
**Switzerland's Sanctions Policy towards Russia during the 2022 Ukraine
Conflict: A Constructivist Perspective**

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ABSTRACT: This research examines Switzerland's sanctions policy towards Russia during the 2022 Ukraine conflict, utilizing Martha Finnemore's constructivist approach. Switzerland is widely known for its long-standing commitment to human rights, as well as its traditional inclination toward neutrality in international affairs. This study seeks to understand why, despite its cautious stance in most global conflicts, Switzerland chose to adopt the European Union's sanctions in response to serious violations of international humanitarian law committed during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Employing a qualitative descriptive method through literature review and policy analysis, the research applies Finnemore's concept of ideas and norms to explore how deeply rooted human rights values shape Swiss foreign policy behavior. The findings reveal that the sanctions imposed by Switzerland are not merely political gestures, but rather a reflection of human rights norms that have been internalized through its constitution, legal system, and long-standing role in international humanitarian institutions. The study concludes that Switzerland's decision represents a consistent normative commitment to defend universal human rights and uphold the principles of international law.

Keywords: Human Rights, Foreign Policy, Constructivism, Sanctions, Switzerland.



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INTRODUCTION

Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine drew widespread international condemnation due to its violation of key international legal norms, including the prohibition of the use of force and the principles of state sovereignty under the United Nations Charter. This invasion began with the dispatch of Russian troops to Ukraine, accompanied by the firing of missiles by Russia at several locations around Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine (Hakim & Sadiyin, 2022). This invasion had a significant impact on international political, economic, and security stability (Khoirunnisa & Jubaidi, 2024). It has even created systemic shocks that have disrupted the financial stability of many developing countries. Countries in Africa, Southeast Asia, and South Asia have experienced rising fuel costs, food insecurity, currency devaluation, and fiscal strain. For example, in Pakistan, this crisis worsens

the existing economic challenges, including a ballooning trade deficit and soaring inflation (Rahmadan & Sabrina, 2024). To ensure human behavior in war remains within the bounds of humanity, efforts have also been made to establish international norms and laws to regulate behavior during armed conflict. International organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), have played a crucial role in preventing war and managing conflicts to limit escalation. The UN, therefore, passed a resolution urging Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukraine to stop the invasion. Western countries and allies such as United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and European Union member states finally imposed economic sanctions on Russia, which aimed to weaken the Russian economy and its military capabilities to stop Russia's invasion of Ukraine (Gayatri et al., 2024).

Amid international pressure to act, Switzerland, globally recognized as a neutral country, took the surprising step of adopting EU sanctions against Russia. This was announced by the Swiss President at the time, Ignazio Cassis on February 28 (RFE/RL, 2022). This move not only drew a global spotlight but also served as a test for Switzerland. On one hand, as a neutral country, Switzerland has historically refrained from imposing unilateral sanctions on other countries. On the other hand, Switzerland is renowned as a country that upholds human rights; this can also be proven through the Swiss constitution, which explicitly upholds human rights in Articles 7 to 36 (Swiss Federal Council, 1999). Historically, Switzerland has played a significant role as the host of various international conventions, such as the Geneva Conventions. As the center of international human rights institutions, one of them is the International Committee of the Red Cross. These long-standing commitments indicate that human rights considerations are consistently integrated into the formulation and implementation of Swiss foreign policy (Haloho et al., 2023). This makes Switzerland's decision to impose sanctions particularly relevant for analysis through a constructivist lens, where norms and ideas such as the protection of human rights are key in shaping state behaviour.

