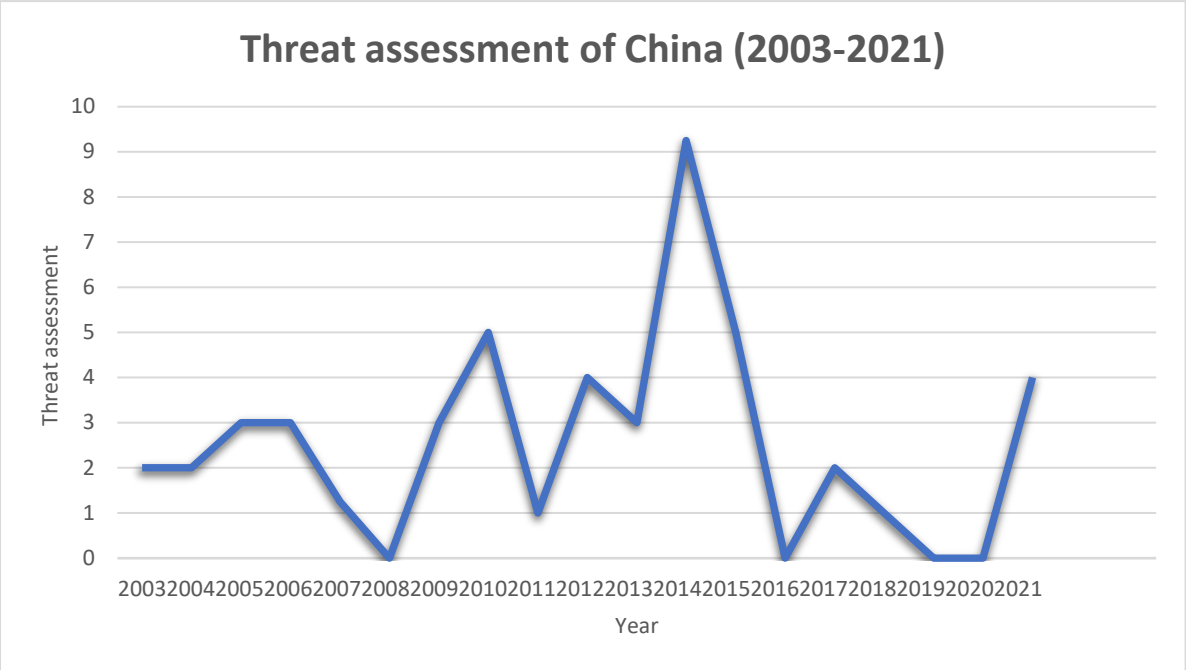
2.3.2.1 Oren and Brummer's classification

I used Oren and Brummer's method (see above) to have a more precise idea of the evolution of the threat assessment related to China[221]. This method, despite its pertinence, has

[221] Oren and Brummer, "Threat Perception, Government Centralization, and Political Instrumentality in Abe Shinzo's Japan."

limitations because it requires exhaustiveness in the data, which is challenging to accomplish when analyzing foreign policy. However, it provides pieces of information that are relevant to have an overview of the evolution of India's threat assessment.

Figure 2.6: Cumulative levels in India's threat assessment of China between 2003 and 2021



In 2014, the threat assessment was critical, especially concerning Chinese activities in Kashmir as well as incidents along the border. This year also coincides with Modi's accession to power (in May 2014). This peak is also consistent with the public opinion threat perception detected by the Pew Research Center, with 56% of Indians that believed China to be a "major threat" in 2014 (Figure 2.6).

Noticeably, the Standing Committee on Defence at the *Lok Sabha* (the lower house of the Indian Parliament) wrote a report in February 2014 that stated that "China and Pakistan continue to pose the major threats to [India's] security[222]." It also underlined that "the rise of China [was] posing a serious strategic challenge to India[223]." However, in a similar report the following year (2015), the Committee does not reference China as a threat or a concern. This event indicates a change in the threat assessment, it may be related to the transition between Prime Ministers.

[222] Standing Committee on Defence, Ministry of Defence, "Threat Perception and Preparedness of the Forces," *Lok Sabha Secretariat*, February 18, 2014, 9.
[223] Standing Committee on Defence, "Perception and Preparedness of the Forces," 10.

It is interesting to see that, despite a decrease between 2016 and 2020, the threat assessment rose in 2021, primarily because the MoD has been referring to a "Chinese threat at the coastal region" when conducting naval exercises in August.

The threats or risks mentioned are not only Pakistan and the border issue, but also the nuclear threat coming from Beijing, which I will develop no further (due to a lack of time). Nonetheless, in the Annual Report of 2002-3, the MoD wrote that "as far as India is concerned, it cannot be ignored that every major Indian city is within reach of Chinese missiles. […] The asymmetry in terms of nuclear forces is pronouncedly in favour of China and is likely to get further accentuated as China responds to counter the U.S. missile defence programme[224]."

2.3.2.2 Evolution of the tone on specific issues

Finally, to complete this threat assessment and have a closer look at the evolution of tone choice, I decided to focus on two particular issues that divide India and China.

2.3.2.2.1 China's relation to Pakistan

One of India's first worries is China-Pakistan's nexus because it brings together India's worst nemesis and its dangerous northern neighbor. The Sino-Pakistani relationship was initiated in the 1960s in order for China to "keep Pakistan as a stable, secure, and reliable neighbour in a strategically important region[225]." The corpus mentions this Sino-Pakistani relationship as soon as 2003 as "China's close defence relationship with Pakistan takes a particular edge in view of latter's known belligerence and hostility to India and its acquisition of nuclear assets.[226]" Moreover, Pakistan became particularly important to China within the latter's "two-ocean" strategy (Pacific and Indian Oceans), a concept that appeared in the literature around 2005[227].

Although the Annual Report of the MoD in 2004 underlined that "relations with China are improving[228]," it also criticized "China's close defence relationship with and regular military assistance to Pakistan, including assistance in the latter's nuclear and missile programmes at critical stages," a development that "require[d] observation[229]." However, it is

[224] Ministry of Defence, Government of India, "Annual Report 2002-2003," 5.
[225] Jingdong Yuan, "Managing Maritime Competition between India and China," in *India and China at Sea* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018), 45.
[226] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2002-2003," 5.
[227] Tom G. Sun and Alex Payette, "China's Two Ocean Strategy : Controlling Waterways and the New Silk Road," *Asian Focus*, Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques, 31 (May 2017): 2.
[228] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2003-2004," 12.
[229] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2003-2004," 13.

not yet assessed as a risk. This relationship was mentioned once again in 2005. In 2006, for the first time, the "close defence exchanges and nuclear and missile cooperation between China and Pakistan[230]" was assessed as a source of "concern."

The region New Delhi calls "Pakistan-occupied Kashmir" is a crucial issue between India, China, and Pakistan. As soon as 2009, the Annual Report of the MoD mentioned the "possibility of enhancing connectivity with Pakistan through the territory of Jammu & Kashmir, illegally occupied by China and Pakistan and with other countries will also have direct military implications for India[231]." "Illegally" is a forceful choice of word, and, in 2009, it concurred with a rising risk assessment (see Figure 2.6).

However, from 2010 to 2015, there is no direct reference to Pakistan in relation to China in the corpus's different documents. The only references are to India's "immediate and extended neighbourhood[232]." The Indian Maritime Security Strategy in 2015 even stated about China that "there is potential for simultaneous cooperation, even amidst competition, which can be promoted through maritime efforts and is a focus area in the revised strategy[233]."

There was a turning point in 2015. Indeed, the launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a bilateral project that connects the Karakoram "Friendship Highway" (from Kashgar in the Xinjiang to Abbottabad) to the port of Gwadar, became another source of worry for India. China tried to present this initiative as purely an economic one, but Prime Minister Modi objected to this massive infrastructural project in 2015 because it crossed territories in Pakistani Kashmir. In 2016, the Annual Report of the MoD denounced the "China- Pakistan Economic Corridor' (CPEC) passing through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir [that] challenges Indian sovereignty[234]." In 2018, the MoD also assessed that "under the rubric of CPEC, China has positioned itself as the primary supplier of military hardware, techno-economic funding and diplomatic support to Pakistan.[235]"

India's main concern with the CPEC is the Gwadar port that China has financed. The Gwadar port could become "a potential naval base – and more specifically a logistical support point for Chinese submarines operating in the Indian Ocean[236]." In 2015, China also sold frigates and 8 Yuan class submarines, and some of these could carry nuclear-tipped missiles.

[230] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2005-2006," 10.
[231] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2008-2009," 6.
[232] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2010-2011," 6.
[233] India, Indian Navy, and Concepts and Transformation Directorate of Strategy, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy.*, 2015, 6.
[234] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2016-2017," 4.
[235] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2017-2018," 4.
[236] Frederic Grare, "Along the Road: Gwadar and China's Power Projection," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, July 31, 2018.

The idea of nuclear submarines in the Arabian Sea is a difficult pill for India to swallow, especially since "New Delhi regards the Indian Ocean as its backyard and deems it both natural and desirable that India function as, eventually, the leader and the predominant influence in the region – the world's only region and ocean named after a single state[237]." Moreover, in 2020, Pakistan and China held joint maritime exercises, Sea Guardians, in the Arabian Sea. However, these have not been mentioned in India's threat assessment.

The links between Pakistan and China present a significant risk to India. It is assessed as such because "Pakistan's value for China as a geostrategic tool or a bargaining chip in the China-US-India triangular relationship will inevitably increase.[238]" The threat assessment regarding the China-Pakistan nexus increased after the beginning of the CPEC in 2015, without, however, crossing the threshold between risk and threat. The analysis of India's threat assessment of the China-Pakistan issue shows that India remains in the hedging part of the spectrum.

2.3.2.2.2 The issue of the northern border

The second matter that divides China and India is the northern border. British India and China obtained a shared border in 1826 after the first war between Britain and Burma. Tensions and disagreements are more recent and date back to the Simla Convention in 1914 between Tibet, India, and China. China criticized the limit drawn between Tibet (*de facto* independent at that time) and India: the McMahon line. Beijing refused to sign the Convention because it claimed the territory that is today Arunachal Pradesh on the East and Aksai Chin on the West. With the independence in 1947 and the annexation of Tibet in 1951, China and India inherited a 4 000km-long border in the Himalayas. After the 1962 war, China kept the Aksai Chin and gave back Arunachal Pradesh to India without ever withdrawing its claim on this territory. Since the war, the balance at the border has been very precarious, and, despite the agreements signed in 1993 and 1996, skirmishes are recurrent in the Ladakh (West) and the Sikkim (East).

The Annual Report of the MEA in 2003 mentions the Sikkim because India and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding on expanding border trade, thus "start[ing] the process

[237] Donald L. Berlin, 'India in the Indian Ocean', Naval War College Review 59, no. 2 (2006): 60. Quoted in David Brewster, ed., *India and China at Sea: Competition for Naval Dominance in the Indian Ocean* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018), 22.
[238] Mohan Malik, *China and India: Great Power Rivals* (Boulder, Colorado: First Forum Press, 2011), 189–90. Quoted in David Brewster, ed., *India and China at Sea: Competition for Naval Dominance in the Indian Ocean*, 51.

by which Sikkim will cease to be an issue in India-China relations[239]." However, as soon as 2004, Indian MoD underlined that "build up in the Tibet Autonomous Region […] require[d] observation.[240]" In 2005, the Ministry "continue[d] to monitor the development of military infrastructure by China in India-China border areas[241]."

Even when Sino-Indian relations were at their 'best,' with the signature of the "Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question[242]" in 2006, the border remained a crucial issue. The same year, the Annual Report stated that "while positive trends of India-China relations are encouraging, the two sides need to proactively address all outstanding issues, including the boundary question, through peaceful means[243]." However, the threat assessment concerning the border remains low, as Air Chief Marshal F.H. Major, the Chief of Air Staff, asserted that "[they] do not see any short-term threat from China on the Arunachal Pradesh border […] but in the longer run, the threat cannot be ruled out[244]." Therefore, in 2007, the boundary issue "continue[s] to be monitored closely[245]."

A slight change happened in 2008. Indeed, despite a "policy of positive engagement [that] is being followed,[246]" the Indian Army changed its threat assessment because of the infrastructure developments in Tibet[247]. This change entailed the diminution of response time in the event of a standoff at the border. Once again, the fiercest choice of tone comes from the military.

However, in general, the words remain carefully chosen. In 2012 and 2013, the Ministry of Defence assured that "although the unresolved boundary dispute between India and China has been a factor in India's security calculus, India has a strategic and cooperative partnership with China[248]." It was verified in 2013 with the signature of the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement. In the following years, "the situation along the India-China border continues to be peaceful[249]."

[239] Ministry of External Affairs, "Annual Report 2003-2004," 16.
[240] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2003-2004," 13.
[241] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2004-2005," 13.
[242] Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Annual Report 2005-2006," 6.
[243] Ministry of Defence, Government of India, "Annual Report 2005-2006," 10.
[244] Quoted in Jonathan Holslag, *China and India: Prospects for Peace* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2010), 128.
[245] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2006-2007," 6.
[246] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2007-2008," 22.
[247] Holslag, "The Persistent Military Security Dilemma between China and India," 823.
[248] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2011-2012," 6.
[249] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2015-2016," 18.

2017 should have marked a turning point at the border with the two months-long standoff at Doklam in the Sikkim. Despite this notable event, the MoD stated that "though events in 2017 added to the complexities in India-China relations, the strategic dialogue between India and China continued under the overall context of a developmental partnership, which also helped in peaceful disengagement of border personnel of India and China at the face-off site in the Doklam region[250]." The tone is measured despite the tensions at the border. The emphasis is placed on cooperation, even if the report underlines that the number of transgressions has increased since 2016 – 334 in 2017 against 235 in 2016.

Other skirmishes happened in 2020, and shots were fired for the first time since the war. At least twenty Indian soldiers died at the border, and the death toll is unknown on the Chinese side. China remains a significant risk for India with the massive number of troops deployed at the border, and tensions are still present despite the numerous meetings and agreements. However, I do not believe India has assessed this as a threat since 2003 in the several official documents and doctrines I have studied.

2.4 Conclusion of the threat assessment

In conclusion, India's threat assessment between 2003 and 2021 seems limited to terrorism (in Pakistan, Kashmir, and Afghanistan), piracy, and nuclear proliferation. China and the U.S. are not associated with an imminent threat, even though China has been listed under "concern" on several occasions. There is no doubt that China is perceived as a risk and assessed as one. China may be *perceived* as a threat (the public opinion hints about this), but the official assessment does not show a real evolution from risk to threat perception. Therefore, using Oren and Brummer's classification (Figure 1.2), I argue that India's threat assessment lies at the third level and remained in the hedging interval, despite a high point in 2014.

A further analysis of India's threat assessment would be useful to have a better and more precise examination. It would allow to widen the scope to other actors in the society, such as the media (how is China assessed in the biggest Indian media?), and other politicians and decision-makers (to study for example whether there is a distinction between the political parties), or even a closer look at the population's threat assessment.

Now that it is clear that India has assessed China and the U.S as risks rather than threats since 2003, this is still not sufficient to conclude that India is indeed hedging. I will now move on to the second indicator: the diplomatic assessment.

[250] Ministry of Defence, "Annual Report 2017-2018," 4.

Chapter 3: Diplomatic assessment

Now that the threat assessment has shown India's hedging behavior, I will turn to the next indicator: the assessment of India's diplomatic position on the international stage.

In the first part, I will analyze India's voting pattern at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to figure out whether there has been a rapprochement with China or the U.S in terms of diplomatic preferences. If India has a diplomatic stance growing closer to the U.S, then my hypothesis, whereby India is hedging, is weakened. On the contrary, if India's position at the UNGA remains similar to China's, India is hedging. Despite the need for some nuance, I will show that the scale is tipped in favor of the second possibility.

The second part will focus on two contentious issues, Taiwan and the South China Sea, and analyze India's standpoint in both cases. If India remains ambiguous on both issues, it goes along with my hypothesis that its strategy is hedging. I argue that India's growing unofficial relationship with Taiwan is not yet accompanied by any sign of an official relationship that would indicate balancing. On the South China Sea topic, India seems to indicate irritation vis-à-vis China, but it does not officially support the American stance. Therefore, I will show in this second chapter that the diplomatic indicator tends to support my hypothesis.

3.1 Voting patterns at the United Nations General Assembly

Firstly, I will focus on India's voting pattern at the UNGA since 2003. I will use the Ideal Points indicator. This statistical measure has been constructed by Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten who argued that "votes in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) have become the standard data source for constructing measures of state preferences as they are comparable and observable actions taken by many countries at set points in time[251]." Nevertheless, they underlined that all indicators are not all equally pertinent because "existing measures fail to separate changes in the U.N.'s agenda from shifts in state preferences[252]." The S-score indicator or the Affinity score, for example, are based on the assumption that all votes weigh the same for every country. Therefore, the authors developed the Ideal Point model to have "more valid inter-temporal comparisons" and be "better able to distinguish signal from noise in identifying

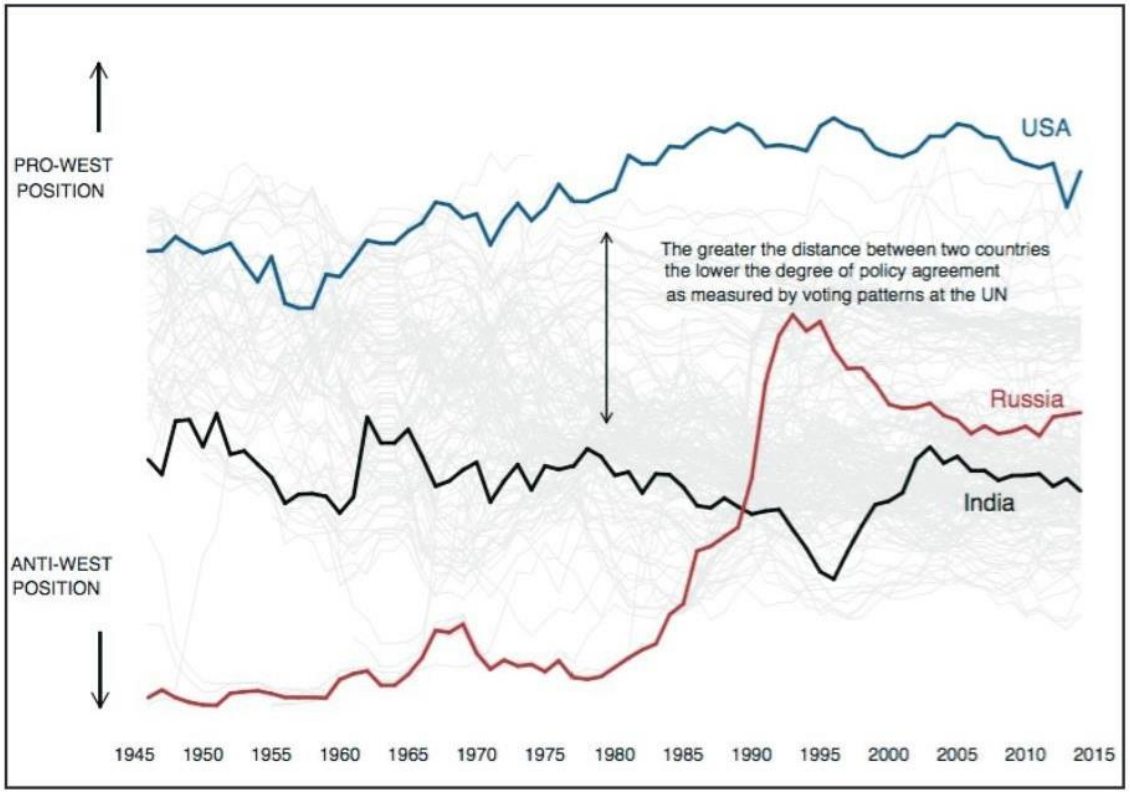
[251] Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten, "Estimating Dynamic State Preferences from United Nations Voting Data," 431.
[252] Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten, 431.

meaningful shifts in foreign policy orientations[253].” To better grasp the meaning of this indicator, I’ll use Aparajita Das’ formulation: he has studied India’s voting record since its independence and he describes the IP as “points on a policy-preference spectrum, one end of which represents the Western position, and the opposite end, an anti-Western position[254].” (See Figure 3.1 to illustrate this). Furthermore, Das underlined that “intuitively, the lines represented on the graphs may be interpreted as tending toward the US-led liberal order when values are higher on the y-axis, the direction in which the Western states tend to vote[255].”

Figure 3.1: “Policy Positions”

From Aparajita Das, “A Fine Balance: India’s Voting Record at the UNGA,” Observer Research Foundation, no. 192 (2017): 3.

Figure 1.2: Policy Positions



Despite the value of this indicator, there are serious limitations to this study of UNGA votes because it is limited to resolutions adopted with a vote. Around a quarter of the votes are

[253] Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten, 432.
[254] Das, “A Fine Balance: India’s Voting Record at the UNGA,” 2.
[255] Das, “A Fine Balance: India’s Voting Record at the UNGA,” 3.

actually "consensus votes," and this proportion varies over the years, which should also be considered[256]. For example, when studying votes on human rights in North Korea, it is essential to bear in mind that the resolutions since 2016 have been adopted by consensus whereas, before that, there were votes. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to identify a tendency throughout the years.

Moreover, Das acknowledges that there "may be a distinction between the revealed preferences of a member state, as expressed by its voting patterns at the UNGA and its 'true' preferences [257]." On the one hand, one could believe that UNGA votes are not binding enough to reveal one country's foreign policy choices. On the other hand, the upsides when studying UNGA votes, rather than the Security Council votes, are that India has taken part in the votes yearly (whereas India was in the Security Council only in 2011 and 2012) and that voting is non-binding at the UNGA. Therefore, strategic voting is "likely […] a less common phenomenon than in the U.N. Security Council[258]."

Firstly, I will draw a general assessment of India's voting pattern compared to China's and the U.S., based on Aparajita Das' analysis between 2003 and 2017 and Voeten's database for the remaining years. Secondly, I will focus on more specific votes: the ones considered by the U.S. as 'important votes' and the votes regarding human rights issues.

3.1.1 A general assessment

In an Issue Brief for the Observer Research Foundation (based in New Delhi), Aparajita Das has studied India's voting record at the UNGA, which he described as a "fine balance[259]."

He concludes from his 2017 analysis that "Indian policy has maintained a high degree of consistency over the years, often withstanding major transitions on the international stage[260]." According to him, it reveals that India's position has been viewed as "a common thread for various coalitions of developing nations throughout the history of the U.N.[261]." He underlines that since the 2000s, "India has enjoyed a relatively high level of agreement with Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa[262]," especially with the "emergence of BRICS as a

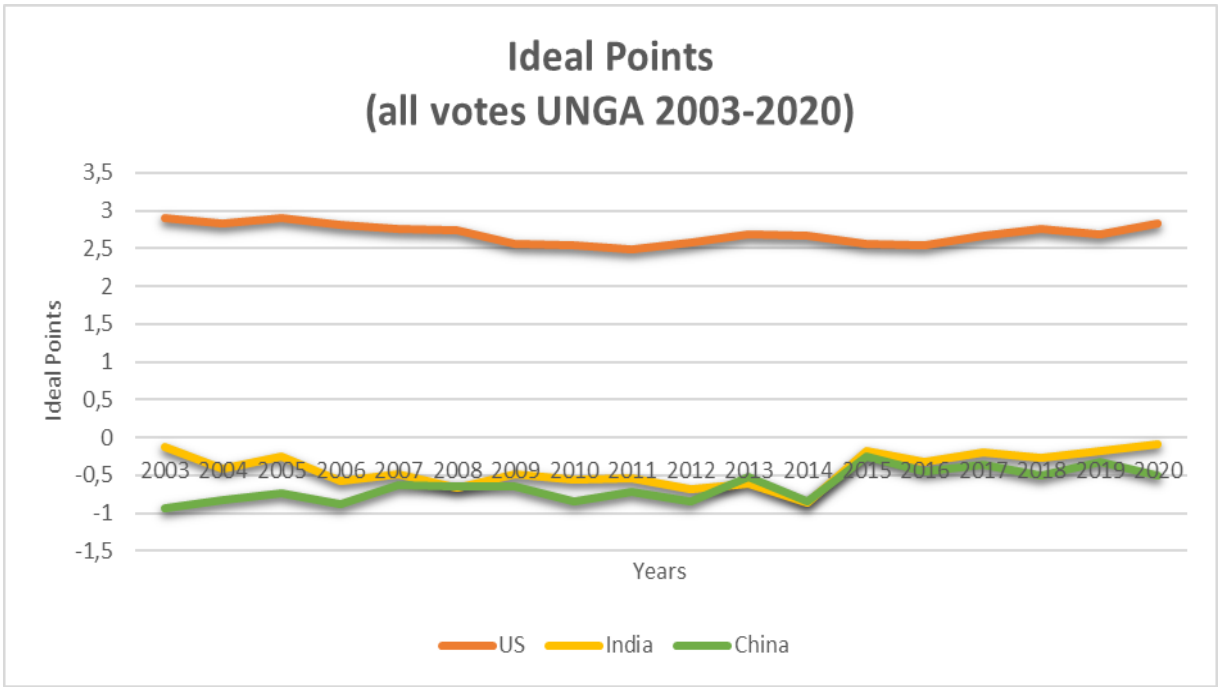
[256] Frank Häge and Simon Hug, "Consensus Voting and Similarity Measures in IOs," *SSRN Scholarly Paper* (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, 2012), 5.
[257] Das, "A Fine Balance: India's Voting Record at the UNGA," 1.
[258] Das, 1.
[259] Das, 1.
[260] Das, 2.
[261] Das, 2.
[262] Das, 5.

multilateral grouping" in 2001. India's position also became more consistent with the Western states since 2005 and the Indo-U.S. nuclear agreement. Still, the fact remains that both "are at a greater distance from each other than in the early years of the U.N., perhaps indicative of India's greater recognition and vocal opposition to existing disparities in the liberal world order[263]."

I wanted to develop this analysis further by focusing on the co-evolution between India's votes and China's/the United States' until 2020.

Figure 3.2 : Ideal Points on all votes at the UNGA for India, China, and the U.S (2003-2020)

Ideal Points Data: Voeten, Erik; Strezhnev, Anton; Bailey, Michael, 2009, "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LEJUQZ, Harvard Dataverse, V28, UNF:6:dki7hpeRB0FwTFJ00X/TCQ== [fileUNF].



Bailey et al. emphasize the idea that IPs are not dyadic "but [one] can compute absolute distances between the ideal points of countries[264]." Here, I wanted to analyze the evolution of a relation between two pairs of states. Therefore, I computed the absolute distance between the

[263] Das, 9.
[264] Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten, "Estimating Dynamic State Preferences from United Nations Voting Data," 435.

ideal points of India and the U.S./China to study how both evolved. I also changed the scale (y-axis) to have a more accurate view of the evolution (see Figure 3.3 and 3.4).

Figure 3.3: Distance between Ideal Points (India-China, 2003-2020)

Ideal Points Data: Voeten, Erik; Strezhnev, Anton; Bailey, Michael, 2009, "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LEJUQZ, Harvard Dataverse, V28, UNF:6:dki7hpeRB0FwTFJ00X/TCQ== [fileUNF].

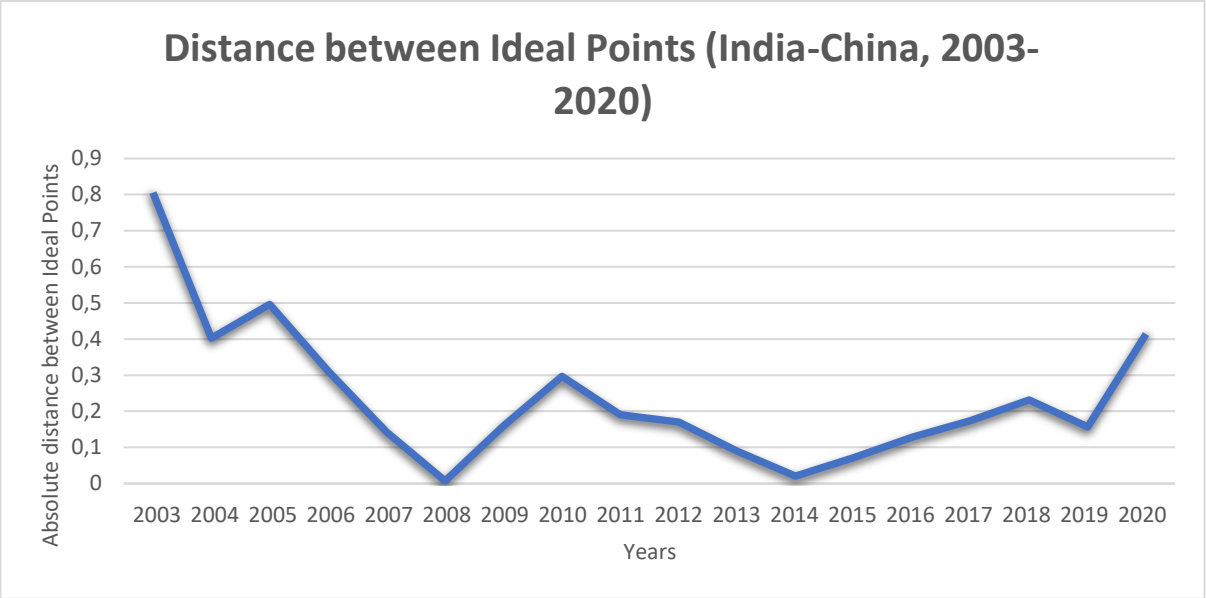
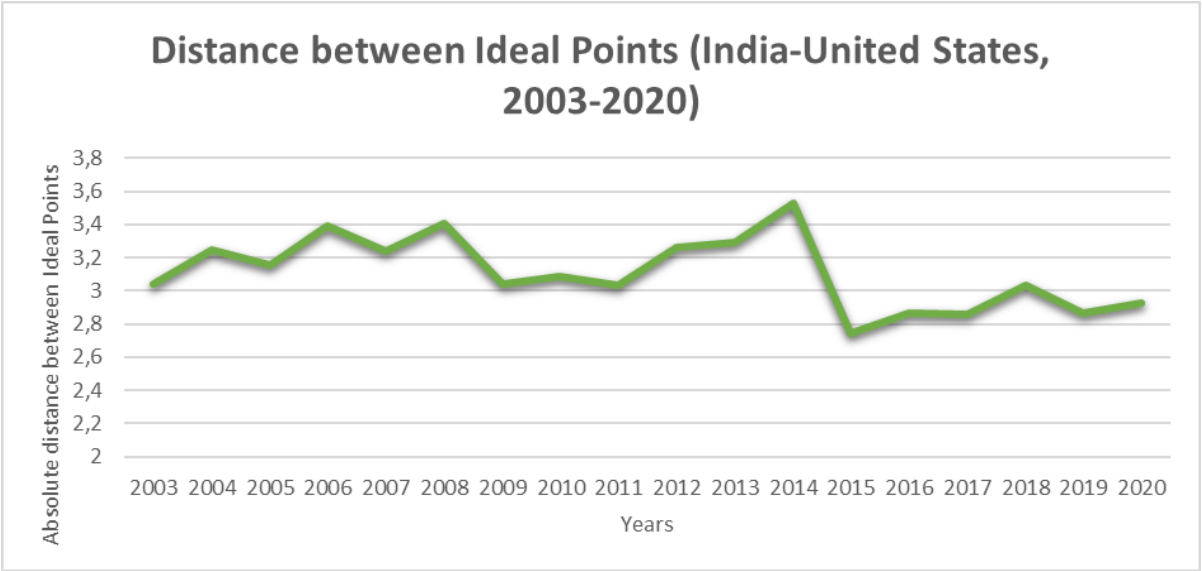


Figure 3.4 : Distance between Ideal Points (India-United States, 2003-2020)

Ideal Points Data: Voeten, Erik; Strezhnev, Anton; Bailey, Michael, 2009, "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LEJUQZ, Harvard Dataverse, V28, UNF:6:dki7hpeRB0FwTFJ00X/TCQ== [fileUNF].



India's votes converged with China's between 2003 and 2013-2014, and they slightly diverged afterward. The lowest difference between Ideal Points (almost reaching zero) was reached in 2008 and 2014. After both these dates, the difference increased again. The turning point in 2014 tallies with the threat assessment analysis. It could be linked to Modi's accession to power and the skirmishes at the border. The most impressive result is that India's voting pattern remains distinct from the U.S.' even if the difference has reduced since 2014. Of course, India could be slightly diverging toward the "Western vote" since 2015, but Figure 3.2 indicates the massive distance that remains between India and the U.S.

After a general assessment of the three powers' voting patterns on all votes, I argue that there has not been a genuine rapprochement between India and the U.S. Despite a slight increase in the gap between India and China, the two countries still vote essentially in a similar manner at the UNGA.

3.1.2 "Important votes" at the UNGA

The U.S. Department of State publishes yearly a "listing of important U.N. General Assembly (UNGA) votes, defined as 'votes on issues which directly affected important United States interests and on which the United States lobbied extensively[265].'" Those reports state that an "important basis for identifying [those] issues is their consistency with the State Department's Strategic Goals[266]." Therefore, those "important" votes (in an American perspective) may reveal to a better extent the U.S.' preferences in terms of voting at the UNGA. Thus, if New Delhi disagrees with Washington on those very votes, it is even more meaningful in terms of preferences analyses.

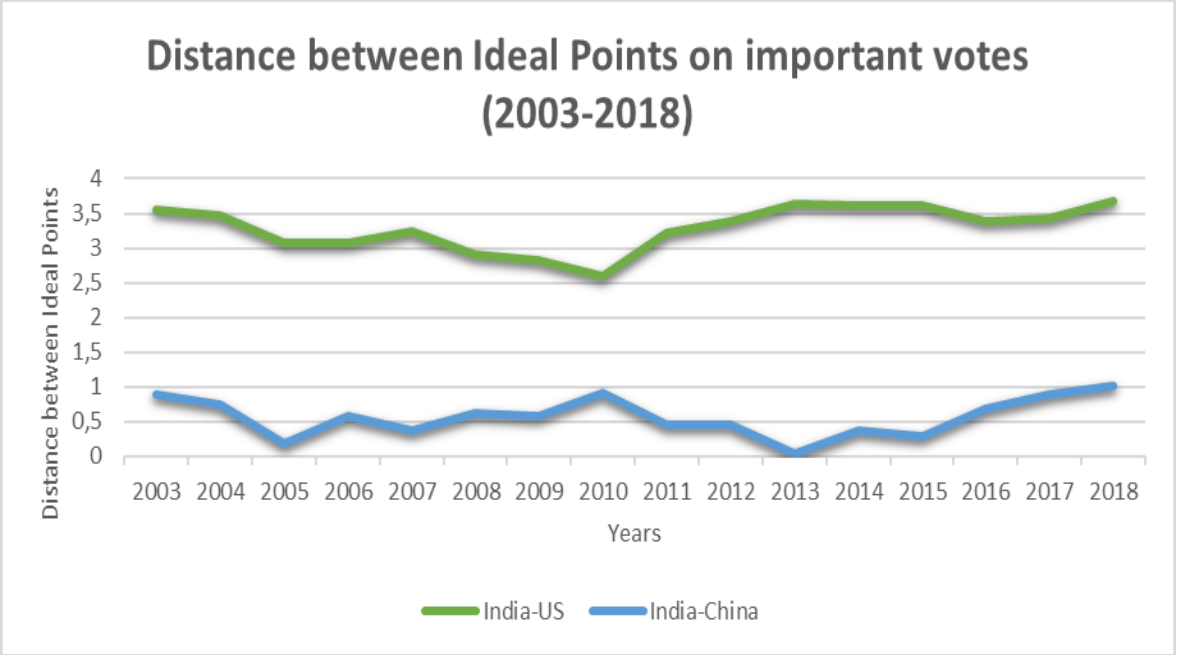
In 2003, 15 votes were reported as 'important' by the U.S. The minimum was reached in 2014 with 13 votes and the maximum in 2020 with 31 votes.

[265] *Voting Practices in the United Nations: Report to Congress Submitted Pursuant to Public Law 101-167* (United States, Department of State, 1998), 43.
[266] *Voting Practices in the United Nations*, 43.

Figure 3.5 : Distance between Ideal points calculated on "important votes" (2003-2018)

Ideal Points Data: Voeten, Erik; Strezhnev, Anton; Bailey, Michael, 2009, "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LEJUQZ, Harvard Dataverse, V28, UNF:6:dki7hpeRB0FwTFJ00X/TCQ== [fileUNF].

Data sets: Bailey, Michael A., Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten. "Estimating dynamic state preferences from United Nations voting data." Journal of Conflict Resolution 61, no. 2 (2017): 430-456. https://github.com/evoeten/United-Nations-General-Assembly-Votes-and-Ideal-Points



Firstly, it is interesting to notice that the curves are symmetric from 2005/2006 until 2016. When India is voting in a more U.S-similar manner, it is voting to a lesser extent like China. This element shows the trend of polarization between China and the U.S., especially visible for U.S.'important votes.'

Secondly, when the Ideal Points are calculated on "important votes" only, we see a growing difference between India's voting patterns and China's. The 'absolute' distance reached almost 1 in 2010 and 2018, whereas it reached only 0,3 and 0,2 on all votes[267]. There is a more significant increase in the level of disagreement between India and China when focusing on those important votes.

There has been a decrease in the difference between India and the U.S. until 2010 (Figure 3.5). However, India's position does not seem to be more "Western-oriented" since

[267] Appendix 7.

2016. Contrary to the I.P. on all votes, the distance between India's and the U.S.' I.P. on important votes grows, which reveals an even stronger disagreement on votes that the U.S considers as affecting its national interest.

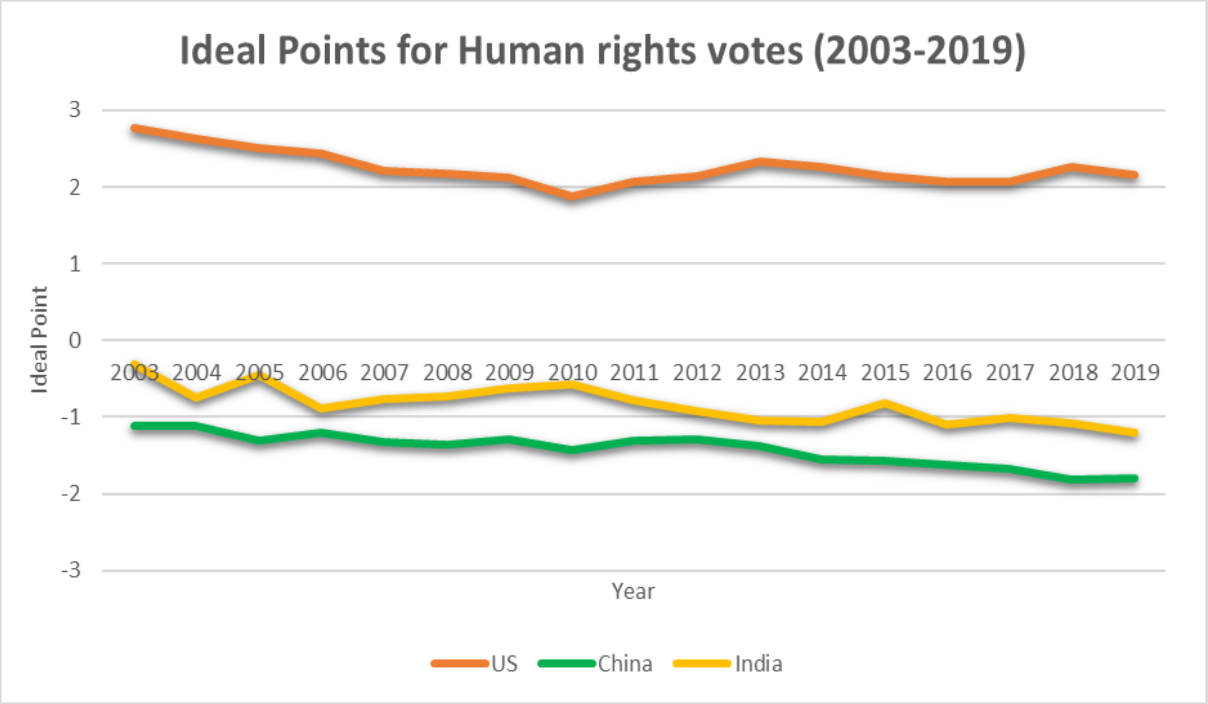
According to those results, India is not choosing a side or the other as both curves are going up from 2016 onward, which is an even more robust evidence of hedging.

3.1.3 A focus on "Human Rights" votes

Finally, I decided to focus on the votes on human rights issues because they should polarize China's position as an autocracy and the U.S.' as a democracy. An evolution toward either of them would be meaningful and could indicate a trend toward balancing. As a democracy, it is expected of India to vote similarly to the U.S. on these issues. The human rights (H.R.) vote represents 17% of all votes, according to the data from Michael A. Bailey, Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten.

Figure 3.6 : Figure 3.6: Ideal Points of Human Rights votes for India, China, and the U.S (2003-2019)

Ideal Points Data: Voeten, Erik; Strezhnev, Anton; Bailey, Michael, 2009, "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LEJUQZ, Harvard Dataverse, V28, UNF:6:dki7hpeRB0FwTFJ00X/TCQ== [fileUNF].



(See Appendices 7 and 8 for the computation of the absolute distance for the two pairs)

Once again, India's voting pattern remains very different from the U.S.', even if the difference is slightly lower than for the overall votes (range 2,45 – 3,37 for H.R. votes[268] against 2,74 –3,53 for overall votes). However, there is no clear tendency, and India does not seem to follow the "liberal" path at the UNGA. Compared to China, the average difference is 0,59 for H.R. votes against 0,24 for overall votes. Therefore, India is slightly less in agreement with China's voting when human rights are involved. Nonetheless, this "disagreement" is far from comparable to the distance U.S.-India.

An example of those votes are the resolutions about the "situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar" that have traditionally opposed China and the U.S., the latter being against 'country-specific resolutions,' and the former advocating

[268] Appendices 7 and 8.

for human rights. India had usually been voting against these resolutions since 2006 (from 2003 to 2006, the resolutions were adopted without a vote). However, from 2017 until 2020, India has abstained. India also abstained from the 2021 resolution that called "upon the armed forces of Myanmar to immediately stop violence against peaceful demonstrators and allow the sustained democratic transition of the country[269]." China abstained as well, whereas the U.S. voted in favor of this resolution. India abstained from this resolution that was, according to New Delhi, "tabled in a hurry." Still, it was also trying to suggest another text with ASEAN countries and submit it to a vote, but China opposed this resolution as well[270]. Therefore, India did not align with either power on this specific issue.

One voting pattern is particularly interesting: the votes regarding the resolutions entitled "Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea." These votes started in 2004 and ended in 2015, as, afterward, the resolution was adopted by consensus. India's voting pattern was consistent because it abstained from each vote while China voted against and the U.S. in favor. The former "opposed any 'country-specific resolutions,' which some argued 'use human rights issues for political purposes,[271]" whereas the latter, the co-sponsor of the draft resolution, "promotes accountability related to the human rights situation in DPRK[272]." This consistent abstention from India shows a strategy that aims to avoid alignment on contentious issues, the North Korean issue being another major source of tensions between China and the U.S.

On the Crimean issue, India has opposed resolutions on the "situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine" since those votes began in 2017. However, India has abstained, rather than opposed, the resolutions on the "problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov" since 2018.

These tendencies are interesting because they go against common sense: one would expect India to vote similarly to other democracies at the U.N. One explanation is the existence of the "Link-Minded Group of Developing Countries[273]." This group gathers countries from

[269] "General Assembly Reappoints Secretary-General to Second Five-Year Term, Adopting Resolution Condemning Lethal Violence by Myanmar's Armed Forces," published June 18, 2021.
[270] Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "India, Russia, China Abstain from UN Vote on Myanmar," *The Economic Times*, June 20, 2021.
[271] "North Korea Human Rights on the UN General Assembly Agenda," *Korea Economic Institute of America*, December 9, 2020.
[272] United States Mission to the United Nations, "General Statement on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," November 18, 2020.
[273] Amr Essam, "The Like Minded Group (LMG): Speaking Truth to Power," *Universal Rights Group*, May 10, 2016.

South and South-East Asia and the Middle East, including India and China. It is most active during climate talks or conferences. Still, this group also operates at the UNGA on human-rights-related issues because those countries "attempt to weaken pressure on all states to cooperate with U.N. human rights mechanisms[274]." I do not believe that this explanation undermines the results of this analysis, as this group is a manifestation of this Sino-Indian joint commitment on the international stage.

3.1.4 Conclusion of the UNGA votes analysis

In our analysis, "prima facie," India seems to follow China regarding UNGA votes and is in quite a strong dissonance with the U.S. According to Srdjan Vučetić, these differences in voting cannot be entirely attributed to the states' revealed preferences but also to "complex historical processes of national and international/institutional political development.[275]" Vučetić, who studied China's and the U.S.' patterns of voting at the UNGA, noticed that China's "diplomats at the UNGA have had a tendency to track majority voting blocks, such as the Non-Aligned and/or the G77[276]," or even the Like-Minded Countries that I mentioned earlier. Conversely, he underlined that "U.S. diplomats have followed the opposite path, reflecting and reinforcing the notion of American exemptionalism[277]." Even within the "liberal/Western group," the U.S. has a peculiar voting pattern.