Violations of human rights that happened during the invasion created international and domestic pressure for Switzerland to take a stronger stance. In March 2022, Switzerland adopted EU sanctions against Russia, including the freezing of assets belonging to Russian oligarchs and restrictions on the export of strategic goods (Global Sanctions, 2022). This decision marked a significant step in Swiss foreign policy, which has historically been characterized by a neutral stance on international conflicts. While this policy has sparked debate among the public and foreign policy observers, many view the move as a reasonable adjustment to global political realities and as a form of moral responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law. Therefore, Switzerland's decision can be understood as a commitment to international norms, especially in the field of human rights, which have become an integral part of the country's legal system, institutions, and political identity (Franke, 2024). However, limited scholarly attention has been given to how these human rights norms, as internalized ideas, influence Switzerland's foreign policy decisions particularly through a constructivist lens. This highlights the need for further analysis behind Switzerland's sanction policy, beyond conventional explanations such as strategic or economic interests.

According to Martha Finnemore's constructivist approach, state behavior is guided not only by material interests or military power, but also by ideas and norms rooted in the international system (Finnemore, 1996). Switzerland, a country that has long built its identity on humanitarian values, has internalized human rights norms as a fundamental principle in its foreign policy. Thus, the decision to impose sanctions against Russia reflects not only a political response to aggression but also Switzerland's normative consistency in defending civil rights and human dignity. This research is based on the assumption that human rights norms have become an integral part of Swiss foreign policy. Therefore, it is essential to examine how Switzerland's decision to impose sanctions against Russia can be understood within the framework of constructivism, particularly through the lens of ideas and norms developed by Martha Finnemore. Through this approach, this research aims to analyze how human rights norms understood as internalized ideas have influenced Switzerland's foreign policy, particularly in its decision to adopt sanctions against Russia in 2022. The main research problem addressed is how Switzerland, often associated with humanitarian diplomacy, justifies its adjustment to traditional foreign policy approaches through the lens of constructivism. This study seeks to examine how human rights ideas and norms, as conceptualized by Martha Finnemore, influence Swiss foreign policy in the context of sanctions against Russia.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, the author draws on the theoretical basis of constructivism, complemented by the concept of human rights. Constructivism in international relations is a theoretical approach that emphasizes that state behavior is not determined solely by material interests or military power, but also by socially constructed elements such as ideas, identities, and norms. Within this perspective, the international system is shaped through shared understandings and intersubjective meanings among actors (Rizkiyah et al., 2023). A central concept in this theory is norm internalization, which refers to the process by which a norm is no longer perceived as an external obligation but becomes an integral part of a state's identity, institutions, and policy frameworks. When a norm is internalized, it influences how a state defines what is appropriate and legitimate behavior in the international arena.

In this framework, international norms such as human rights, global justice, and the protection of vulnerable groups not only become a discourse but also a reference in the formation of foreign policy. These norms work not through coercion, but through a process of socialization and internalization that influences the state's perception of what is appropriate and right in the international context. Martha Finnemore, one of the key figures in constructivism, argues that states act based on shared values and social expectations shaped by international norms. In her work "National Interests in International Society" (1996), she explains that national interests are not fixed or given, but are formed through the adoption of international norms over time (Finnemore, 1996).

Thus, Switzerland's actions in imposing sanctions against Russia cannot be understood entirely through the lens of strategic or economic interests, but must be seen in terms of how the human rights norms that Switzerland has long internalized shape its moral and political response to human rights violations in the Ukraine conflict. Martha Finnemore's constructivist approach allows for a deeper analysis of the normative and ideological dimensions of Swiss foreign policy and explains

how international norms influence the actions of state actors in a changing global context. Apart from the constructivism theory, this research also uses the concept of human rights. In addition to constructivism, this study also incorporates the concept of human rights as defined by Nurliah Nurdin and Astika Ummy Athahira (2022), who view human rights as inherent and inalienable rights of every individual that must be protected from political, legal, and social violations (Nurdin & Athahira, 2022). As norms that are broadly recognized in international law, human rights form one of the core principles governing interstate relations and foreign policy decisions.