An analysis of regional groups could explain why India has a voting pattern so close to China's. As Vučetić and Ramadanovic stated, it would be interesting to "develop techniques that enable us to pay much greater attention to region- and peer group-level influences on state behaviour in the world's largest deliberative body.[278]"

Despite these nuances, I argue that it is possible to draw conclusions from this Ideal Point analysis:

- First off, India's general voting pattern has been consistent over the years, and the changes have been minor.

[274] Ted Piccone, "China's Long Game on Human Rights at the United Nations," *Brookings*, September 18, 2018, 10.
[275] Srdjan Vucetic, "China and Its Region: An Assessment of Hegemonic Prospects" *SocArXiv*, September 22, 2021), 24.
[276] Vucetic, 24.
[277] Vucetic, 24.
[278] Srdjan Vucetic and Bojan Ramadanovic, "Canada in the United Nations General Assembly from Trudeau to Trudeau" *SocArXiv*, March 3, 2019, 16.

- Secondly, it is possible to witness a slight rapprochement with the U.S., except when looking at 'important votes' and distancing from China from 2014 onwards. However, the discrepancy remains far larger between India and the U.S. than between India and China.
- Thirdly, India has abstained consistently on several issues that divide China and the U.S., such as human rights in Korea or the militarization of Crimea. I argue that this willingness to remain 'neutral' is a sign of hedging.

In conclusion, the tendencies observed in these I.P. analyses are not pronounced enough to report an alignment on either great power. Even though India is voting closely with China, this is more likely due to their shared history than a significant foreign policy choice. Therefore, the relative stability of India's voting pattern in comparison to the great powers, as well as its consistency in abstaining on several issues, are in line with the argument that India is hedging.

3.2 Position on contentious issues

According to Fortier and Massie's criteria, "hedging should translate into ambiguous positions by middle powers on hotly contested international security issues between great powers[279]." Indeed, since a hedging state produces ambiguous signals to avoid alignment when confronted with an issue that polarizes the international system between China and the U.S., India should manage to maintain an ambiguous stance.

I have chosen to study two issues that "entail a clear zero-sum logic that pressured middle powers to side with one great power against another[280]": Taiwan and the territorial disputes in the South and the East China Sea. These issues are located in the Indo-Pacific region, which is crucial for India's strategic interests. India's alignment with the U.S. or China on either one of these issues would be a strong case for a balancing strategy.

3.2.1 Taiwan

The Taiwan issue is pertinent from this perspective because of the critical role it plays between China and the U.S. The former aims to reunify before 2049 when the latter provides

[279] Maxandre Fortier and Justin Massie, "Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition," *Research Project*, 2021, 5.
[280] Fortier and Massie, 5.

Taiwan with "defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capacity[281]."

3.2.1.1 Absence of official relations

India and Taiwan do not have any official diplomatic relations as they do not exchange embassies nor hold official dialogues. India recognized the Popular Republic of China in 1950 and was "one of the first countries to adhere to the One-China policy[282]." Nowadays, "India is among the 179 of the 193 member states of the U.N. that do not maintain diplomatic ties with Taiwan[283]."

In 2008, the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reaffirmed his country's acknowledgment of the One-China policy during a visit to China[284]. Similarly, in 2014, during the visit of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the then Indian Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj recognized "support[ing] the One-China policy." However, she also said that India "expect[ed] [China] to also have a One-India policy[285]" when it came to Arunachal Pradesh and Kashmir, the disputed areas with Pakistan and China. However, India does not officially align with the U.S. regarding Taiwan. Indeed, "while most like-minded countries have voiced their support for Taiwan and are assessing the implications of China's rising aggression, India has steered clear of issuing any statement on Taiwan[286]."

Officially acknowledging the One-China policy does not imply that an India-Taiwan relationship is inexistent or impossible. It only means that "India's relationship with China imposes certain constraints on how India-Taiwan relations can develop[287]."

[281] Clement J. Zablocki, "H.R.2479 - 96th Congress (1979-1980): Taiwan Relations Act," *Legislation*, October 4, 1979.
[282] Sana Hashmi, "India-Taiwan Relations: Time Is Ripe to Bolster Ties," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 15, no. 1 (2020): 40.
[283] Harsh V. Pant and Premesha Saha, "The Taiwan Question in Indian Foreign Policy," *Observer Research Foundation*, May 16, 2020.
[284] "Full Text of China-India Joint Document," *Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of India*, January 14, 2008.
[285] Quoted in Pranab Dhal Sharma, "One China? What about One India policy: Sushma Swaraj to Wang Yi", *Indian Express*, 12 June 2014.
[286] Hashmi, "India-Taiwan Relations."
[287] Tanvi Madan, "The India Opportunity for Taiwan," in Bonnie S. Glaser et Matthew P. Funaiole, éd., *Perspectives on Taiwan: Insights from the 2018 Taiwan-U.S. Policy Program*, CSIS Reports (Lanham: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2019), 26.

3.2.1.2 Unofficial signals of support

India's and Taiwan's strategies are not incompatible. In 2016, the newly elected president of Taiwan, Tsai Ing-wen, launched the New Southbound Policy to enhance economic relations and cooperation with eighteen countries in Asia, including India. This strategy is compatible with the Look East Policy launched in India in 1992, which became the Act East policy in 2014[288]. Indeed, "the New Southbound Policy and the Act East Policy provide a framework for India and Taiwan to engage each other[289]."

In a broader sense, "there is a growing realization that China should not define India's equation with Taiwan, and a rethink in the policy is crucial[290]." Several steps have been undertaken in the last years, primarily through informal channels. In terms of diplomatic ties, Prime Minister Modi invited Ambassador Chung Kwang-Tien, former Representative of Taiwan, to his swearing-in ceremony in 2014. In return, "on May 20, 2020, two B.J.P. Parliamentarians attended the second swearing-in ceremony of Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen virtually[291]." The two countries also revived the India-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Forum in 2020. Another evolution is that India Foreign Service is now sending its officers for language training to Taiwan rather than to China, "allow[ing] newly minted I.F.S. officers to understand Taiwan as it is, rather than as a subset of the China issue[292]." Finally, slight changes in this relationship are even noticeable in military affairs. For example, the Annual Report Ministry of Defence of India in 2016-2017 recorded that Taiwan was "one of the major export destinations for defense products[293]."

This progression is not to Beijing's liking. On October 7, 2020, the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi voiced concerns "regarding the so-called forthcoming National Day of Taiwan." It reminded Indian media "that there is only One-China in the world, and the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government representing the whole of China. Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory[294]." This was perceived as a "diktat[295]" in

[288] Hashmi, "India-Taiwan Relations," 40.
[289] Hashmi, 45.
[290] Hashmi, 45.
[291] Hashmi, 42.
[292] Sana Hashmi, "India-Taiwan Ties: From Mutual Neglect to Growing Bonhomie," *Institute of South Asian Studies* (ISAS), May 29, 2022.
[293] "Annual Report 2016-17," *Ministry of Defence, Government of India*, 56.
[294] Letter from Chinese Embassy, *Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of India*, October 16, 2020.
[295] Hashmi, "India-Taiwan Relations," 42.

India and has had the opposite effect than the one expected. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs assured that "Indian media is a free entity, and they can report on any issue they deem fit[296]."

3.2.1.3 Maintaining ambiguity as the course of action

Despite the pressure from other democracies, an alignment with the American position on Taiwan still appears too costly for India. China has made sure that it was unequivocal in a Global Times article, stating that "New Delhi [would] suffer losses if it play[ed] the Taiwan card." The newspaper barely hides his threatening tone: "those who want to use the Taiwan question to contain the mainland will have to suffer losses[297]."

Therefore, India remains cautious and, in 2016, "[it] had reportedly backtracked from sending representatives to the swearing-in ceremony of then Taiwanese president-elect Tsai Ing-wen[298]." However, the situation has not paralyzed New Delhi, and several parliamentary delegations have visited India from Taiwan over the years. These signals aim at maintaining ambiguity. For example, in 2017, three Members of Parliament traveled from Taiwan. This visit drew criticism from China that "hope[d] India would understand and respect China's core concerns and stick to the One-China principle and prudently deal with Taiwan-related issues and maintain the sound and steady development of India-China relations[299]." Nonetheless, India did not apologize and only underlined that it was not a formal visit[300].

However, the standoff at Doklam in 2017 "did shift the Indian leadership's attention towards the boundary dispute and affected the consistency in interactions between India and Taiwan[301]." Moreover, the following Wuhan Summit of 2018 and Mamallapuram Summit of 2019 that were supposed to settle the border issue also "meant putting elevating ties with Taiwan on the back burner[302]." Another example of this caution has been the renaming of Taiwan as Chinese Taipei by the state-owned company Air India on its website in 2018. China

[296] "Indian Media is Free, MEA tells China after Embassy Objects to 'National Day of Taiwan' Reportage", *India Today*, October 9, 2020.
[297] Yu Ning, "New Delhi will suffer losses if it plays Taiwan card," *Global Times*, February 14, 2017.
[298] Harsh V. Pant, "Is India Playing Hardball by Bringing Taiwan into the Equation with China?," *Scroll.in*, February 24, 2017.
[299] "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang's Regular Press Conference on February 15, 2017," *Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Mumbai*, February 15, 2017.
[300] "Official Spokesperson's response to a question on the visit of a Taiwanese Delegation to India," *Ministry of External Affairs*, February 15, 2017.
[301] Hashmi, "India-Taiwan Relations," 38.
[302] Hashmi, 38.

appreciated this terminology and outlined that "Air India shows respect for the objective fact that there is only one China in the world and Taiwan is part of China[303]." However, Tanvi Madan has stressed that Air India did "not go as far as Beijing's demand to use 'Taiwan, China'[304]."

Finally, the COVID pandemic has provided India with "an opportunity to leverage its ties with Taiwan vis-à-vis Beijing[305]." Indeed, Sana Hashmir underlines that "due to Taiwan's impeccable COVID-19 response and also India-China violent clashes in the Galwan valley, domestic public opinion in India is increasingly shifting in favor of Taiwan[306]." Taiwan has been donating masks and Personal Protective Equipment to help India through its disastrous second wave, and Taiwan also extended its medical diplomacy to India.

However, the case of Taiwan's World Health Organization status has shown that India maintains ambiguity on this issue. Taiwan had applied for observer status in the World Health Organization every year from 1997 to 2008 before it was allowed to attend the World Health Assembly in 2009 as "Chinese Taipei." However, this clearance ended in 2016. Due to Taiwan's exceptional management of the COVID crisis, new discussions started in 2020 to admit Taiwan to the World Health Assembly. The U.S. enacted the TAIPEI Act in March 2020, and the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo guaranteed he would "do its best to assist" Taiwan's "appropriate role" in the WHO[307]. However, Beijing refused, and the WHO continued to list Taiwan's COVID case number under China's[308]. India found itself in the middle because it became the next Chairperson of the WHO in 2021. Therefore, it faced a "major choice on whether to support a U.S. move to reinstate Taiwan's observer status at the W.H.A. or to China's opposition to it[309]. "India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar attended a meeting: "seen as an American effort to garner support to bring about changes in the WHO[310]. "Meanwhile, the U.S., Japan, and Australia signed a demarche in 2020 to push for the admission

[303] "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lu Kang's Regular Press Conference on July 5, 2018," *Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America*, July 5, 2018.
[304] Tanvi Madan, "The India Opportunity for Taiwan," 26.
[305] Harsh V. Pant and Premesha Saha, "The Taiwan Question in Indian Foreign Policy," *Observer Research Foundation*, May 16, 2020.
[306] Sana Hashmi, "India-Taiwan Relations: Time is Ripe to Bolster Ties," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 15, nº 1 (2020), 33.
[307] Nike Ching, "US Supports Taiwan's World Health Assembly Observer Status," *Voice Of America*, March 30, 2020.
[308] Saha, "The Taiwan Question in Indian Foreign Policy."
[309] Suhasini Haidar, "India Caught in U.S.-China Spat over Taiwan's Status at WHO," *The Hindu*, May 13, 2020.
[310] Saha, "The Taiwan Question in Indian Foreign Policy."

of Taiwan[311]. In 2021, and for the first time, the G7 "support[ed] Taiwan's meaningful participation in WHO forums." The group deemed it important that "the W.H.A. […] benefit from the experience of all partners, including Taiwan's successful contribution to the tackling of the COVID-19 pandemic[312]." However, Taiwan was excluded again in 2021, and India "lost an early opportunity to support Taiwan's observer role at the 74th W.H.A[313]."

To conclude, it is clear that "any significant development in India-Taiwan relations runs the risk of meeting with a likely stern reaction from Beijing[314]." Sana Hashmi argues that "this explains India's steady, albeit slow, outreach to Taiwan[315]." For the moment, however, I believe that the evolution of the Taiwan issue in Indian foreign policy indicates India's hedging strategy. Despite the benefits that could result from a closer relationship with Taiwan, India is still willing to maintain this "trade-off between the fundamental (but conflicting) interests of autonomy and alignment[316]. "

3.2.2 The South China Sea

The territorial disputes in the South China Sea (S.C.S.) between China and its neighbors, especially Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines, are contentious because "the location and energy reserves give the South China Sea a critical geostrategic importance[317]." Hence, both great powers have increased their military activity in the region. China led several naval exercises in 2018 while building artificial islands to expand its Exclusive Economic Zone. The U.S. has organized freedom of navigation operations the same year (six since 2017[318]) while rejecting China's territorial claims.

With the rising territorial tensions, the main worry for India has become the chokepoint of the Strait of Malacca since it links the Indian Ocean to the S.C.S[319]. Moreover, around 50% of India's trade crosses the Sea[320]. Harsh V. Pant underlines that "the idea of the Indo-Pacific

[311] Saha.
[312] "G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meeting: Communiqué, London, 5 May 2021," *Government of the United Kingdom*, May 5, 2021.
[313] Roger Liu and Sameer Patil, "Indian support for Taiwan at WHA," *Taipei Times*, July 22, 2021.
[314] Sana Hashmi, "India-Taiwan Ties: From Mutual Neglect to Growing Bonhomie."
[315] Sana Hashmi.
[316] Darren J. Lim and Zack Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging: The Logic of Alignment in East Asia," *Security Studies* 24, no. 4 (October 2, 2015): 707.
[317] Nandini Jawli, "South China Sea and India's Geopolitical Interests," *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs* 29, no. 1/2 (2016): 86.
[318] "Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea," *Global Conflict Tracker*, accessed on March 3, 2022.
[319] India and Indian Navy, *Indian Maritime Doctrine INBR 8* (New Delhi: Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), 2009), 56.
[320] Vo Xuan Vinh, Tran Xuan Hiep, and Vo Minh Hung, "India's Engagement in the South China Sea," *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 17, no. 2 (July 3, 2021): 64–77.

as a single maritime zone makes it impossible for India or any other state to ignore Chinese manoeuvres in the South China Sea[321]." When, in 2009, China presented the 1948 U-shaped line map at the U.N, India refused to recognize the legal value of this claim[322].

The S.C.S. has become a commercial issue for India when, in 2011, Oil and Natural Gaz Corporation Videsh and PetroVietnam engaged in Indo-Vietnamese oil cooperation. China manifested its opposition "to any country engaging in oil and gas exploration and development activities in waters under China's jurisdiction[323]." However, India did not yield, and the Ministry of External Affairs retorted that India would follow Vietnam's understanding of the jurisdiction despite Beijing's concerns[324]. In the ASEAN-India Vision Statement in December 2012, Indian and the members of ASEAN "committed to strengthening cooperation to ensure maritime security and freedom of navigation, and safety of sea lanes of communication[325]."

India also started to develop its military activities in the S.C.S. to maintain "freedom of navigation in international water[326]." It established the Campbell Bay naval base in July 2012 in the Andaman Islands[327], and the Indian Navy (IN) participated in its first naval exercise with Japan (JIMEX). The Indian Navy became more active in 2014 with the rebranding of the "Look East Policy" as the "Act East Policy" by the new Modi government. The Navy was deployed in 2016 "in a demonstration of India's 'Act East' policy[328]" and participated in multilateral naval exercises with the U.S. and Japan, especially the Malabar Exercise that "still involves theSouth China Sea, but only as a transit area[329]." It is also interesting to notice that the Ministry of Defence underlined in 2016 that "peace and stability in the region is of great significance to India[330]" on the topic of the S.C.S. The MILAN exercises (every two years between 2008 and 2014 and in 2022) also allowed India to strengthen links with states in the South China Sea, such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Vietnam, and the Philippines. During the 17th ASEAN-Indian Summit in 2020, these states denounced the "recent developments, including land reclamations, activities, and serious incidents, in the South China

[321] Harsh V. Pant, "The Strategic Signal of an Indian Presence in the South China Sea," *Observer Research Foundation*, September 2, 2021.
[322] Ulises Granados, "India's Approaches to the South China Sea: Priorities and Balances," *Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies* 5, no. 1 (2017): 130.
[323] "South China Sea: India Should Avoid Rushing in Where Even US Exercises Caution," *Observer Research Foundation*, September 30, 2011.
[324] "China Objects to Oil Hunt, India Says Back Off," *Hindustan Times*, September 15, 2011.
[325] "Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit," *ASEAN*, December 21, 2012.
[326] "Incident Involving INS Airavat in South China Sea," *Ministry of External Affairs, September 01, 2011*.
[327] Jawli, "South China Sea and India's Geopolitical Interests," 91.
[328] "Visit of Indian Warships to Subic Bay, Philippines," *Indian Navy*, May 2016.
[329] Granados, "India's Approaches to the South China Sea: Priorities and Balances," 129.
[330] Ministry of Defence, Government of India, "Annual Report 2016-2017," 4.

Sea, which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions and may undermine peace, security, and stability in the region[331].” India also deployed a naval task force in the S.C.S. in August 2021 “in pursuit of India’s ‘Act East’ policy and to enhance military cooperation with friendly countries […] ensuring good order in the maritime domain[332].”

However, India’s engagement remains relatively limited in the S.C.S. Firstly, Abhijit Singh underlines that “the U.S. Navy’s emphasis on navigational freedoms in the EEZs encourages other regional navies to violate India’s domestic regulations in the waters surrounding the Andaman and Nicobar Islands[333].” Therefore, India has repeatedly refused to participate in patrols with the U.S. in the S.C.S[334]. According to Hoo, this is a sign of hedging because “Delhi has consciously refrained from establishing a more permanent naval deployment partially out of concern that this may correspondingly instigate a stronger Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean[335].” Secondly, the S.C.S. is not listed as a priority in the different Indian Maritime Doctrine but as a “Secondary Area[336].” The Indian Ocean Region is India’s main priority in the same way that the S.C.S. is China’s. However, this hierarchy could change, and it means that there “is a possibility that, strategically, India wants to get involved in the South China Sea as China has been doing in South Asia and the Indian Ocean[337].”

To conclude, Vo Xuan Vinh, Tran Xuan Hiep, and Vo Minh Hung believe that “there are reasons to expect India’s increasing engagement[338]” in the S.C.S. but, within the Quad or the ASEAN, it might be challenging to agree on a path forward with regard to China’s militarization and territorial claims[339].

3.2.3 Conclusion on the contentious issues

With the analysis of these contentious issues, it is interesting to see that India remains ambiguous in its statements on Taiwan. In contrast, its actions concerning the S.C.S. could indicate a tendency of balancing against China. However, India has also refused to participate in certain U.S patrols and has recently protested the entry of the U.S.S. John Paul Jones into its

[331] “Chairman’s Statement of the 17th ASEAN–India Summit,” *ASEAN (website)*, November 12, 2020.
[332] “Eastern Fleet Ships on Overseas Operational Deployment,” *Press Information Bureau*, August 2, 2021.
[333] Abhijit Singh, “The U.S. Navy in the Indian Ocean: India’s ‘Goldilocks’ Dilemma,” *War on the Rocks*, May 11, 2021.
[334] Rahul Roy-Chaudhury and Kate Sullivan de Estrada, “India and US FONOPs: Oceans Apart,” *Survival* 64, no. 1 (January 2, 2022): 143.
[335] Tiang Boon Hoo, “The Hedging Prong in India’s Evolving China Strategy,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 101 (September 2, 2016): 803.
[336] Concepts and Transformation Directorate of Strategy, *Freedom to Use the Seas: India’s Maritime Military Strategy* (Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, 2007), 60.
[337] Vinh, Hiep, and Hung, “India’s Engagement in the South China Sea.”
[338] Vinh, Hiep, and Hung.
[339] Vinh, Hiep, and Hung.

EEZ "without requesting India's prior consent[340]." Therefore, I argue that, despite India's growing irritation with China's assertiveness in the South China Sea, this second example is still in line with the hypothesis of India hedging because New Delhi maintains ambiguity.

3.3 Conclusion of the diplomatic assessment

The UNGA vote analysis shows that India is voting close to China at the UNGA, and this tendency is observable since the creation of both states. However, there has been a slight evolution, especially when it comes to 'important' votes (according to the U.S Department of State), India is voting closer to the U.S. Either way, this indicator should be further studied to have a more precise idea of India's voting pattern, especially within groups dynamics which could give more information about the proximity between India and China. In conclusion, there is no alignment on either state, and ambiguity is key in India's behavior on contentious topics, may they be Taiwan, the South China Sea, or even human rights issues in North Korea. This underpins the fact that India is hedging.

[340] Singh, "The U.S. Navy in the Indian Ocean."

Chapter 4: Military Assessment

Now that I have explained my conclusions concerning threat and diplomatic assessments, my final chapter will focus on the military aspect of hedging. As Rajat Ganguly put it, "the Indian military's expansion and modernisation, including the development of a nuclear deterrent, has happened in phases, mainly driven by threatening developments within the surrounding region, the evolving global strategic environment, and the perceptions and decisions taken by India's political elites[341]." Therefore, since the results in chapter 2 allowed me to argue that India was still perceiving China as a risk and not a threat, it should appear in this analysis of India's military development that India is hedging.

According to Haacke, a hedging state's military capabilities enhancement measures "should be […] appropriate to ascertain and mitigate security risks[342]." They should include "normal surveillance capabilities and limited effort to enhance interoperability[343]." Moreover, according to Fortier and Massie, a hedging state should "combine national and international mobilization of military power against a latent security threat while cooperating with the latter to mitigate the risk that it becomes an immediate danger[344]."

Therefore, I argue that India should cooperate with both the U.S and China while diversifying its partnerships with other countries. New Delhi should also pursue military acquisitions from several partners to avoid alignment. The different purchases (heavy or light weaponry) should reflect its desire to mitigate security risks.

Firstly, I will focus on military cooperation to analyze to what extent India is cooperating with both the U.S, China, and other partners (in terms of alliances and Defence Cooperation Agreements). I will also study to what extent it is trying to enhance interoperability (through Joint Military Exercises). Subsequently, I will analyze India's acquisitions that, if India is hedging, should include an effort toward diversifying its suppliers when it comes to foreign defense procurement.

[341] Rajat Ganguly, "India's Military: Evolution, Modernisation, and Transformation," *India Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (2015): 188.
[342] Haacke, "The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia," 394.
[343] Haacke, 394.
[344] Fortier and Massie, "Strategic Hedgers? Middle Powers and the Sino-American Military Competition," 5.

4.1 Military cooperation

Helen Milner wrote in 1992 that a consensus had been reached in the I.R. community on a definition for military cooperation that was anchored in the two-player games theory. She quotes Robert Keohane and Charles Lindblom saying that cooperation happens "when actors adjust their behavior to the actual or anticipated preferences of others, through a process of policy coordination[345]." However, she underlines that it does not make it easier to define whether events are cooperative[346].

D'Orazio distinguishes between two forms of cooperation: institutional and behavioral. The latter "takes the form of observed events in which the cooperation is not present before or after[347]." The author gives the example of military aid, arms transfers, or international military education. Institutional cooperation, on the other hand, "takes the form of a signed agreement, treaty, or mutual affiliation in an organization designed to enhance security cooperation[348]." Furthermore, they can be ranked according to their duration or level of cooperation (for example, a Defense Cooperation Agreement does not involve the same commitment as an alliance).

Studying military cooperation in the context of the Indo-Pacific is particularly relevant because "alliances, partnerships, joint military exercises, basing agreements, arms transfers and related military ties that many argue constitute the bedrock of Asia's security governance today[349]." In that respect and based on D'Orazio's method, the two indicators that I will study are Joint Military Exercises (JMEs) and the agreements signed between the different countries, such as Defense Cooperation Agreements (DCAs).

Throughout the following pages, I argue that a hedging strategy entails military cooperation with both great powers because the cornerstone of this policy is to maintain ambiguity over the country's future alignment (as defined in Lim and Cooper[350]). This 'three-player game' actually stretches out to other players because the hedger should also try to diversify its partnerships.

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[345] Charles Lindblom, *The Intelligence of Democracy* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 227. Quoted in Helen Milner, "International Theories of Cooperation among Nations: Strengths and Weaknesses," ed. Joseph Grieco and Peter Haas, *World Politics* 44, no. 3 (1992): 467.
[346] Milner, 470.
[347] Vito James D'orazio, *International Military Cooperation: From Concepts to Constructs* (Pennsylvania State University, 2013), 57.
[348] D'orazio, 57.
[349] Vucetic, "China and Its Region: An Assessment of Hegemonic Prospects," 9.
[350] Lim and Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging: The Logic of Alignment in East Asia," 696–727.

4.1.1 Joint Military Exercises (JMEs)

My first indicator of military cooperation is a Joint Military Exercise (JME). A JME, also called "war games," refers to "any activity involving the operation of actual military forces in a simulated hostile environment[351]." It can include various exercises, from combat training to disaster relief operations or carrier passage simulations. JMEs are an "indicator of military cooperation that has the potential to reveal much about the nature of the international system's underlying relationships[352]." They are a handy element to integrate into our analysis because, as Jordan Bernhardt explains it, "non-great powers can use joint military exercises as part of a hedging strategy. Joint military exercises signal a willingness to cooperate, but there are not nearly as visible and binding as things like signing an alliance[353]". Therefore, a JME induces less cost or risk than a formal alliance, allowing the state to cooperate with both great powers without risking severe trade-offs.

Another upside with JMEs is that the data is easily collected. For example, I used datasets from Jordan Bernhardt's "Joint Military Exercises Dataset[354]" between 2003 and 2016 and the Military Balance +[355] between 2014 and 2021. For some instances, I used further information from the Government of India's Press Information Bureau.

I decided to gather several pieces of information on those JMEs. Firstly, I wanted to distinguish between JMEs that entailed Combat activities and those devoted to Non-Combat activities because Disaster Relief training does not have the same meaning as Live-fire exercises. I also distinguished between bilateral (or trilateral) and multilateral exercises because India's participation in the JME RIMPAC (along with circa twenty other states) does not indicate the same commitment as the bilateral JME 'Hand-in-Hand' with China. Finally, it would also be interesting to study the JME's duration, their location, whether the emphasis was placed on interoperability activities, or even which army corps were involved. Still, I decided not to because of a lack of time and space.

4.1.1.1 With both the U.S and China

First of all, I studied JMEs that India participated in with the U.S and China to explore the extent of military cooperation with both powers.

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[351] Peter P. Perla, "War Games, Analyses, and Exercises," *Naval War College Review* 40, no. 2 (1987), 45.
[352] D'orazio, "International Military Cooperation," 24.
[353] Jordan Bernhardt, "The Causes and Consequences of Joint Military Exercises" Ph.D. Thesis, Stanford University, 2020), 50.
[354] Jordan Bernhardt, "Joint Military Exercises Dataset", 2021, https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/HXQFHU, *Harvard Dataverse*, V1, UNF:6:l6IWV3Smr1r4TIkCDYBtIg== [fileUNF].
[355] The Military Balance +, "Exercises 2014-2021," January 2022.

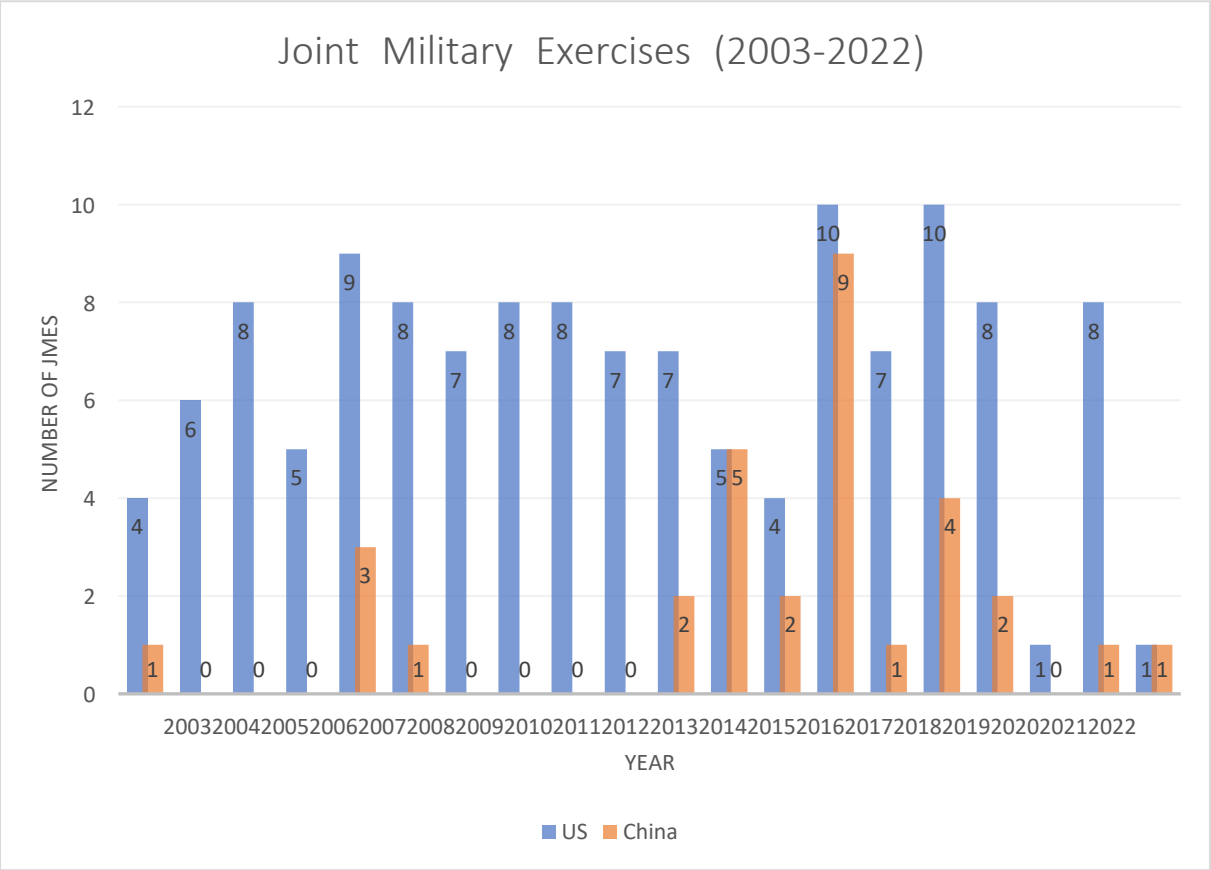
In his work, Bernhardt formulated the following hypothesis: “non-great powers that are not allies of a great power are likely to conduct joint military exercises with great powers on opposite sides of geopolitical competition simultaneously[356].” His correlation analysis allowed him to verify this hypothesis, showing that “hedging opportunities are associated with around a 15-percentage point increase in the likelihood of holding a joint exercise[357]“. This conclusion demonstrates the pertinence of this indicator in analyzing India’s hedging strategy.

[356] Bernhardt, 50.
[357] Bernhardt, 65.

Figure 4.1 : Joint Military Exercises between India and China and/or the U.S (2003-2022)

Data:

- *Ministry of Defence, Government of India, "Joint exercises with the U.S. 2003-2006," Press Information Bureau, August 23, 2007, https://pib.gov.in/newsite/archiveReleases.aspx.*
- *Military Balance +, "Exercises 2014-2021".*
- *Bernhardt, Jordan, 2021, "Joint Military Exercises Dataset", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/HXQFHU, Harvard Dataverse, V1, UNF:6:l6IWV3Smr1r4TIkCDYBtIg== [fileUNF].*



The number of JMEs that included India and the U.S. rose after 2005. This coincided with the development of the Indo - U.S. relationship after the U.S. - India Civil Nuclear Agreement. The number of India's JMEs in cooperation with China has been less constant over time, but it has grown, even catching up with the U.S. in 2014. However, to put this number into perspective, I have also compiled which JMEs were bilateral and multilateral (appendices 9 and 10). Indeed, I believe that multilateral JMEs (especially those that also include the other great powers) are less likely to induce trade-offs for India and, therefore, less indicative of a

hedging strategy. For example, in 2014, four out of five JMEs between India and China were multilateral, and three of them also included the U.S.

India and China have maintained one bilateral JME since 2007 and almost annually since 2013: the Hand-in-Hand Exercise (8 occurrences). The aim was to maintain military cooperation over time. The Chinese and Indian joint statements underline the importance of interoperability. I agree with Bernhardt, who believes that "establishing interoperability with competing great powers also demonstrates the ability to swing toward closer cooperation with either bloc if one side tries to take advantage of the smaller state[358]." India has also participated in the Peace Mission Exercise in cooperation with the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2018 and 2021. However, tensions remained: the Hand-in-Hand JME did not occur between 2010 and 2013 because China refused to grant a visa to the Indian Army's Northern Area Commander, Lt. Gen. B. S. Jaiswal. Beijing justified it by saying that he was in charge of the 'sensitive' region of Jammu and Kashmir[359]." Moreover, Hand-in-Hand did not occur in 2017 after the Doklam standoff nor in 2020 and 2021.

India and the U.S. maintain several annual JMEs: Malabar between the Navies, *Shatrujeet* and *Habu Nag* for amphibious exercises, *Yudh Abhyas* between the Armies, Cope-India between the Air Forces, and *Vajra Prahar* between the Special Forces. In this sense, the number of JMEs with the U.S. is higher than those with China, which is not surprising. However, this is not the point here since hedging is not a synonym for equidistance.

What is more interesting is India's behavior within those JMEs, especially when it comes to Malabar. In 2007, Malabar included Japan, Singapore, and Australia, gathering the Quad members for the very first time. However, China strongly protested against this "anti-China coalition[360]," and it marked the end of the Quad when Australia withdrew. The Malabar Exercises became bilateral again until 2015, when Japan became a permanent member. Beijing also protested this, saying that "relevant countries should not provoke confrontation and create tension in the region[361]." Between 2007 and 2020, Australia has "been regularly courting India

[358] Bernhardt, 50.
[359] Ananth Krishnan, "India, China Firm up Plan for Joint Military Exercises," *The Hindu*, January 14, 2013, sec. National.
[360] Asha Sundaramurthy, "India Keeps Australia Out of the Malabar Exercise — Again," *The Diplomat*, May 08, 2018.
[361] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei's Regular Press Conference," December 14, 2015.

for an invitation[362]" for the Exercise, but New Delhi consistently refused. It provided several explanations, the main one being that accepting Australia could lead to a "weaponization" of the Quad.[363] This reluctance on the Indian side is a noticeable element that shows how the perspective of integrating a new partner in a JME can become too binding or too costly for a state.

India finally decided to invite Australia to join the Malabar Exercises in 2020, marking a turning point. Nonetheless, the importance of this event is to be nuanced as Abhijit Singh underlines that "upgrading the trilateral Malabar to a quadrilateral, without acquiring the requisite combat and deterrence capability, could yield gains for India in the short term, but would prove ineffective in the long run[364]."

Another interesting detail is that India's participation in other "Western" multilateral JMEs such as La Perouse (with Australia, France, Japan, and the U.S) or Sea Dragon (with Australia, Canada, Japan, and the U.S) in 2021 has been noticeably balanced by the exercise Peace Mission that gathered China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

As the table above allowed for a global overview of the issue, it is essential to underline that all JMEs do not have the same aim or entail the same activities. As Bernhardt puts it, "joint military exercises that focus on activities like search and rescue or peacekeeping can enhance interoperability, improve communications, and build key relationships, but they are less directly applicable to actually engaging in modern military operations[365]." In this sense, I believe that all JMEs do not entail similar "costs." Instead, they have different significations that are to be considered when measuring hedging.

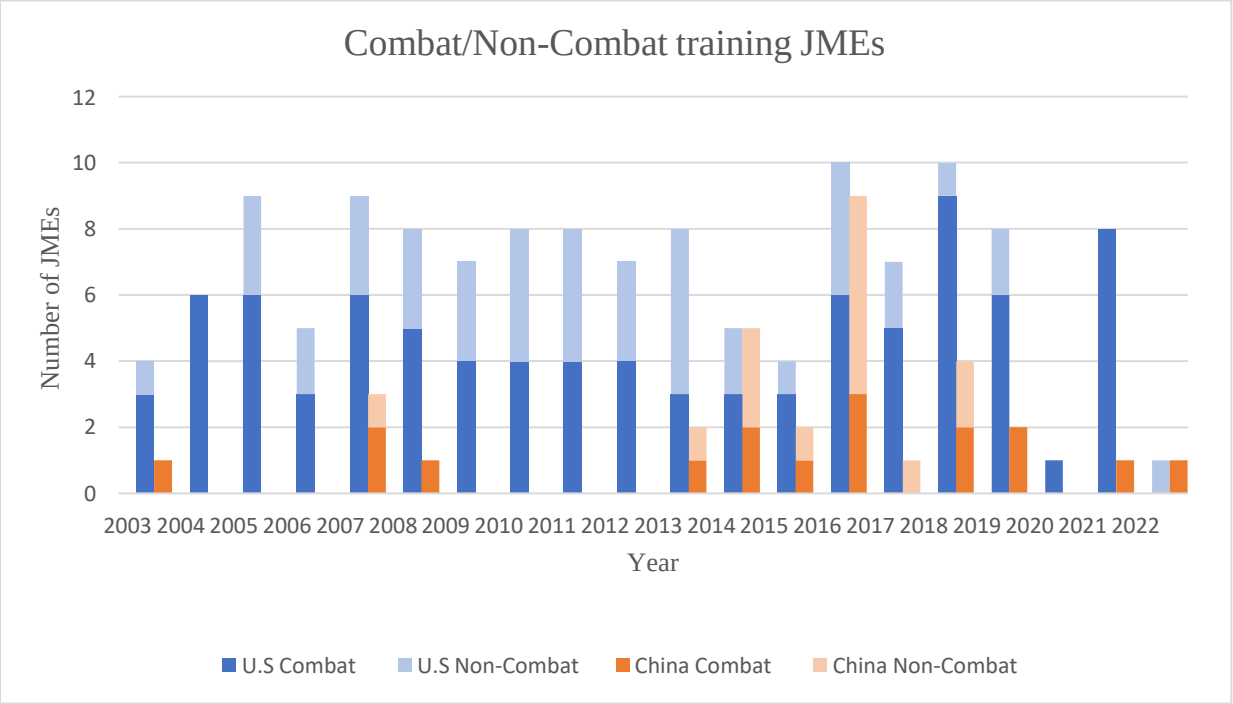
Therefore, I decided to focus on one particular aspect of JMEs: the differentiation between Combat and Non-Combat activities during the training. I gathered these pieces of information with Bernhardt's dataset on JMEs and completed it with statements from the Ministry of Defence. The following table compiles these data.

[362] Anant Singh Mann and Harsh V. Pant, "India's Malabar Dilemma," *Observer Research Foundation*, August 14, 2020.
[363] Mann and Pant.
[364] Abhijit Singh, "Make the Right Call on 'Malabar' Going Quad," *Observer Research Foundation*, July 20, 2020.
[365] Bernhardt, "The Causes and Consequences of Joint Military Exercises," 52.

Figure 4.2: Joint Military Exercices with China and the U.S distinguished between Combat and Non-Combat exercises

Data:

- *Ministry of Defence, Government of India, "Joint exercises with the U.S. 2003-2006," Press Information Bureau, August 23, 2007, https://pib.gov.in/newsite/archiveReleases.aspx.*
- *Military Balance +, "Exercises 2014-2021".*
- *Bernhardt, Jordan, 2021, "Joint Military Exercises Dataset", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/HXQFHU, Harvard Dataverse, V1, UNF:6:l6IWV3Smr1r4TIkCDYBtIg== [fileUNF].*



According to Bernhardt's database, in the first half of the 2010s, nearly half of the JMEs between India and the U.S. have included Combat Training. However, this proportion has decreased since 2015, which shows India's tendency to develop military cooperation further and in a more obvious way. Aside from Hand-in-Hand, India-China Exercises have almost always been Non-Combat Training, whether humanitarian, logistics, or disaster relief. Of course, this does not mean that military cooperation is inexistent, but it can tell that the signal sent is weaker when it comes to hedging behavior.

To conclude, this study of India's Joint Military Exercises in relation to China and the U.S support the central hypothesis of India hedging. Generally, Bernhardt argues that "with the major powers exploring new relationships and the non-aligned countries seeking to determine their place in the international order, joint exercises have emerged as a way of hedging their bets [to avoid] being drawn too closely to any particular power[366]." India is no exception to the rule. It has maintained bilateral and multilateral JMEs with China despite the border tensions and New Delhi's worries about PLAN warships in the Indian Ocean Region. This shows an intent to maintain ambiguity about the side India would choose in a great power conflict, despite the slight evolution since 2016/2017 as JMEs with the U.S. focusing more on combat training and JMEs with China becoming scarcer since 2020. It will be interesting to monitor those emerging tendencies in the future.

4.1.1.2 Diversification

Now that we have assessed that India organized JMEs with both China and the U.S, despite an asymmetry in the number and the type of JMEs, I will broaden the analysis to all India's partners in JMEs to study the diversification of its military cooperation. Rajat Ganguly argues that "bilateral and multilateral military exercises became an enduring feature of India's defence relationships[367]," This will be the topic of this second subsection.

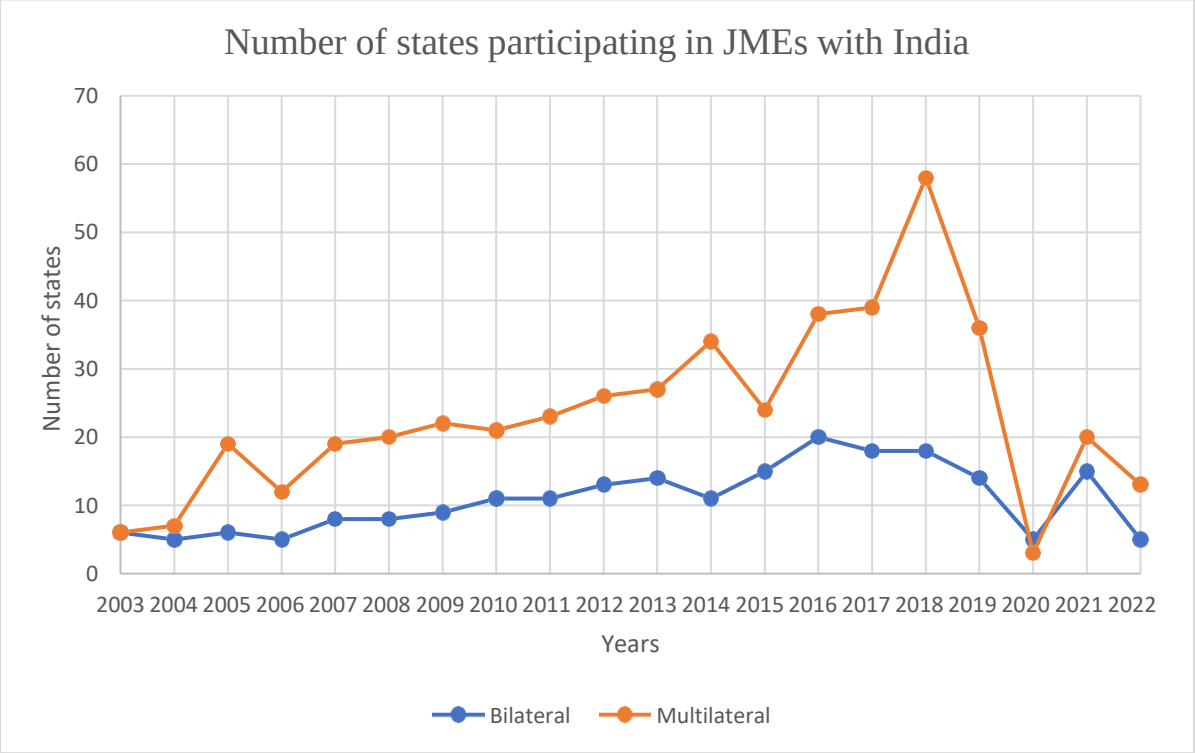
The graph below (Figure 4.3) identifies the number of states that India organized JMEs with, whether within multilateral cooperation or bi/trilateral relationships. The curve that I was more interested in was the bi/trilateral one because a bilateral JME entails more commitment and is more meaningful, especially if repeated over the years.

[366] Bernhardt, 78.
[367] Ganguly, "India's Military," 198.