It can be said that human rights are a global norm that has been recognized in international law and has become one of the pillars in relations between states. Human rights are not only seen as legal instruments but also as normative motivations that influence Switzerland's behavior on the international stage. As a country with a strong attachment to the principle of human rights, Switzerland cannot be passive about human rights violations that occur in the Ukraine-Russia conflict. Switzerland's actions can be interpreted as a demonstration of solidarity with universal human values that have long been integral to its international political and legal identity. The integration of Finnemore's constructivist theory and the concept of human rights provides a useful analytical lens to understand how moral values, rather than merely strategic calculations, have shaped Switzerland's decision to impose sanctions on Russia.

METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to provide an in-depth understanding of Switzerland's sanctions policy against Russia in 2022, focusing on the decision-making process and normative considerations as the unit of analysis. This research analyzed within the time frame of February to December 2022, which encompasses the critical period of international reaction following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The primary focus of this study is to examine how these values influenced Switzerland's response to human rights violations in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and how these actions reflect the country's normative consistency at the international level. This approach emphasizes the analysis of non-numerical data that is contextual and interpretive (Malahati et al., 2023). The analytical framework used in this study is a thematic analysis based on the constructivist theory of international relations, particularly drawing on the concepts of ideas and norms as proposed by Martha Finnemore. Rather than focusing on the evolution of norms as in the norm life cycle model, this research examines the presence and influence of already internalized norms in shaping state behavior.

Data collection techniques were employed through documentation studies and literature reviews, utilizing secondary data obtained from multiple sources, including official documents, international organization reports, relevant scientific articles and academic journals, as well as books and articles from credible mass media. With this method, the author can build a fairly clear and comprehensive analysis (Sulung & Muspawi, 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Economic Sanctions against Russia

After World War II, Russia-Ukraine relations were volatile, particularly regarding the issue of borders and Ukraine's westward geopolitical orientation. Finally, in 2014 the conflict between the two countries escalated with Russia's annexation of Crimea (Hendra et al., 2021), and support for Donbass separatist groups, this is further complicated by the growing involvement of foreign fighters, which poses challenges to the effective implementation of international humanitarian law (Khoirunnisa et al., 2025), as well as massive cyberattacks such as Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) and groups of hacker to damage and paralyze government systems, to disrupt communications and weaken opponents in an efficient and low-cost manner. Ukraine's vulnerability to cyberattacks was heightened by Russia's advanced digital warfare, impacting both public and governmental systems (Sugiati & Khoirunnisa, 2024).

This action clearly violates the principle of state territorial integrity, as upheld by Article 2 of the UN Charter, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of any state. As an independent state, Ukraine is entitled to this protection (Sari, 2022). Tensions between the two countries continued until 2022, when Russia launched a full military invasion of Ukraine, triggered by Ukraine's intention to join NATO, which Russia considered a direct threat to its national security (Saeri et al., 2023). The European Union itself has imposed sanctions on Russia several times for its violations, starting from 2014 during the illegal annexation of Crimea and destabilization of Eastern Ukraine. EU sanctions take the form of diplomatic sanctions, individual sanctions (such as asset freezes), and limitations on economic engagement with the regions of Crimea and Sevastopol (Idris & Mu'tashim, 2023). However, the culmination of these tensions was the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which established a structural shift in the foundations of European security.

The invasion constituted a severe breach of international law. In this invasion, Russia is considered to have committed serious violations of various principles of international law, including international humanitarian law, international moral standards, and the principle of national sovereignty. In this invasion, Russia committed human rights violations and damaged health facilities, which caused various criticisms through media channels (Zulfa et al., 2022). To halt the Russian invasion, many countries, particularly Western countries such as the United States, Britain, and Canada, have imposed economic sanctions. These sanctions are used as a tool to suppress or limit the influence of other parties without having to engage in direct military confrontation. As a regional body comprising numerous European nations, the European Union (EU) also provides economic sanctions (Shapran et al., 2022).