Figure 4.3 : Number of states participating in JMEs with India (2003-2022)

Data:

- *Ministry of Defence, Government of India, "Joint exercises with the U.S. 2003-2006," Press Information Bureau, August 23, 2007, https://pib.gov.in/newsite/archiveReleases.aspx.*
- *Military Balance +, "Exercises 2014-2021".*
- *Bernhardt, Jordan, 2021, "Joint Military Exercises Dataset", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/HXQFHU, Harvard Dataverse, V1, UNF:6:l6IWV3Smr1r4TIkCDYBtIg== [fileUNF].*



The number of states that participated in bilateral (or trilateral) JMEs with India increased steadily between 2003 and 2016, apart from 2014 (but the number of states engaged in multilateral JMEs raised in 2016). The massive decrease in 2020 is easily explained by the COVID pandemic and the low number in 2022 because I stopped the review in April 2022. Despite a slight decline in 2019 and 2021, it is acceptable to say that, since 2003, India has diversified its relationships through multilateral and bilateral exercises. Bernhardt also underlined that India "substantially expanded the number of countries with which it exercised after 2005[368]." Another one of its conclusions was particularly striking; he noted that "China,

[368] Bernhardt, "The Causes and Consequences of Joint Military Exercises," 41.

Russia, and India conducted at least one joint military exercise with around 30% of countries in recent years[369].”

Figure 4.4 : “Joint military exercises per year by number and alliance status of participating countries. Germany, India, and Japan become great powers in 1992.”

From Jordan Bernhardt et al., “The Causes and Consequences of Joint Military Exercises” (Stanford, California, Stanford University, 2020), 50.

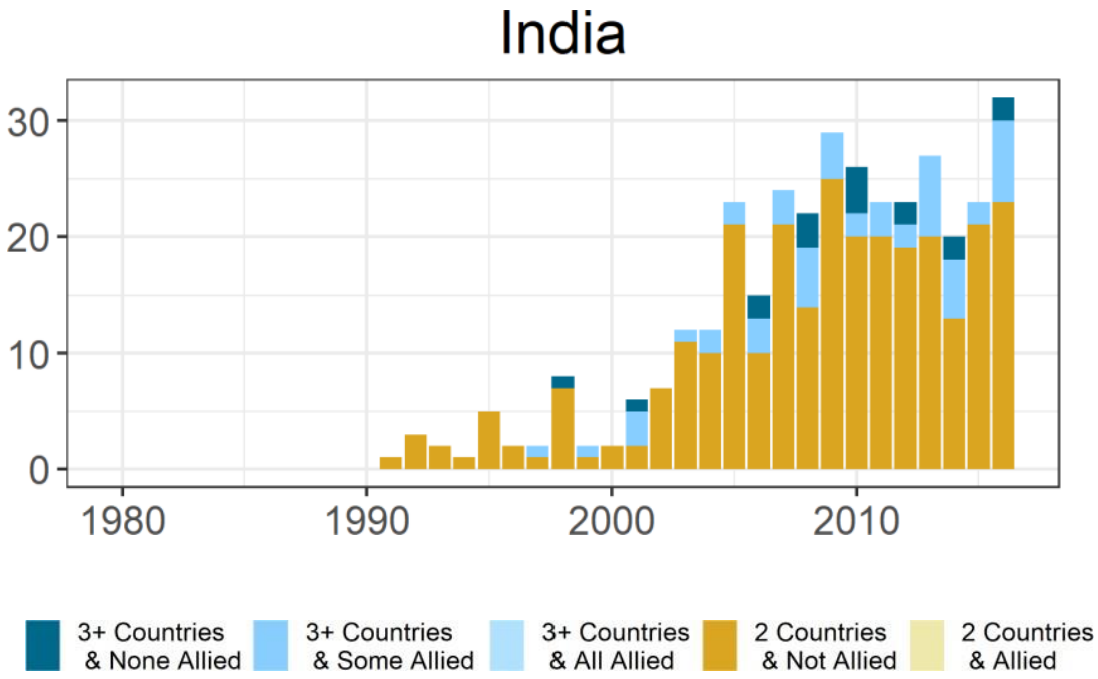


Figure 4.4 from Jordan Bernhardt displays the number of JMEs that India participated in and the number of countries involved, and their status (allied or not) related to India.

This graph shows that New Delhi mainly takes part in JMEs with countries that are not allies and mainly in bilateral JMEs. One of D’Orazio’s results was that the global number of JMEs decreased from 2006 to 2010[370]. However, this tendency is not noticeable in Figure 4.4. This reinforces the idea that India is diversifying and developing partnerships with other countries at a particularly intense pace compared to the rest of the world.

[369] Bernhardt, 35.
[370] D’orazio, “International Military Cooperation,” 26.

To conclude, using the previous graphs on JMEs, I argue that India has maintained military cooperation with both great powers, despite the tensions that could have severed those links (with China). In addition, India has developed partnerships with many new countries that are not necessarily its allies, such as Oman (2009), the Maldives (2009), and Thailand (2007). New Delhi has managed to diversify its military relationships, which is a clear sign of hedging because it maintains ambiguity and prevents alignment.

4.1.2 Alliances and cooperation agreements

Another indicator of cooperation between two states is the establishment of strategic alliances, military agreements, or other groupings related to strategic issues.

The Correlates of War project distinguishes three types of alliances: defense pacts, neutrality or non-aggression pacts, and ententes[371]. However, when studying India, this typology is too restrictive. Indeed, New Delhi does not have any official ally per se. According to Wilkins, this phenomenon is more global[372]. There is a shift in international security cooperation away from the 'alliance archetype' and toward 'alignment' that can take on different forms: 'coalitions,' 'security communities,' and 'strategic partnerships.'

The last one is the one I will use for India because, if India has no allies, it does have 'strategic partners[373].' Wilkins describes a strategic partnership as a "structured collaboration between states (or other "actors") to take joint advantage of economic opportunities, or to respond to security challenges more effectively than could be achieved in isolation[374]." He distinguishes it from 'normal' bilateral relations as "strategic partnerships call for greater engagement between the parties than mere ad hoc bilateral relationships that ensue as a result of normal diplomatic intercourse between states[375]." Wilkins tries to build a conceptual framework for those cooperation relationships. He argues that they are "built around a general (security) purpose […] rather than one specific task[376]" and, more importantly, they usually correspond to "primarily 'goal-driven' (positive) rather than 'threat-driven' (negative)

[371] Douglas M. Gibler and Meredith Reid Sarkees, "Measuring Alliances: The Correlates of War Formal Interstate Alliance Dataset, 1816-2000," *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 2 (2004): 215.
[372] Thomas S. Wilkins, "'Alignment', not 'alliance' – the shifting paradigm of international security cooperation: toward a conceptual taxonomy of alignment," *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 1 (January 2012): 53–76.
[373] Ankit Panda, "Why Does India Have So Many 'Strategic Partners' and No Allies?," *The Diplomat*, November 20, 2013.
[374] Thomas S. Wilkins, "Russo–Chinese Strategic Partnership: A New Form of Security Cooperation?," *Contemporary Security Policy* 29, no. 2 (August 1, 2008): 363.
[375] Vidya Nadkarni, *Strategic Partnerships in Asia: Balancing without Alliances* (London: Routledge, 2010), 48.
[376] Thomas S. Wilkins, "Japan's Alliance Diversification: A Comparative Analysis of the Indian and Australian Strategic Partnerships," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 11, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 123.

alignments[377].” This idea is particularly interesting for this research because if India does have a strategic partnership (S.P.) with China and the U.S, it will support the hypothesis that India is effectively hedging. Wilkins adds that, in an S.P., “no enemy state is identified by the partnership as a ‘threat,’ though the partnership may be concerned with joint security ‘issue areas,’ such as proliferation or terrorism[378].” This element is consistent with our analysis in the first part: the existence of a risk assessment rather than a threat one. Finally, when writing about India’s S.P.s, Ankit Panda argue that they allow New Delhi “to get its foot in the door for further diplomatic engagement on military and defense issues should circumstances change[379].” However, in the meantime, a country that engages in S.P.s maintains ambiguity, which is fully compatible with the hedging framework.

Strategic partnerships are challenging for I.R scholars to analyze because, in the case of India, for example, “no formal document has been signed by India that defines what the term means and what binding obligations India and its strategic partner are accepting in terms of their bilateral relations[380].” Therefore, I have chosen to study a perceptible and ‘countable’ indicator: the signature of Defense Cooperation Agreements.

4.1.2.1 Cooperation with the U.S and China

As I mentioned earlier, neither great power is officially allied with India. Brandon J. Kinne explains that, indeed, “governments rarely sign new alliances, and the global alliance structure has remained relatively static for decades[381].” However, it remains possible to study the development of strategic partnerships through Defense Cooperation Agreements (DCA). According to Kinne, DCAs “institutionalize their signatories’ day-to-day defense relations, facilitating such wide-ranging activities as defense policy coordination, joint research and development, weapons production and arms trade, joint military exercises, training and exchange programs, peacekeeping, and information exchange[382].” They are less binding than alliance treaties and, therefore, more frequent. From a hedging perspective, it is a pertinent indicator because it allows the state to develop defense relations with both powers that are neither exclusive nor antagonizing. Indeed, “DCAs exclusively address cooperation [and] they contain no mutual defense or non-aggression commitments[383].” Kinne distinguishes DCAs

[377] Wilkins, 123.
[378] Wilkins, 123.
[379] Panda, “Why Does India Have So Many ‘Strategic Partners’ and No Allies?”
[380] Kanwal Sibal, “‘Strategic’ Relations Suit India,” *India Today*, December 26, 2012.
[381] Kinne, “The Defense Cooperation Agreement Dataset (DCAD),” 1.
[382] Kinne, 1.
[383] Kinne, 2.

from non-aggression pacts, mutual defense pacts, strategic partnerships, and status-of-forces agreements (SOFAs) as "DCAs overtly exclude the mutual defense commitments that define alliances as such[384]." The author gives an example that I found particularly striking from a hedging perspective: China and Indonesia signed a DCA in 2007, and when exposed to domestic criticism, the Indonesian defense minister defended this agreement by arguing that "[they] only want[ed] to improve our defense cooperation with China. [They had] no intention of signing a defense treaty with China[385]." Moreover, Kinne's statistical analysis results show that "the vast majority of DCA partners lack a direct alliance of any form[386]."

Therefore, I will analyze whether India has signed DCAs with China and the U.S.

India has been a "Major Defense Partner" for the U.S since 2016. The two countries had signed several documents on cooperation before 2014: information sharing in 2002 (GSOMIA) and the Defense Trade and Technology Initiative in 2012. However, it is since Modi's election in 2014 that the three main DCAs have been signed between India and the U.S. Indeed, during the BJP's first year in power, India has "asked the Pentagon for a 'Non-Paper' on the foundational agreements[387]" that the two authorities could later draft. In 2016, they signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) to facilitate the utilization of each other's military facilities (for boat replenishments, for example), and the then-Defence Minister clarified that "it does not have anything to do with the setting up of a base[388]." In 2018, India and the U.S signed the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), upgrading the GSOMIA to increase military communication through secured lines, thus raising interoperability. This DCA ticks Haacke's hedging criteria, according to which a hedger should make a "limited effort to enhance interoperability[389]." The COMCASA being an "India-specific" CISMOA (the usual DCA that the U.S signs with other partners) and thus a less "intrusive instrument[390]," it shows that India only wishes for 'limited' interoperability. Finally, the third DCA signed between India and the U.S is the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA) in 2020 to share military information between NASA, the U.S Department of Defense, and India's MoD. Thus, the U.S-India strategic

[384] Kinne, 7.
[385] Kinne, 24.
[386] Kinne, 8.
[387] Ajai Shukla, "2 Indo-US Pacts Ready; Only One Likely to Be Signed," *Business Standard India*, April 11, 2016.
[388] "The 3 Foundational Agreements with the US and What They Mean for India's Military Growth," *ThePrint* (blog), October 27, 2020.
[389] Haacke, "The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia," 394.
[390] "India, US Sign Landmark Military Communications Secrecy Pact at Historic Meeting," *ThePrint* (blog), September 6, 2018.

partnership is relatively developed. Still, Manoj Joshi underlines that "in themselves, the agreements are fairly routine and should not be over-hyped" and that "they are really about building trust and setting the trajectory for future relations[391]." Therefore, there is cooperation, but not an alliance or anything near that. This could indicate hedging on India's side if there is a strategic partnership with China as well.

The strategic relationship between India and China goes back to the Panchsheel or the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in 1954. As I said earlier, the 1962 war ended the idea that there could be a 'peaceful coexistence.' However, as soon as 1996, India and China signed an Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures for the border. Despite these efforts, the Annual Report from the MoD in 2003 underlined that "the pace of progress has been less than satisfactory[392]." However, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2006 to organize "regular and institutional contacts between the armed forces and defence officials and experts of the two countries[393]." The first India-China Annual Defence Dialogue took place in 2007, and it has been reiterated eight times until 2018. In 2009, the Annual Report stated that "there has been a convergence of views and action on various issues in international fora[394], and in 2015, that "relations between the two nations have improved over the past few years[395]." In between, the two countries signed the DCA Border Defense Cooperation Agreement in 2013, which officially established the strategic partnership. In 2018, to replace the 2006 MoU, "India and China have agreed to expand their military ties and enhance interaction to ensure peace on their common border[396]." Even though the strategic partnership with China is mainly focused on the issues at the border, it still indicates an intention to develop cooperation and therefore is in line with my research hypothesis.

Finally, it is interesting that the extent of the cooperation, or the emphasis officially put on it, has not been distributed evenly over the years. I used the software IRaMuTeQ to analyze the Press Information Bureau's statements related to China and the U.S between 2003 and 2022. The same words are used to describe both powers: 'agreement,' 'cooperation,' 'partnership,' and 'bilateral.' I focused on the evolution of the use of the term 'cooperation' with the following graphs.

[391] Manoj Joshi, "Building upon the American Connection," *Observer Research Foundation*, October 28, 2020.
[392] "Annual Report 2002-03," *Ministry of Defence, Government of India*, 5.
[393] "Annual Report 2006-07," *Ministry of Defence, Government of India*, 5.
[394] "Annual Report 2008-09," *Ministry of Defence, Government of India*, 6.
[395] "Annual Report 2015-16," *Ministry of Defence, Government of India*, 18.
[396] "India, China agree to expand military ties after defence talks," *Reuters*, August 24, 2018.

Figure 4.5: Use of the word "cooperation" throughout the years for China (IRaMuTeQ, Press Information Bureau)

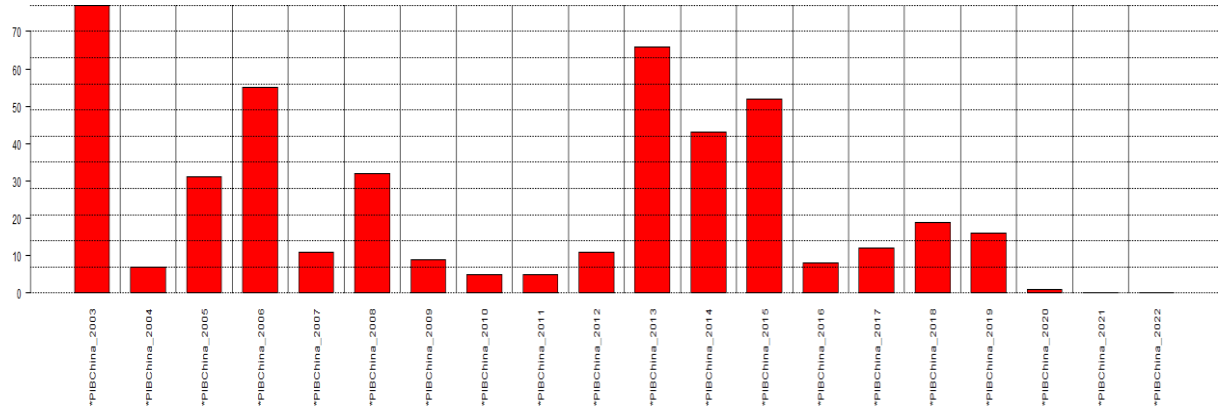
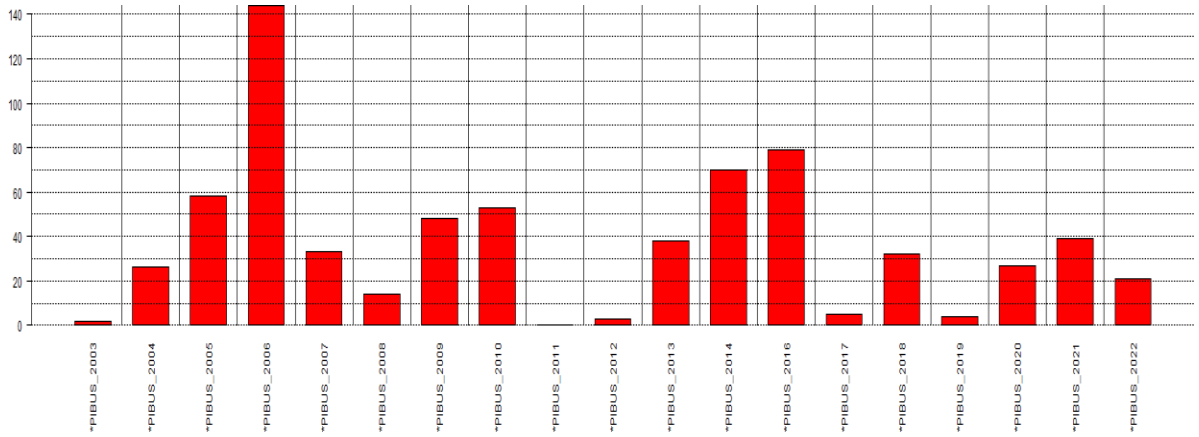


Figure 4.6: Use of the word "cooperation" throughout the years for the U.S. (IRaMuTeQ, Press Information Bureau



From 2013 to 2015, cooperation with China augmented because of border issues and the willingness to stabilize the situation. However, this effort has not been as strong after the 2017 and 2020 standoffs. For the U.S., cooperation peaked in 2006 with the Indo-U.S. nuclear agreement signed in 2005 and ratified by Congress in 2008. Cooperation has been rising between both countries in the past few years, without reaching the 2006 peak.

In a nutshell, when it comes to strategic partnerships, I argue that India engaged with both China and the U.S between 2003 and 2022, which is an argument in favor of hedging for India, even though the topics and the level of cooperation varied.

4.1.2.2 Diversification

As illustrated by the examples of China and the U.S, it is challenging to identify strategic partnerships because they can take many different forms and shapes. However, it is possible to assert that India is diversifying its strategic partnerships as it secured nineteen defense agreements between 2000 and 2008, "a staggering change from the seven total agreements secured in the first 53 years of independence[397]". Ankit Panda argues that "India currently conducts bilateral relations on the level of 'strategic partners' with the United States, Russia, China, Japan, Indonesia, Australia, Vietnam, South Korea, Iran, ASEAN, Afghanistan, and several others.[398]" This diversity of partners has sometimes raised interrogations. For his part, Kanwal Sibal believes that "it is logical for India to have strategic partnerships with US, France, UK, Germany, the European Union, Japan, and Australia on the one hand, and Russia, Brazil, Nigeria, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, and Iran, on the other, spanning countries with radically different world views and international and regional roles, with some amongst them having serious differences with each other that could even lead to a military conflict[399]." I believe that this apparent contradiction is exactly what hedging entails and explains. India's Foreign Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, also argued that, for India, "any quest to maximize options and expand space naturally requires engaging multiple players[400]." He added that, and this is particularly thought-provoking in the perspective of this paper, "hedging is a delicate exercise, whether it is the non-alignment and strategic autonomy of earlier periods, or multiple engagements of the future. But there is no getting away from it in a multi-polar world[401]." Therefore, I believe that India's strategy entails an undeniable element of diversification.

It is needless to say that all those strategic partnerships do not refer to the same level of cooperation. There is "a hierarchy that is well appreciated by the foreign policy community in India[402]." In 2011, the Foundation for National Security Research in New Delhi published *India's Strategic Partners: A Comparative Assessment,* comparing "how well those partnerships are working and what kind of potential they have in the future[403]." A panel of experts assessed each 'strategic partner' according to 3 parameters: the importance of the

[397] Hedrick, *India's Strategic Defense Transformation*, 42.
[398] Panda, "Why Does India Have So Many 'Strategic Partners' and No Allies?"
[399] Sibal, "'Strategic' Relations Suit India."
[400] "External Affairs Minister's Speech at the 4th Ramnath Goenka Lecture, 2019," *Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs*, November 14, 2019.
[401] "External Affairs Minister's Speech at the 4th Ramnath Goenka Lecture, 2019."
[402] Panda, "Why Does India Have So Many 'Strategic Partners' and No Allies?"
[403] Satish Kumar, S.D. Pradhan, Kanwal Sibal, Rahul Bedi, and Bidisha Ganguly, *India's Strategic Partners: A Comparative Assessment* (New Delhi: Foundation for National Security Research, November 2011):1.

cooperation between 2000 and 2011, how sustained it has been, and the potential for the future. From these indicators, they deduce scores out of 90 points. Thus, they consider that Russia is India's most developed and promising S.P. (62 points), just ahead of the U.S (58) and France (51); further behind are the U.K (41), Germany (37), and Japan (34). It is particularly interesting to see how these experts explain the U.S' second place behind Russia. Indeed, they underline that, in public opinion, "the strategic partnership with the U.S. usually acquires a higher profile because of its image as a global power[404]." However, they argue that, in contrast to Russia, "the U.S. has been very lackadaisical in providing political and diplomatic support to India on vital issues[405]." According to this panel, the U.S behavior justifies a need for diversification on the part of India, hence the importance of Russia's S.P.

To conclude on strategic partnerships, an analysis of DCAs shows that India maintains a military cooperation relationship with both China and the U.S. Moreover, New Delhi multiplies strategic partnerships with different countries and on different levels. I believe that a remark from Ankit Panda pretty much sums it all up: he argues that strategic partnership is "a form of beneficial ambiguity for India[406]." This is clearly consistent with India hedging: maintaining ambiguity as a course of action.

4.1.3 Conclusion on military cooperation

In conclusion, India's behavior in terms of Joint Military Exercises or strategic partnerships includes both dynamics of engagement with the two great powers and diversification with other countries. These two dynamics reflect a willingness to avoid alignment and maintain ambiguity, in line with a hedging strategy. Finally, I want to end my analysis with a final study of India's arms imports and other military acquisitions.

4.2 Military acquisitions

Similar to military cooperation, a hedging state's force enhancement strategy should entail diversification. Haacke explains that one indicator of hedging can be the enhancement of capabilities, even if, beforehand, it is necessary to "distinguish between hedging as a risk management strategy and balancing behavior in relation to a state's military capabilities

[404] Satish Kumar et al., *India's Strategic Partners: A Comparative Assessment* : 14.
[405] Satish Kumar et al., 14.
[406] Panda, "Why Does India Have So Many 'Strategic Partners' and No Allies?"

enhancement (MCE) measures[407].” Indeed, enhancing one’s military capabilities is usually associated with internal balancing in realist theory. Adam Liff draws a typology of MCE measures that distinguishes between force development and force employment measures[408]. In the latter appear some external elements that I have already mentioned, such as joint exercises, interoperability, or security partnerships. Among internal force development measures, Liff mentions “quantitative increases in defense budgets and/or weapons acquisitions,” and “qualitative improvements to weapons systems and technologies[409].” These two are the ones I decided to focus on in this last part. Using Adam Liff’s methodological reflections, Haacke argues that, to distinguish hedging from internal balancing, “it is important to clarify *why* these [military capability enhancement] measures are undertaken[410].” I would add that a hedging state should seek to diversify its suppliers in terms of arms imports.

From this perspective, I decided to study the repartition of India’s arms imports according to the suppliers and the nature of the weapon system (heavy/light). In this part, I will mainly use datasets from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and, more precisely, from the Arms Transfer Database.

I will use the SIPRI’s Trend Indicator Values (TIV) of Arms Exports, a unit of account built to “represent the transfer of military resources rather than the financial value of the transfer[411].” Indeed, this information is often missing or unknown in those transactions, and it does not always reflect the value of the import/export. The TIV is helpful because it takes into account the year of production of the weapon, its performance, its size, its engines, and other elements of information such as the fact that some weapons are “refurbished” (for instance, their TIV equals 66% of the value of a new weapon). This is particularly helpful in comparing India’s imports from Russia and the U.S, and it provides consistency over time.

Before diving into this final part, it is pertinent to underline that India is amongst the world’s largest arms importers, with 11% of global imports in 2022[412].

[407] Haacke, “The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia,” 395.
[408] Adam P. Liff, “Whither the Balancers? The Case for a Methodological Reset,” *Security Studies* 25, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 420–59.
[409] Liff, 436.
[410] Haacke, “The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia,” 395.
[411] “SIPRI Arms Transfers Database – Methodology,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/background#TIV-tables.
[412] “India Is amongst the World’s Largest Arms Importers, Says SIPRI as It Cites Conflict with China,” *The New Indian Express*, March 14, 2022.

Figure 4.7 : The evolution of India's arms imports (TIV million)

SIPRI Arms Transfers database, TIV of arms exports to India, 2003-2021, https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php.

There has been a decrease in arms imports from 2012 to 2018, which could correspond to an effort toward autonomy (and internal balancing) with the implementation of the *Atmanirbharta* (self-reliance) policy by PM Modi in 2014. However, this willingness to 'indigenize' (in New Delhi's words) India's military-industrial complex has also been accompanied by an increase in arms imports since 2018, reaching the 2012 level in 2021. This shift in the opposite direction proves that internal balancing is not the only tendency if it is one at all.

India has not imported arms from China in the period 2003 to 2022. Therefore, arms imports are not a helpful indicator in comparing India's relationship with both great powers. However, I do not believe that this discredits the rest of the analysis. Therefore, I will instead focus on the diversification of suppliers and the origin of certain types of weapons and armament.

4.2.1 Diversification

To measure diversification, I will analyze the evolution of the levels of arms transfers between 2003 and 2021 with the different suppliers.

Figure 4.8: Arms exports to India in millions TIV (2003-2021) (<!> Russia excluded)

SIPRI Arms Transfers database, TIV of arms exports to India, 2003-2021, https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php.

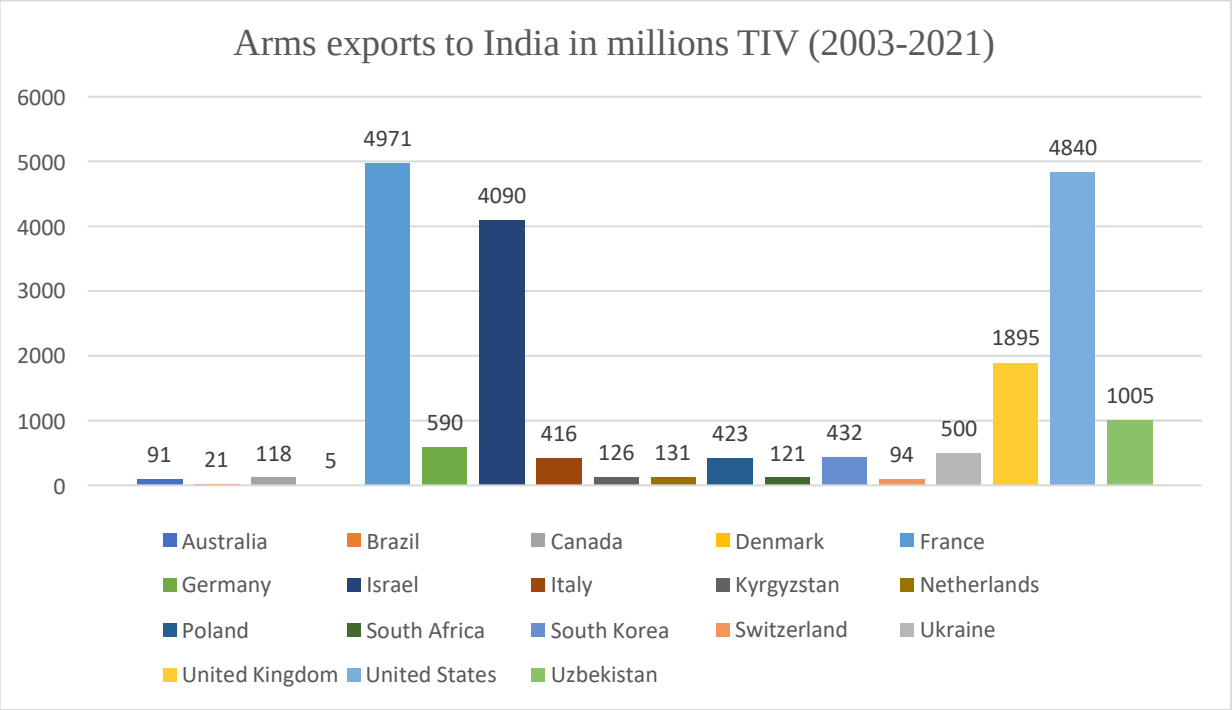
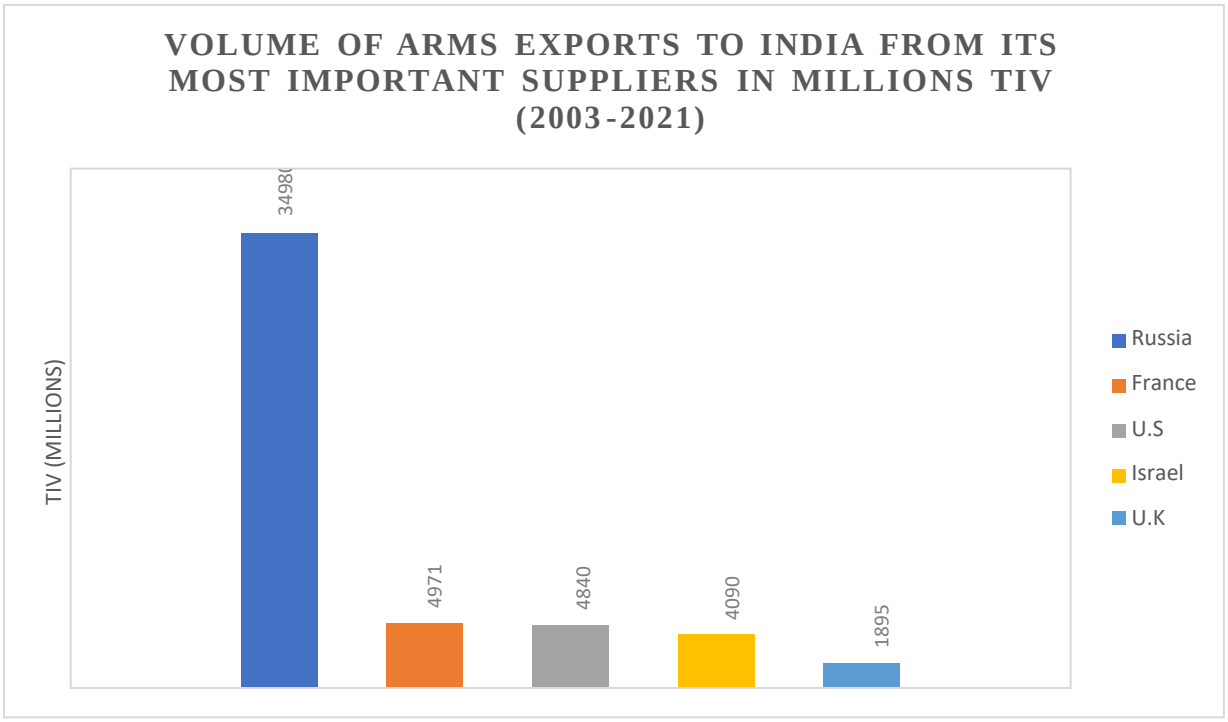


Figure 4.9 : Volume of arms exports to India from its most important suppliers (2003-2021)

SIPRI Arms Transfers database, TIV of arms exports to India, 2003-2021, https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php.



Firstly, I wish to indicate that I excluded Russia from the first graph because it prevented a good overview of the other partners due to the considerable gap between Russian exports to India and France, the second in line. Russia's massive superiority in volume (more than seven times superior to the U.S) is not surprising, even though the graphic representation is impressive. When looking at volumes in TVI, the U.S is not even second but third. This can be partly explained by the massive €7.8 b deal signed with France in 2016 for 36 Rafales. A Rafale is valued at 55 million SIPRI TIV. Therefore, this transfer already accounts for 1 870 million TIV out of 4 971. Israel has been another essential supplier for India since 1997. Like Russia, Israel allows India to develop joint ventures, such as the "development of a longer-range version of the existing Israeli Barak missile[413]," to New Delhi's liking. Figure 4.8 indicates the multiplicity of India's arms suppliers (18 in total). However, to see if India is hedging, I should study the evolution over time to see if diversification is a current tendency.

[413] Maaike Verbruggen, "India's Arms Imports: A Holistic Overview of India s Motivations for Choosing Arms Suppliers," *Master's Thesis, University of Oslo*, 2015, 39.

Figure 4.10 : Arms exports to India (in million TVI) between 2003 and 2021 (<!> Russia excluded)

SIPRI Arms Transfers database, TIV of arms exports to India, 2003-2021, https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php.

-250

YEARS

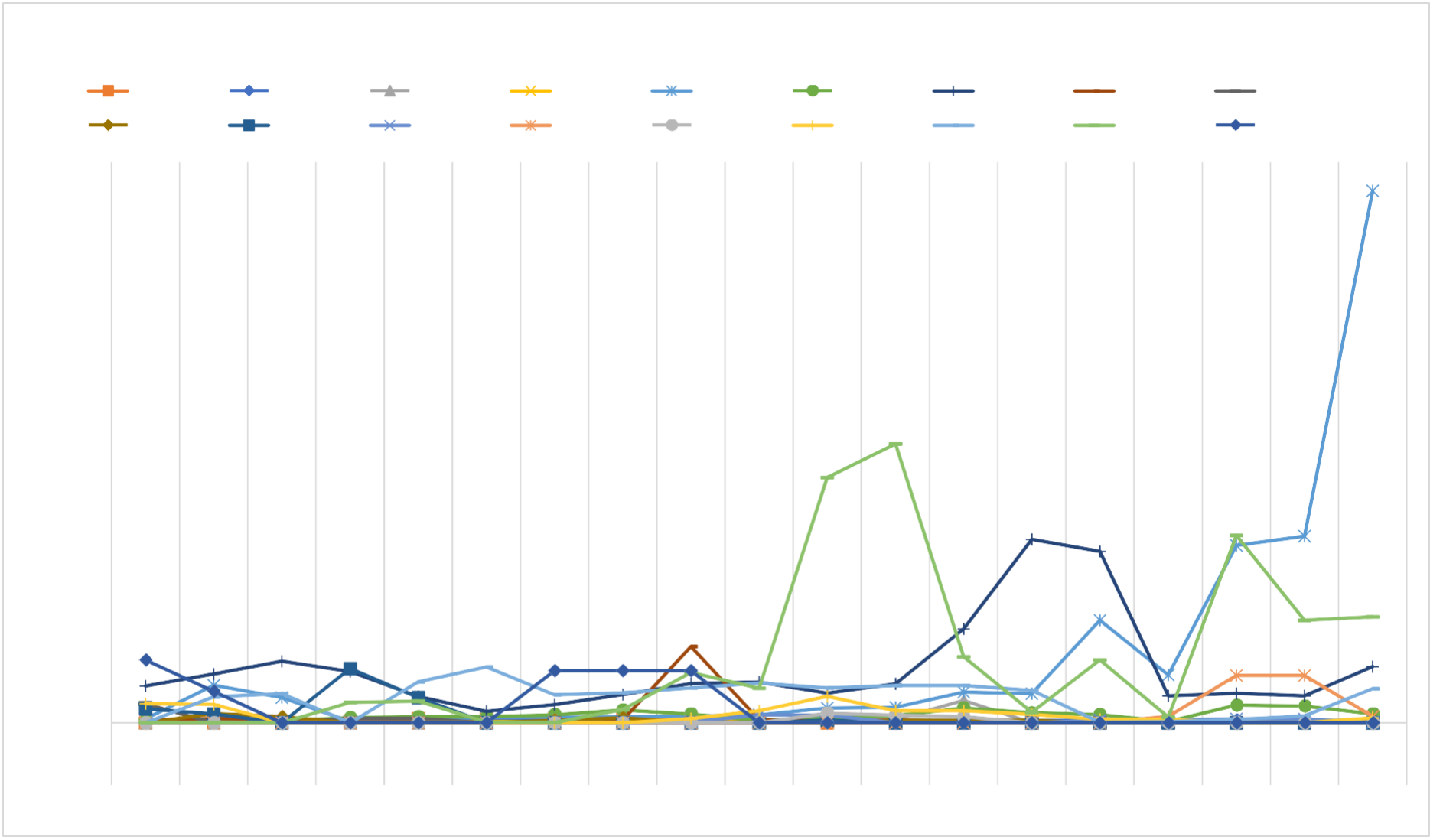
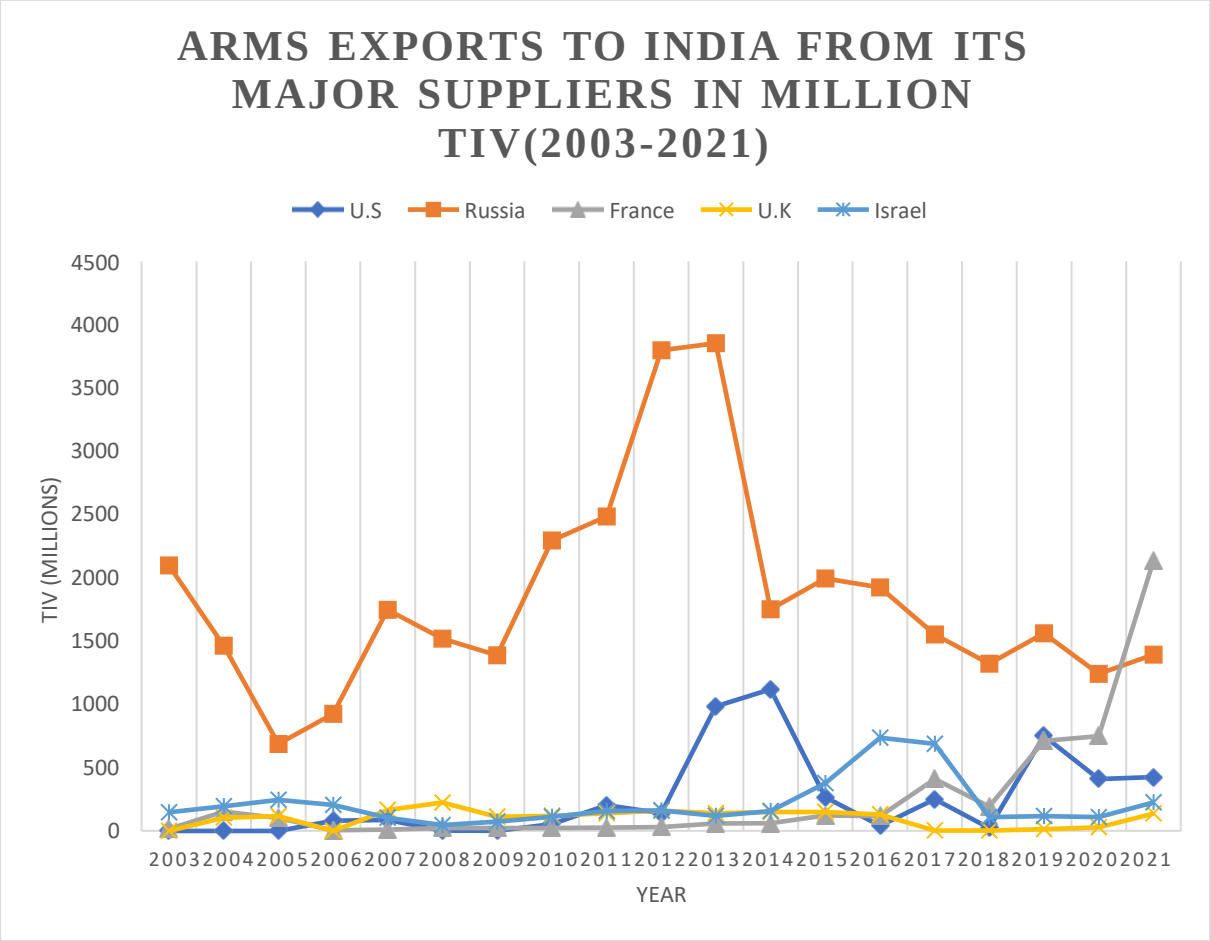


Figure 4.11 Arms exports to India from its major suppliers (in million TIV) (2003-2021)

SIPRI Arms Transfers database, TIV of arms exports to India, 2003-2021, https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php.



Once again, I had to distinguish between all partners (without Russia) and significant partners in order to be able to see the evolutions in Figure 4.10. India had nine suppliers in 2003 and twelve in 2021, a maximum (reached in 2011, 2013, and 2015). The diversification is not spectacular, but there is a slight evolution towards it. Maaike Verbruggen has studied India's arms imports since the 1970s, and she analyzes the diversification of India's arms suppliers[414]. She argues that "India's trend toward diversification matches with the other importers and the rest of the world. The state of polarity of the world most likely caused this[415]." Some of these imports are 'imposed' by other partners. For example, the purchase of 6 Ilyushin II-78 to Uzbekistan in 2003 was made via Israel and Russia because they would then be fitted with the Israeli Phalcon AEW system.

[414] Verbruggen, "India's Arms Imports," 44.
[415] Verbruggen, 73.

However, Pant argues that "India remains keen to diversify the stable of countries from which it buys arms and wants to reduce its dependence on Russia, especially after extended delays in Russian arms supplies and growing disenchantment in India regarding price escalations[416]." INS Vikramaditya, for example, India's first aircraft carrier and formerly Admiral Gorshkov in the Soviet Navy, was commissioned in 2013. It cost India twice the initially expected (USD 2,35 billion against USD 974 million). Moreover, there were significant delays in the delivery, most likely due to engine problems. As a result, there was internal criticism against the decision to buy this carrier.

As I mentioned earlier, the U.S has been preparing a $500 million military aid package for India "to deepen security ties and reduce the country's dependence on Russian weapons[417]." Indeed, the U.S wants the diversification to happen, but it would have to be through them, and "while India is already diversifying its military platforms away from Russia, the U.S wants to help make that happen faster[418]." This is not a tendency that is already clearly visible. Still, if it happened, depending on the amounts and quality of arms imports from the U.S, it would undoubtedly cripple India's hedging strategy.

4.2.3 Type of acquisition

To go further than pure volumes of arms transfers (even though the TIV indicator incorporates other dimensions than just financial transfers), I analyzed the origins of India's purchases according to the type of weapons they encompassed. In other words, where is India buying what, and why?

From a hedging perspective, despite China's absence among India's arms suppliers, analyzing whether India is increasingly importing weapon systems from the U.S, which arms it imports, and why. A shift towards the U.S would weaken my hypothesis.

I used the SIPRI Arm Trade Register, which employs the following classification: Aircraft, Air defense systems, Armored vehicles, Artillery, Engines, Missiles, Naval weapons, Sensors, and Ships. The limitation with this register is that it lists only certain types of weapons, primarily heavy weaponry because it is deemed the most insightful. However, I tried to integrate lighter weapons as well to obtain a complete picture of India's arms imports.

[416] Harsh V. Pant, "India's Arms Acquisition: Devoid of a Strategic Orientation," in *The Global Arms Trade* (Routledge, 2010), 69.
[417] "US Seeks to Wean India From Russia Weapons With Arms-Aid Package," *Bloomberg.Com*, May 17, 2022.
[418] "US Seeks to Wean India From Russia Weapons With Arms-Aid Package."

Firstly, Verbruggen has built the following table to distinguish the number of 'unique' suppliers for each weapon system (among those listed by the SIPRI).

Figure 4.12: Number of unique suppliers in total and per weapon system for India 1970-2014

From Maaike Verbruggen, "India's Arms Imports: A Holistic Overview of India s Motivations for Choosing Arms Suppliers," Master's Thesis, University of Oslo, 2015, 44.

Table 6.2 Number of unique suppliers in total and per weapon system for India 1970-2014

	Total suppliers	AD systems	Aircraft	Armored vehicles	Artillery	Engines	Missiles	Naval weapons	Sensors	Ships	Other	Cumulative suppliers per subsystem
'70-'74	8	0	4	0	1	2	5	0	1	1	0	14
'75-'79	9	0	3	0	1	1	6	1	5	1	1	19
'80-'84	9	1	4	2	2	0	4	4	3	4	0	24
'85-'89	14	0	8	1	0	1	5	1	4	2	0	22
'90-'94	10	4	0	4	1	0	6	2	0	3	0	20
'95-'99	15	0	4	4	1	2	5	0	6	3	0	25
'00-'04	16	3	8	2	1	1	4	3	3	6	0	31
'05-'09	12	4	5	5	4	5	7	0	2	2	1	35
'10-'14	15	1	11	1	1	6	7	0	5	3	0	35
Total	**24**	**13**	**47**	**19**	**12**	**18**	**49**	**11**	**29**	**25**	**2**	**225**

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Register

Between 2000-2004 and 2010-2014, the number of suppliers has risen for Engines, Missiles, and Sensors, but especially for Aircraft. However, this number has decreased in other sectors, such as Armored Vehicles or Artillery. Therefore, diversification does not necessarily affect each sector to the same extent. This table also shows that "not only does India have more suppliers, they are also offering arms in multiple weapon systems[419]." Now let's go into more details about these purchases.

India has concluded major contracts with Russia over the last decades. For example, INS Vikramaditya is, for the moment, India's only aircraft carrier, as INS Vikrant, indigenously built, should be commissioned in 2022. Therefore, India's only aircraft carrier is a former Soviet carrier (Kiev-class).