The sanctions involve measures such as suspending oil and gas imports from Russia, intended to exert economic pressure and diminish Russia's financial capacity, including restrictions on the export and import of essential goods such as foodstuffs, the freezing of assets belonging to Russian business figures, and travel bans within the European Union. These sanctions also target 18 companies with assets and investments within the European Union (CNN Indonesia, 2022).

Economic sanctions against Russia are not limited to the European Union and Western powers, such as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, but have also been supported by Asian countries like Japan, which is a member of the G7.

The sanctions imposed by Japan include freezing banking assets originating from Russia and stopping oil and coal imports from Russia. Japan has expressed its intention to implement further sanctions should the G7 introduce new measures and encourage other nations to do the same. These economic sanctions are anticipated to exert a deterrent effect on Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine (Zulfa et al., 2022).

Switzerland's position on Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Since 2014, the European Union has imposed sanctions on Russia in response to its illegal annexation of Crimea. As a partner and neighbor of the EU, Switzerland is expected to support sanctions against Russia for its mistreatment. However, during the 2014-2020 period of the Russia - Ukraine crisis, it is generally recognized that Switzerland did not take a firm stance on EU sanctions. Switzerland chose a pragmatic approach by considering national interests, especially in the economic aspect and long-term diplomacy.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Switzerland took the notable step of fully aligning itself with the European Union by adopting the entire package of sanctions. This action triggered many questions about Switzerland's changing foreign policy, especially regarding its commitment to international values and moral responsibility for human rights violations. Previously, Switzerland was considered inconsistent as it initially refused to impose sanctions against Russia, then gradually adopted some policies in favor of sanctions without explicitly stating its full support. This shows the dynamism and flexibility in Swiss foreign policy, which is no longer rigid but increasingly adaptive to global developments and humanitarian crises (Fachrie & Wicaksa, 2021).

In this context, Switzerland utilizes its foreign policy flexibility to assert its position against violations of international law, without completely abandoning the fundamental principles it has always upheld. Switzerland plays an important role as a humanitarian actor that seeks to promote respect for international law and human rights, while maintaining lines of communication between the warring parties. This step was taken to adapt to changing geopolitical realities, as well as to maintain its credibility as a country that upholds humanitarian values. Despite adopting sanctions, Swiss public support for the fundamental principles underpinning its foreign policy remains high, reflecting that Switzerland's stance on international conflicts remains influenced by normative values that are deeply embedded in its national identity and political institutions (Greminger & Rickli, 2023).

As a mediator on international issues, Switzerland has a strong tradition of prioritizing and promoting human rights and international law. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was regarded as a violation not only of international law but also of human rights, as evidenced by widespread violence, the bombing of civilian areas, mass displacement, and other atrocities that resulted in significant civilian casualties (Tangkas et al., 2024). With the adoption of EU sanctions,

Switzerland indirectly stated that human rights violations in the Russia - Ukraine conflict could not be tolerated and on a moral and humanitarian level they took a firmer position.

Constructivist Analysis: The Role of Ideas

While previous studies have primarily viewed sanctions through the lens of power politics, this section analyzes how Switzerland's sanctions align with constructivist perspectives considering normative commitments. Within Martha Finnemore's constructivist framework, state interests are not predetermined by material power alone, but are socially constructed through the influence of ideas and norms. This understanding emphasizes the importance of ideas and norms in determining the attitude of the state in taking action against the realities that occur, including in international politics (Finnemore, 1996). More specifically, ideas here are normative ideas that shape the way states understand the world and determine what is considered a national interest. Ideas are not inherently formed; rather, they emerge through social interactions and are shaped by a nation's political culture. That is why ideas are considered very important because they form the social structure underlying international interactions, not just material factors (El Bilad, 2011).