Similarly, in the IAF, most fighters are Russian Su-30MKI (260 in January 2020), even if most of them are produced in India by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. However, the 2021 deal to order 12 more Su-30MKI and upgrade the 85 planes of the current fleet may have recently been "put on the backburner[420]." In 2018, India had already withdrawn from the Sukhoi/HAL Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft development project that it had agreed on in 2007. David Axe quotes an Indian official who said the aircraft was "too expensive, poorly

[419] Verbruggen, "India's Arms Imports," 43.
[420] "Amid Ukraine-Russia War, IAF's Rs 35,000 Cr Plan to Upgrade Su-30 Fighter Fleet Put on Backburner," *ANI* News, May 8, 2022.

engineered and powered by old and unreliable engines[421].” This happened just before the contract signature for French Rafale and could indeed explain the diversification[422].

Nonetheless, when distinguishing between army corps, Russian fighters are still predominant. In the Navy, the dominance is absolute as “the only fighters that [it] uses are 45 MiG-29Ks, which are operated from India’s sole aircraft carrier[423].” Similarly, in the Indian Air Force, “while [it] has now diversified to French and Israeli systems, the majority of its equipment, including fighters and missiles, is of Russian origin[424].”

With regard to its submarine forces, the Indian Navy ordered six conventional Scorpène submarines from the French shipbuilder Naval Group, and the last one, INS Vagsheer, was commissioned in April 2022. In the meantime, India has developed its own SSBNs, the first one being the INS Arihant (2009). More significantly, India has indicated its project to build a six nuclear-powered attack submarines fleet. Russia already leased two Akula-class nuclear-powered attack submarines to India. The possibility of a third lease was discussed in 2021 to have two SSNs simultaneously because the PLAN modernization is “clearly putting pressure on the India Navy[425].”

In contrast, the creation of AUKUS has shown that the U.S had no intent to help India acquire SSNs. It also underlines the failures of the Defence Trade and Technology Initiative since 2012. Moreover, this shows that when India wants to build its submarine power to strengthen its second-strike capability and nuclear credibility, it turns to Russia rather than the U.S because “it is more appealing to purchase from an industrial supplier than a hegemon or a restrictive supplier, since an industrial supplier has the least leverage[426],” and it does not try to control India’s will.

The case of the defense systems is striking. In cooperation with the Indian Defence Research Development Organisation, Israel has been an essential supplier in this area. For example, they jointly developed the Barak-8 surface-to-air missile defense system that was in service in 2016. However, the U.S can still block some technology transfers because Washington also contributes to the systems’ development. It may have done so in 2002 when India tried to purchase Arrow II, the Israeli anti-ballistic missiles system, mainly because of the

[421] David Axe, “India Hates the Russian Su-57 Stealth Fighter,” Text, *The National Interest* (The Center for the National Interest, September 21, 2021).
[422] Vasabjit Banerjee and Benjamin Tkach, “After Ukraine, Where Will India Buy Its Weapons?,” *War on the Rocks*, April 12, 2022, https://warontherocks.com/2022/04/after-ukraine-where-will-india-buy-its-weapons/.
[423] Verbruggen, “India's Arms Imports," 45.
[424] Verbruggen, 45.
[425] Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, “India Launches 3rd Arihant Submarine,” *Observer Research Foundation*, January 7, 2022.
[426] Verbruggen, “India's Arms Imports," 45

U.S' "reluctance about how this sale might affect the conventional weapons balance between India and Pakistan[427]." On the other hand, India recently ordered the Russian S-400 Triumf air defense system, despite the possible U.S sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, and it received its first deliveries in December 2021. The Russian ambassador to India, Denis Alipov, assured that deliveries were not affected by the war in Ukraine[428], and the Pentagon announced that New Delhi plans to deploy the system by June 2022.

Regarding radars, India has also bought three Phalcon Airborne Warning and Controlling Systems (AWACS) aircraft and may buy two more in the coming years. The reason for these purchases is mainly the Pakistani advance in this domain, with eight Chinese Karakoram Eagle AWACS[429].

When it comes to drones, the Indian Navy leased two U.S Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, Sea Guardians, under the Defence Acquisition Procedure in 2020[430]. Verbruggen argues that "Russia is not an expert in drone production, while Israel and the USA are," and that "Israel also offers electronic warfare technology that Russia cannot.[431]" This shows that a shift away from Russia would be explained by a need for more advanced technology rather than a genuine willingness to align with the U.S/Israel.

However, Malone and Mohan argue that there is at least one upside with Russia that would justify for India to keep buying from Moscow; indeed, "beyond selling arms outright, [Russia] continues to provide India opportunities for joint production and licensed manufacturing (something that India now requires as part of arms contracts)[432]." The development of the Brahmos missile is a clear example, whereas the U.S and India "do not have a single project that they can hold up as symbolic of the depth of their defense cooperation[433]."

As a matter of fact, in terms of missiles, Verbruggen provides an overview of India's purchases, and it "shows that Russia and Israel offer missiles with better characteristics than the USA. The USA has only recently entered the market, but so far, it does not look like the USA is replacing Russia or Israel for the most sensitive arms[434]." Similarly, in the Indian Army,

[427] Pant, "India's Arms Acquisition," 69.
[428] "Transfer Of S-400 Missiles To Ukraine Not On Agenda; India Can Be Offered S-500 If Delhi Shows Interest -- Media," *Latest Asian, Middle-East, EurAsian, Indian News*, March 26, 2022.
[429] "Ladakh Face-off: India to Order 2 More Israeli 'Eyes in Sky' for $1 Billion," *The Times of India*, August 27, 2020.
[430] Snehesh Alex Philip, "Indian Navy Inducts Two American Drones on Lease, Could Add More Later," *ThePrint* (blog), November 25, 2020.
[431] Verbruggen, "India s Arms Imports." 42.
[432] Malone, Mohan, and Raghavan, *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, 633.
[433] Yusuf Unjhawala, "India and the US: Defense Collaboration Is Key," *The Diplomat* April 19, 2022.
[434] Verbruggen, "India s Arms Imports," 79.

"the main rocket systems in use […] are Russian, Smerch and Grad[435]." And, even more interestingly, even in the field of smaller and lighter arms, "Russian systems rule the roost[436]." Indeed, AK-47 is the most common rifle for the soldiers in the Indian Army, especially at the border. Moreover, in 2021, India and Russia signed a 10-years deal for the joint manufacture of AK-203.

It is undeniable that there has been a relative shift away from Russia in the last few years. The main answer to the question 'why' is that "there is specific weaponry that India wants which Russia cannot produce[437]." So far, the U.S has not really been capable nor willing to foster technology transfers toward India. However, the war in Ukraine may accelerate things and facilitate "a new phase in defence cooperation between the two[438]."

Nonetheless, I remain doubtful that this evolution will be running smoothly. Indeed, Verbruggen argues that "India is afraid of the USA becoming a hegemonic supplier, and that is limiting further growth. One of the reasons Israel is an attractive supplier to India is that Israel asks no questions and makes no demands.[439]" Moreover, shifting away from a supplier is not that easy. Malone, Raghavan, and Mohan wrote in 2015 that "organizational inertia and the Indian military's familiarity with Soviet/Russian weapons will make replacing Russia as the primary supplier difficult, the more so as Moscow will likely continue offering better prices[440]."

4.2.2 Conclusion on arms transfers

Pant wrote in 2010 that "[India's] ties with major global players such as the USA, Russia, the U.K. and France will remain strong and this will help it to diversify its defence purchases, though the role of the USA is set to increase substantially, with a relative decline in Russian influence[441]." Twelve years later, I believe this has been verified but only to a certain extent. Russia's influence has certainly declined since 2013 but imports from the U.S have not necessarily 'substantially' increased and most importantly, the weapon systems that are bought from Russia, despite a possible lack of technological advance, are the ones that have the overriding strategic significance for India's military. However, as Joshi puts it, "[Russia] is

[435] Suchet Vir Singh, "Submarines, Tanks, Fighters, Even Basic Rifles: Long List of Russian Imports Indian Forces Use," *ThePrint* (blog), March 11, 2022, https://theprint.in/defence/submarines-tanks-fighters-even-basic-rifles-long-list-of-russian-imports-indian-forces-use/867530/.
[436] Singh, "Submarines, Tanks, Fighters, Even Basic Rifles."
[437] Verbruggen, "India s Arms Imports," 41.
[438] Manu Pubby, "Defence Tech Transfer Hitch to Be Resolved Soon: US," *The Economic Times*, April 27, 2022.
[439] Verbruggen, 46.
[440] Malone, Mohan, and Raghavan, *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, 632.
[441] Pant, "India's Arms Acquisition," 75.

highly unlikely to restore the dominance it once held[442].” Nonetheless, a trend towards diversification is undeniable.

The absence of arms imports from China is meaningful, primarily because it provides Pakistan's competitive weapon systems. It is seemingly impossible for India to buy armament from China in this context. However, I argue that India’s joint ventures and arms imports from Russia are a middle ground that allows it to keep hedging. Indeed, when India can not hedge by engaging with China, it does so with other partners, mainly Russia (and France) in the arms imports domain. The Indian abstentions at the UNSC and UNGA votes on the Russian invasion of Ukraine have brought this strategy to light. It has often been said that India’s behavior was linked to its military ‘dependence’ on Russia, which did not allow New Delhi to speak freely. I argue that it is the other way around because, as we have seen, India has diversified its arms suppliers in the last decades and military dependence “is never absolute[443].” Indian hedging is therefore also apparent in the field of arms, whether heavy or light.

4.3 Conclusion of the military assessment

To conclude this fourth chapter, the analysis of military cooperation (military exercises and cooperation agreements) showed that India is diversifying its strategic partnerships without restricting itself to U.S/Western allies, besides developing cooperation with the U.S and China. New Delhi also maintains ambiguity with its military acquisition by involving another actor: Russia. Finally, the diversification of its arms suppliers, with France and the U.K leading the way, is the last indicator of a hedging strategy. This strategy is adapting according to the state of international relations (as shown by the evolution of the Indo-Russian relation).

[442] Shashank Joshi, *Indian Power Projection: Ambition, Arms and Influence* (London: Routledge, 2017), 24.
[443] Rohan Mukherjee, “Nonalignment’s Long Shadow: India and the Ukraine Crisis,” *9DASHLINE*, March 14, 2022.

Conclusion

Throughout this analysis, I have shown that India's foreign policy choices and assessments reveal a strategy of hedging, which means producing ambiguous signals to avoid alignment with either great power. Overall, my findings have supported my hypothesis that India is neither balancing China nor bandwagoning behind the U.S because it is still willing to maintain this "trade-off between the fundamental (but conflicting) interests of autonomy and alignment[444]" despite the risks.

Ambiguity remains crucial for India's strategy in a multipolar world, and this is visible in all three indicators: threat perception, diplomatic position, and military behavior.

The threat assessment analysis has shown that, despite India's perception of China as a serious risk, neither great power is yet assessed as an imminent threat. Even if this tendency seemed to shift in 2014, when PM Modi came into office, the following years' threat assessment does not confirm a transfer from risk to threat. Regarding the Pakistan-China nexus, India assesses it as a serious risk, especially since the beginning of the CPEC project in 2015. Similarly, the border issue is a major risk for India since shots were fired in 2020. However, in both cases, China was never mentioned as a threat, even though it was probably perceived as such.

The diplomatic assessment was carried out in two distinct moments. Firstly, I studied India's UNGA votes in relation to China's and the U.S.'. Even though this indicator entailed certain limitations, it allowed me to conclude that India is voting to a large extent similar to China but has been voting slightly more in compliance with the U.S. over time. It is difficult to perceive an alignment on either great power, which demonstrates a hedging strategy. Secondly, I studied two contentious issues: Taiwan and the South China Sea. The analysis of India's position on Taiwan corroborates my hypothesis that India maintains ambiguity when confronted with such an issue. Even if New Delhi's growing irritation concerning the SCS might question this conclusion if this tendency is exacerbated in the coming years, it still underpins my hypothesis.

Finally, the military assessment showed a clear tendency toward diversification in terms of strategic partnerships and arms suppliers. India has unambiguously put emphasis on increasing cooperation and collaboration with many new partners. Its relationship with Russia

[444] Lim and Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging," 707.

in terms of arms transfers has allowed it to build its military capacities, even though the the extent of this cooperation has been decreasing for technological and cost reasons. India has also developed its military relationship with the U.S, but despite the expectations, it has not entirely shifted toward Washington for arms imports. Finally, India maintained a strategic partnership with China even when their relationship was at its lowest because of the border issue.

With this work, I wanted to shed light on both the hedging strategy, the conceptual debates that came with it, and India's foreign policy that, I believe, may sometimes be overlooked in France. Of course, the war in Ukraine put New Delhi under the spotlight with the abstentions at the UNSC and UNGA votes, but explanations were often reduced to India's "military dependency on Russia." India is a growing power that is to play (and is already playing) a massive role in I.R given its size, capabilities, and geographic position.

Therefore, from a policy-making perspective, I hope that this work will allow having a better understanding of India's foreign policy and what its strategy could be in the future. For example, it is interesting to underline that India requires specific ways to build military cooperation by emphasizing joint collaboration for arms production and avoiding asking for alignment on certain issues, for example.

For scholars, I argue that it would be constructive to develop the field of research related to hedging because it is an promising concept that, if scientifically defined and analyzed, could become an essential tool to complete middle-power theory. If hedging is used a lot, it is not necessarily studied as much, and I emphasize one last time the fact that ambiguous signals and the distinction between risk and threat are two crucial elements of this strategy.

Lastly, I hope this paper allows new questions to emerge for further research studies.

Firstly, it would be particularly pertinent to wonder *why* India is hedging. India's non-alignment heritage is undoubtedly a critical element in the equation, but I argue that choosing to hedge also has something to do with the fact that India is a middle power. Cooper et al. defined a middle power as a state that had "a tendency to embrace compromise positions in international disputes[445]." Moreover, a middle power has capacities that allow it to enjoy a certain strategic leeway and maintain ambiguity. However, Australia is also a middle power that, according to Fortier and Massie, has shifted from hedging to balancing China around 2020. Therefore, a comparative analysis of India and Australia, for example, would uncover the

[445] Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal, *Relocating Middle Powers*, 19.

reasons why the former is hedging and not the latter. India's strategic culture would be an idea for a complementary study in connection with hedging and the heritage of non-alignment. Of course, one must be careful not to essentialize a country's culture, which is a challenge from a Western perspective, but I argue that the strategic culture theory harbors interesting possibilities related to hedging.

Another pertinent study would be to expand the methodology for the threat assessment. In this paper, I have restricted the text analysis to the 'elites' in power, namely the primary decision-makers in terms of foreign policy. However, in a democracy like India, despite its flaws, the role of media is crucial, and it would be strategically pertinent to analyze the threat assessments of several mass media such as *Times of India*, *Hindustan Times*, *The Hindu* for the printed press, or *ThePrint* and *Scroll.in* for online media. At this point, it would be necessary to include sources in Hindi. It would also be relevant to study the threat perceptions accordingto the different political parties, especially between the BJP and the National Congress. Furthermore, I believe that IRaMuTeQ is a tool that contains multiple functionalities that I did not use to their fullest for this analysis.

In terms of method, the Ideal Point analysis could be improved to understand the group dynamics and "peer-group-level influences on state's behaviour in the world's largest deliberative body[446]." In this perspective, following Vucetic and Ramadanovic's suggestions (they study the case of Canada), one could analyze India's position at the UNGA by "considering content-analyzing official statements issues during the General Debates[447]." On a large scale, it would be interesting to carry out this study with IRaMuTeQ to conduct this discourse analysis that the two authors recommend.

Finally, Ciorciari argued that hedging can be a costly strategy[448]. Therefore, it would be relevant to wonder whether hedging is a success for India or not. If this strategy is indeed a success, it "lessen[s] the likelihood that a threat will materialize, keep doors open for productive engagement, and avoid excessive reliance on foreign protector while preserving the strategic flexibility to seek succor if necessary[449]." On the contrary, a hedging strategy that fails would have the state "facing dire threats it is unprepared to meet[450]." It might be to early to tell whether India's hedging strategy is a success or not, and difficult because "effective hedging strategies

[446] Vucetic and Ramadanovic, "Canada in the United Nations General Assembly from Trudeau to Trudeau," 16.
[447] Vucetic and Ramadanovic, 16.
[448] Ciorciari, "The Variable Effectiveness of Hedging Strategies," 529.
[449] Ciorciari, 524.
[450] Ciorciari, 525.

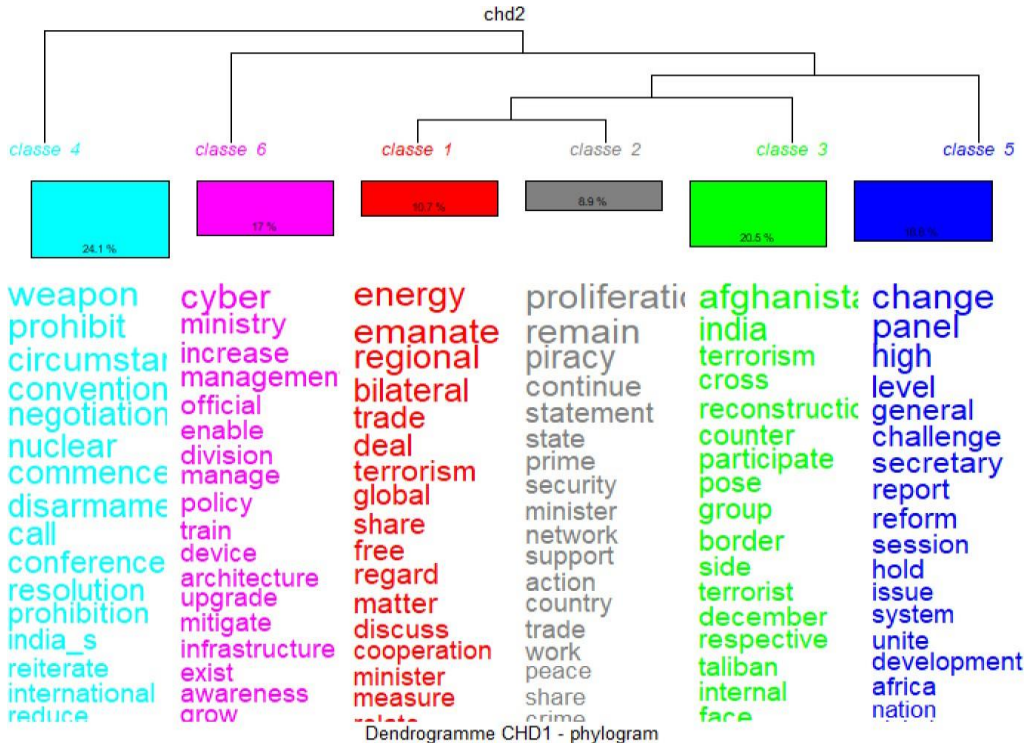
often contribute to non-events[451].” Derek Grossman believes that this strategy is, for the moment, a winning one as “great powers are competing more vigorously for New Delhi’s affection, particularly the United States and China[452].” However, studying the behavior of other countries toward India could be enlightening on the level of success of this strategy.

In either way, hedging is a concept that has a promising future in I.R studies as it allows to have a more precise idea of India’s (and other states’) role in the shifting balance of power of the Indo-Pacific. Despite the clear conclusion of this study, the rapidly changing strategic environment could push New Delhi to abandon hedging if an imminent and existential threat - namely China – is assessed as such.

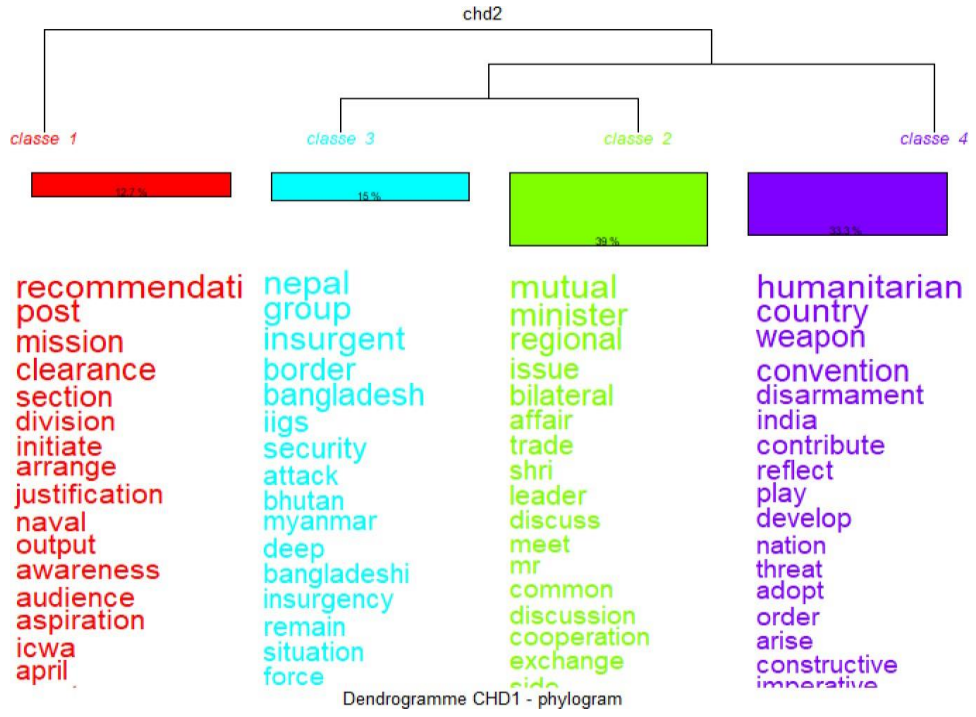
[451] Ciorciari, 527.
[452] Derek Grossman, “Modi’s Multipolar Moment Has Arrived,” *Foreign Policy* (blog), June 6, 2022.