We can see that the idea of protecting human rights and respecting international law has long been entrenched as a moral principle, integral to the political identity and foreign policy of Switzerland. The idea of protecting human rights in Switzerland has become a moral foundation that is deeply embedded in the country's national identity and policies. The decision to impose sanctions can be seen as a form of Swiss efforts to protect the value of human rights. As one of the oldest democracies in Europe and a country that upholds human rights, Switzerland has always played an active role in promoting peace through dialogue mediation efforts, such as organizing a high-level peace conference between Russia and Ukraine which shows Switzerland's commitment to peaceful conflict resolution and respect for human rights at the international level (Haryono, 2024).

In addition, the protection of human rights inherent in Switzerland can be seen from the values of tolerance that are legally formalized, where minority groups are given broad representation in the judiciary, public services, federal organizations, and others. Tolerance and negotiation are taught in the Swiss education system (Damayanti, 2011). Switzerland is one of the countries that has quite a lot of cooperation in the field of human rights, including in international human rights issues. One example is Switzerland's active support for global social movements and women's rights, demonstrated through its engagement with women's organizations and non-governmental groups that help promote and protect women's human rights in countries such as Iran (Haloho et al., 2023). This shows how the idea of human rights in Switzerland is not only domestic but also extends to diplomacy and humanitarian aid. Switzerland is also a depositary of the Geneva Conventions, which are still the basic principles of international humanitarian law that determine what actions are legal during war (TEMPO, 2023).

The idea of protecting human rights has influenced Swiss foreign policy, one of which is the policy of adopting economic sanctions against Russia, because Switzerland sees human rights violations in the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This is one of the factors why Switzerland took this policy. This reflects the idea of protecting human rights that has been embedded in Switzerland. The

sanctions are based on Switzerland's commitment to international law and the Geneva Convention on Human Rights. This attitude shows that Switzerland sees human rights violations as serious violations that must be responded to firmly. The Swiss President at the time, Ignazio Cassis, also stated that Switzerland "cannot stand by and watch" violations of international law and human rights (Euronews & AFP, 2022). This supports Martha Finnemore's idea that a country's actions are shaped not only by interests or power, but also by shared ideas that develop over time. In Switzerland's case, the decision to impose sanctions on Russia was not only a political or economic move, but also a reflection of the country's strong belief in protecting human rights. These ideas are deeply rooted in the Swiss legal system, constitution, and international role. Even though this decision seems different from Switzerland's traditional policy of neutrality, it actually shows that in times of serious human rights violations, countries may act based on the values they believe in. Therefore, the idea of protecting human rights played a key role in shaping this foreign policy response.

Not only the President, but also the Swiss people condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine, where the Swiss people held a demonstration at Schützenmatte in Bern. There were at least 20,000 Swiss people who participated in this action; this demonstration not only occurred in Schützenmatte, but also in Geneva, Basel, Bellinzona, and Lucerne (SRF, 2022). The reason for these demonstrations was, of course, the human rights violations that Russia had committed in the invasion. This shows that human rights ideas and values have been deeply internalized in Switzerland's normative identity, not only at the institutional level, but also as an integral part of the collective consciousness of its civil society.

Thus, the idea of human rights, which has become a Swiss commitment, is deeply rooted in Switzerland's socio-political structure. This idea has then become one of the main factors driving the transformation in its foreign policy orientation to become more proactive in supporting and upholding human rights and fighting for global justice, including through mechanisms such as the imposition of sanctions against human rights violations.

Constructivist Analysis: The Role of Norms

As noted by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink in their article "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change", norms are standards of behavior that are considered appropriate for actors with certain identities that then shape the way states act in a global issue (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). These norms work through a process of socialization and internalization so that a state acts not only because of strategic interests, but because it feels obliged to comply with standards that are considered morally correct. One of the most basic norms is the norm of human rights. Human rights norms are moral principles and legal rules that recognize and protect the basic rights inherent in every individual simply because he is human. This norm is universal and inalienable and must be respected by the state and society anywhere and anytime. These norms are articulated and enforced through multiple legal frameworks at both the international and national levels, such as the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights), various international conventions, and the constitutional laws of individual states (Hindrawan et al., 2023).