Appendices

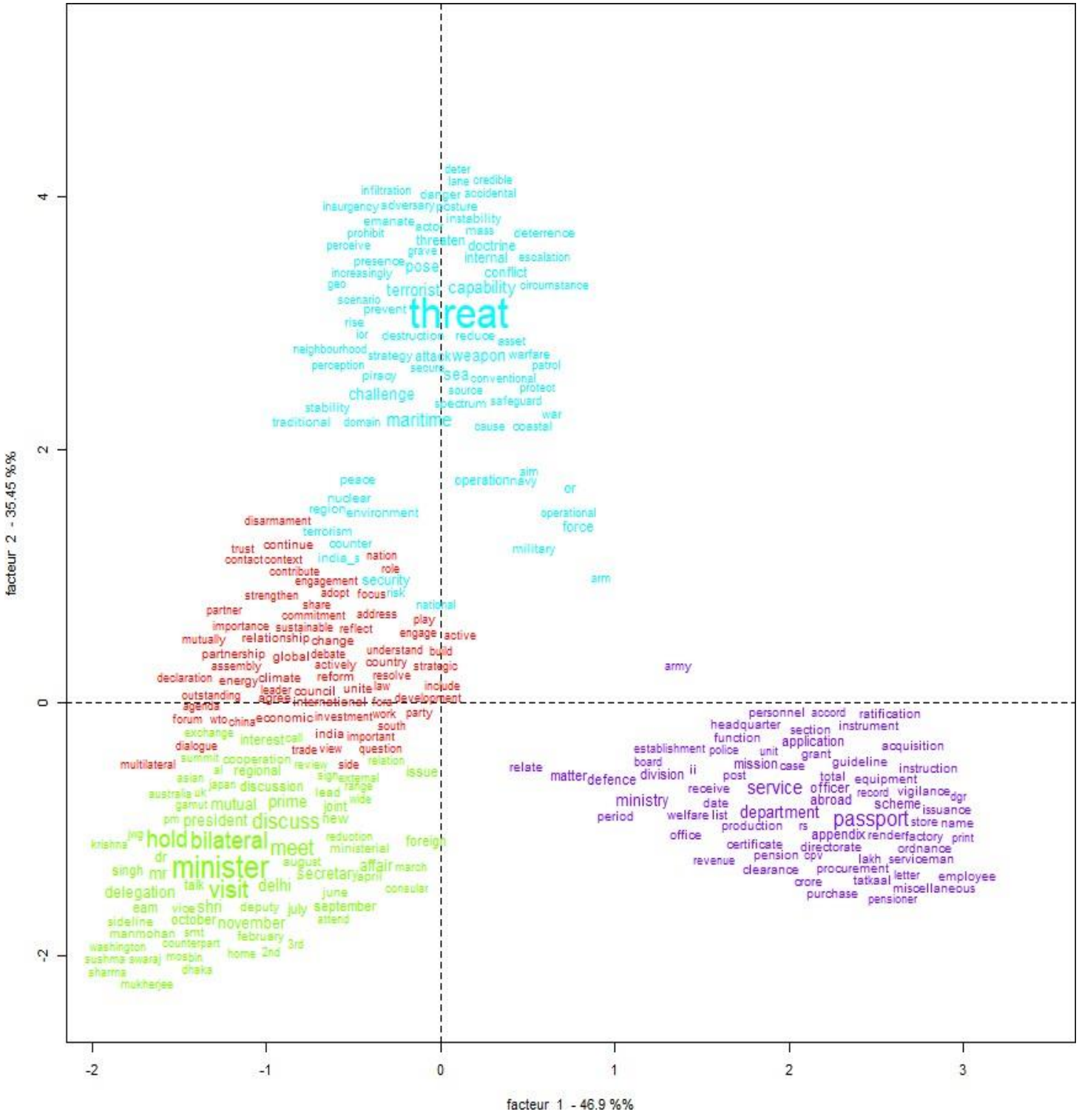
Appendix 1: CHD IRaMuTeQ Subcorpus "threat" – Annual Report MEA (2003-2022)



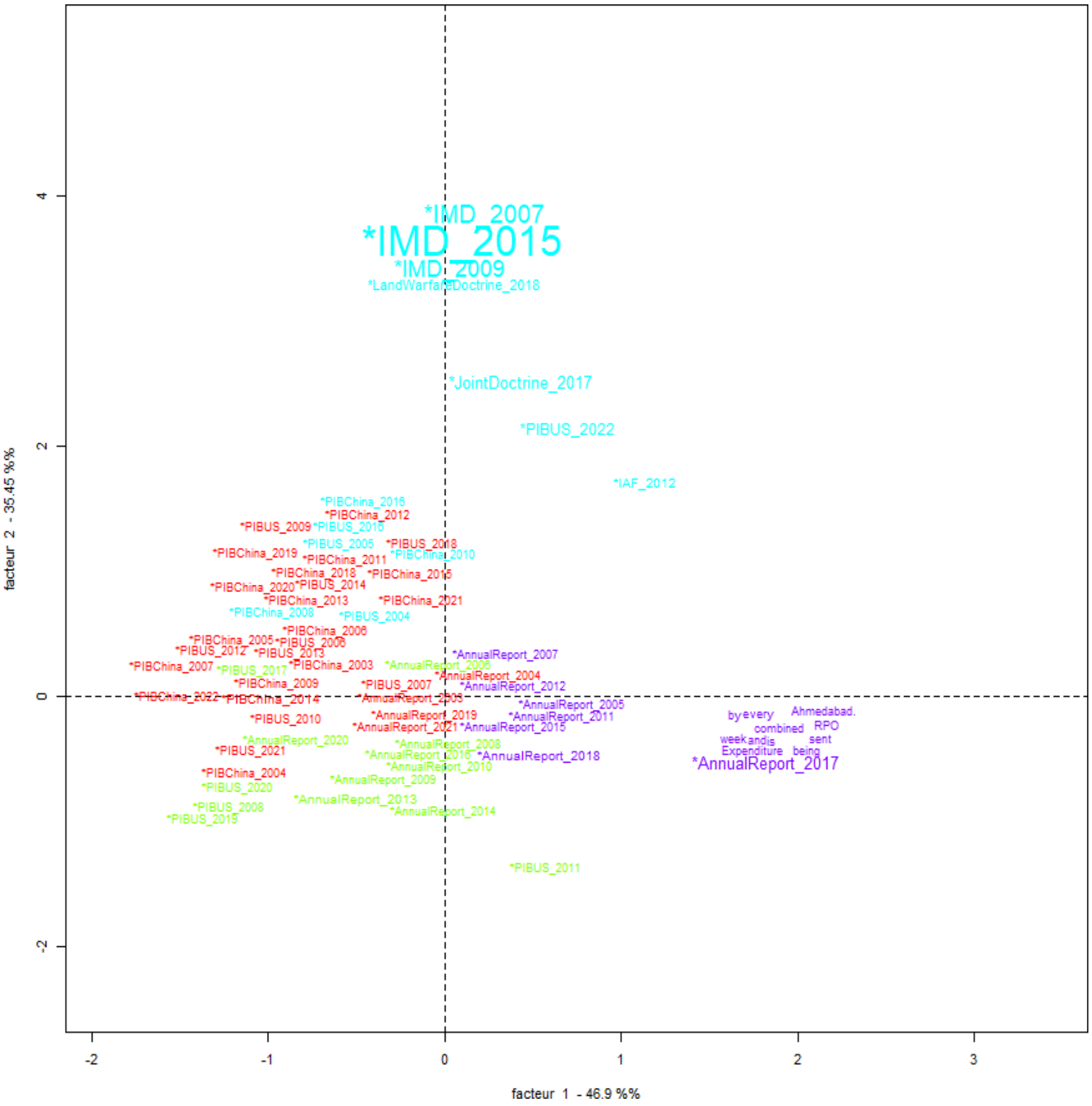
Appendix 2: CHD IRaMuTeQ Subcorpus "concern" – Annual Report MEA (2003-2022)



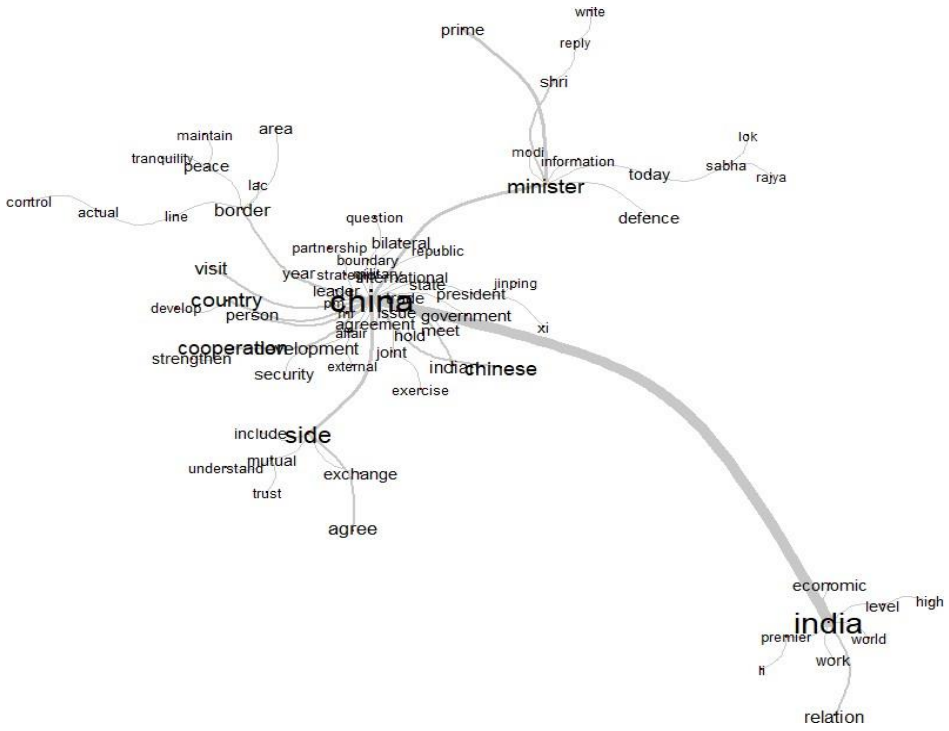
Appendix 3: <u>Correspondence Factor Analysis of the whole corpus (lexical forms)</u>



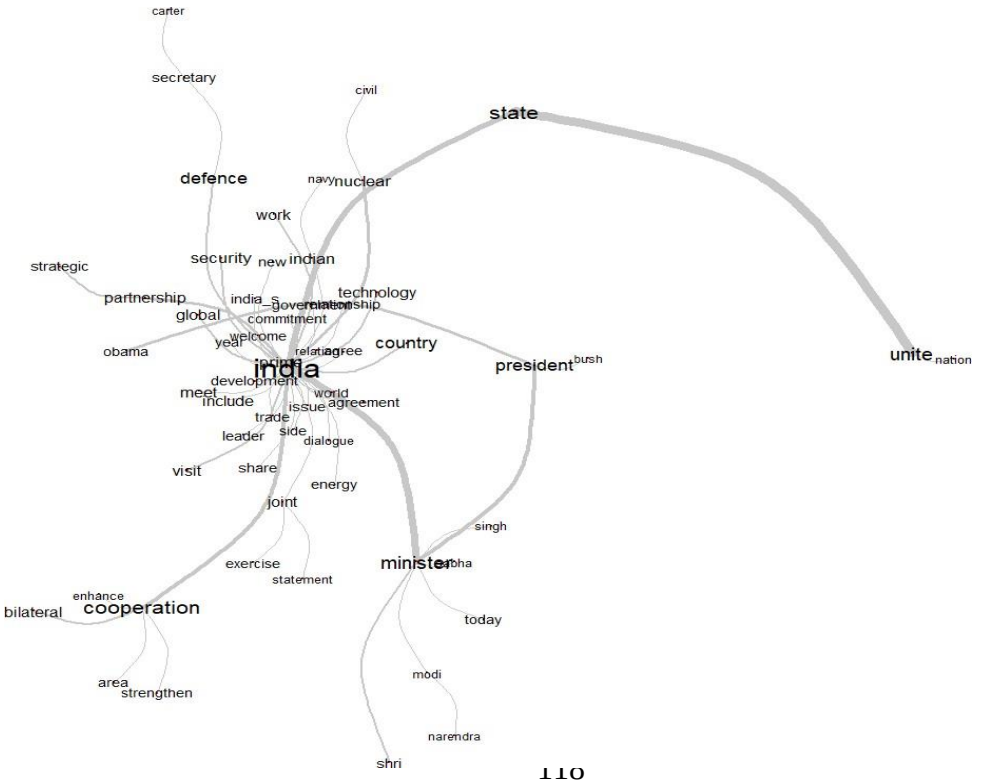
Appendix 4: Correspondence Factor Analysis according to the source of the documents



Appendix 6: Similarities analysis IRaMuTeQ – Press Information Bureau "China"

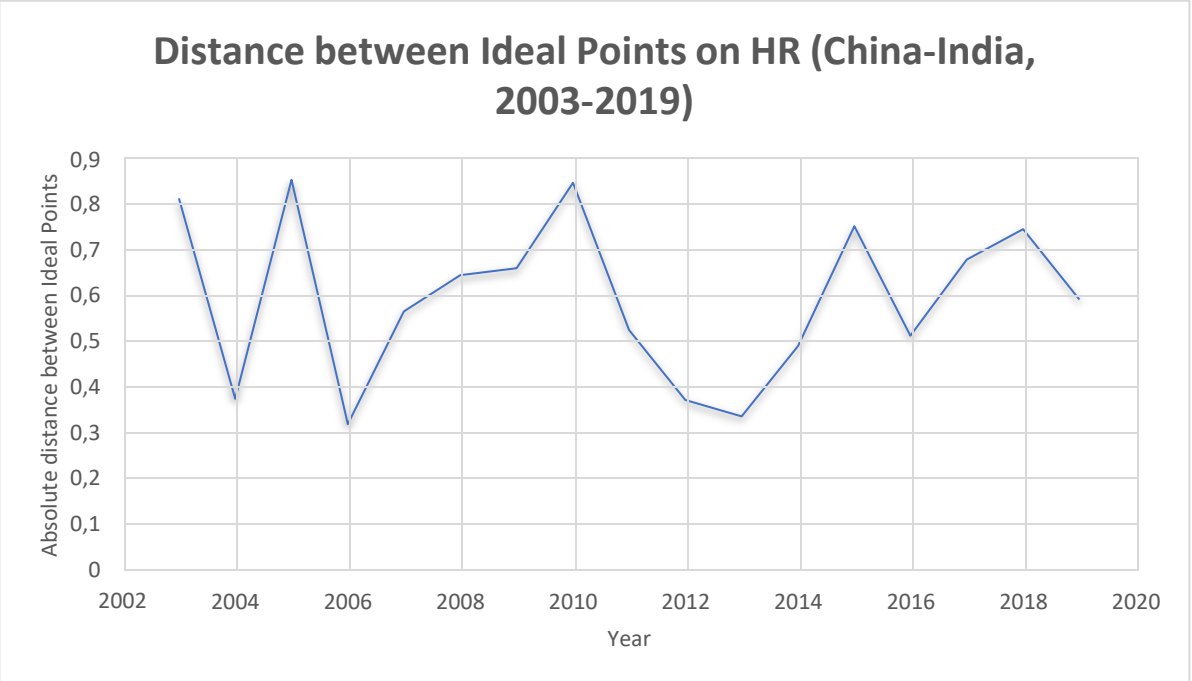


Appendix 5: Similarities analysis IRaMuTeQ – Press Information Bureau "U.S."



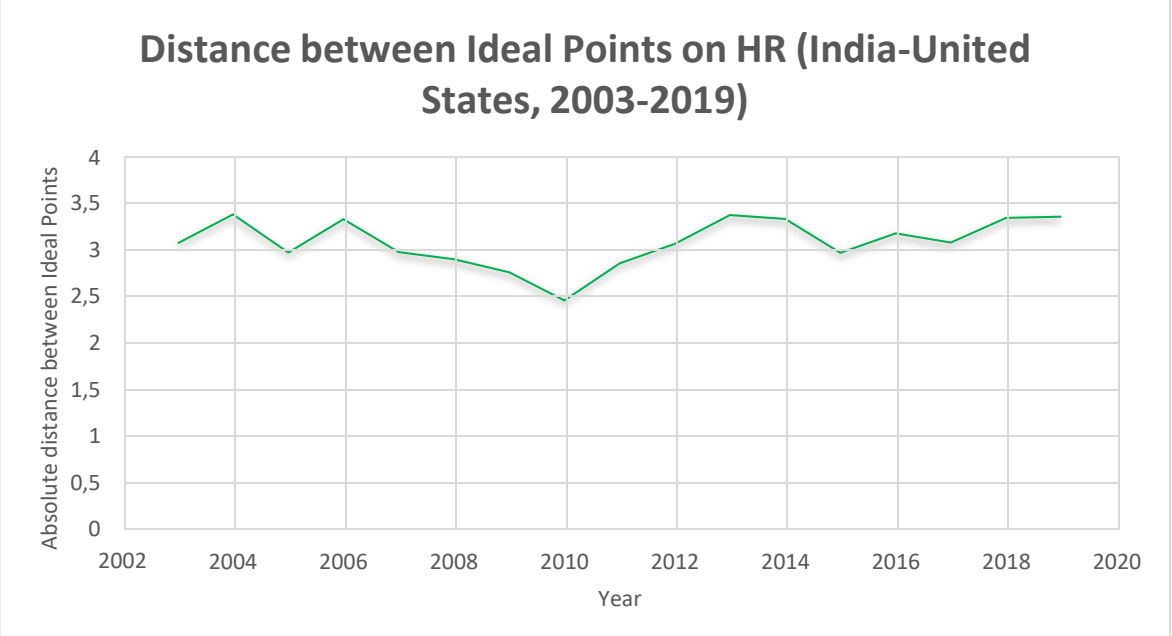
Appendix 7: Distance between Ideal Points on HR (China-India, 2003-2019)

Ideal Points Data: Voeten, Erik; Strezhnev, Anton; Bailey, Michael, 2009, "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LEJUQZ, Harvard Dataverse, V28, UNF:6:dki7hpeRB0FwTFJ00X/TCQ== [fileUNF].

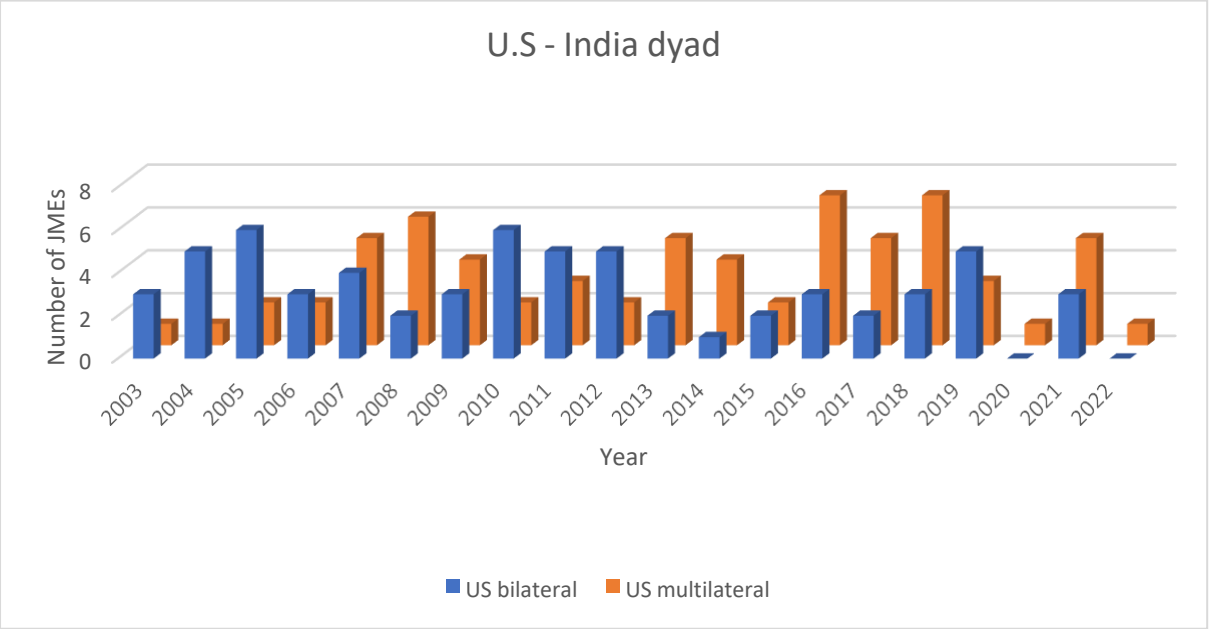


Appendix 8: Distance between Ideal Points on HR (India-United States, 2003-2019)

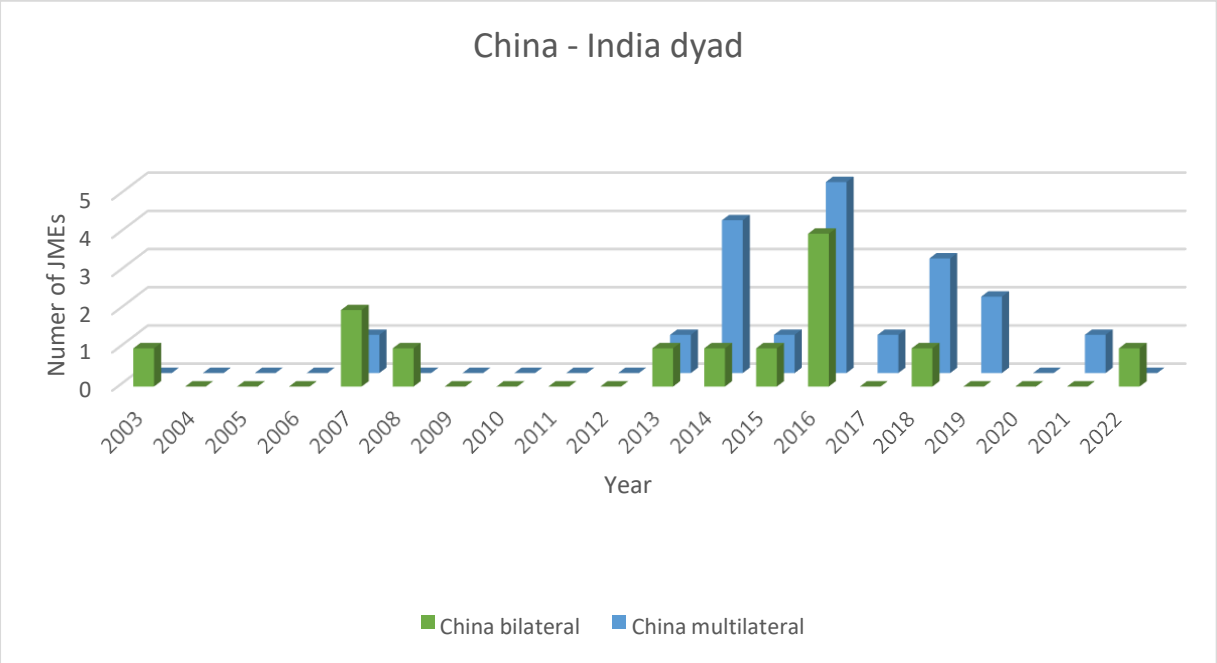
Ideal Points Data: Voeten, Erik; Strezhnev, Anton; Bailey, Michael, 2009, "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LEJUQZ, Harvard Dataverse, V28, UNF:6:dki7hpeRB0FwTFJ00X/TCQ== [fileUNF].



Appendix 9: U.S-India JMEs repartition (bilateral and multilateral)



Appendix 10: China-India JMEs repartition (bilateral and multilateral)



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