Switzerland is one of the countries that has long internalized human rights norms, both through its domestic policies and its position in the international system. This can be seen in the Swiss constitution, which explicitly guarantees the rights to life, liberty, and protection from discrimination in Articles 7-36 (Swiss Federal Council, 1999). At the international level, Switzerland engages in bilateral human rights dialogues with countries at various levels as part of its broader commitment to promoting human rights abroad. It hosts various international institutions that focus on human rights issues, such as the UN Human Rights Council, WHO, ILO, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (Syriariel, 2021).

Switzerland actively engages in international human rights initiatives, notably through collaboration with UN agencies and regional organizations such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), to support the promotion and enforcement of human rights norms. For instance, in Geneva, Switzerland has supported efforts to develop norms ensuring that human rights are upheld both online and offline (FDFA, 2021). In October 2024, Switzerland secured re-election to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the 2025–2027 term. Throughout its mandate, Switzerland emphasized key human rights priorities, such as the abolition of the death penalty, upholding the ban on torture, promoting freedom of expression, protecting the rights of minorities and women, and reinforcing democratic institutions globally (News Service Bund, 2024).

Switzerland's reputation as a country that upholds humanitarian values is not only evident in its institutional role but also in its foreign policy responses that uphold human rights (Haloho et al., 2023). In the case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, it triggered a series of large-scale human rights violations, including the killing of civilians, systematic acts of torture, and a wave of mass displacement that created a humanitarian crisis in various regions. As a country that has been recognized as a protector and promoter of international human rights norms, Switzerland could not remain passive without damaging its credibility as an actor that upholds humanitarian values. This situation has led to strong moral demands, both from within the country and from the international community, for Switzerland to take a firm stance against the aggression and human rights violations taking place.

This pressure reflects global expectations that states that uphold humanitarian values will not be passive in the face of crisis. Switzerland's commitment to human rights, which has been institutionalized in its legal system and foreign policy, provided the moral basis for the response, although the move marked an adjustment from traditional policy practices. Switzerland decided to adopt EU sanctions against Russia, including asset freezes and entry bans for individuals involved. This decision was driven by the normative logic of appropriateness, which is the urge to act in accordance with values believed to be right (March & Olsen, 2009).

Ignazio Cassis, who served as Swiss President during the crisis, publicly emphasized the centrality of human rights and criticized Russia's actions as violations of international law. Apart from political institutions, Swiss civil society also showed support for humanitarian values through large demonstrations in various cities. Despite aligning with EU sanctions, Switzerland's decision raises questions about the balance between maintaining neutrality and upholding human rights. Within

the constructivist framework, this shift illustrates how deeply embedded norms can override traditional foreign policy stances in the face of severe human rights violations.

Adherence to and internalization of these norms is not merely symbolic, but is deeply rooted in the political structure, legal system, and overall culture of Swiss society. Thus, Switzerland's response to the Ukraine crisis can be understood not merely as a pragmatic political reaction, but as a form of actualization of international moral and ethical values that have long shaped the country's identity in the global order. From a constructivist standpoint, norms do not only limit what states can do, but also help define who they are and what responsibilities they have in international society. For Switzerland, human rights norms have long been part of its identity and foreign policy. When Russia's invasion of Ukraine led to large-scale human rights violations, Switzerland responded not only because of international pressure, but also because these norms were already internalized in its legal and political system. The choice to adopt EU sanctions, while different from past neutral practices, was actually consistent with the country's strong commitment to humanitarian principles. This shows that once a norm becomes part of a country's identity, it can guide decision-making even when that means adjusting traditional policies.

Critical Discussion

Switzerland's decision to adopt EU sanctions has raised debates about whether this step weakens its long-standing tradition of neutrality. While Switzerland remains militarily neutral, aligning itself with EU foreign policy responses has created a perception of partiality. This move suggests that Swiss neutrality is no longer understood as rigid non-alignment, but as a flexible principle that can adjust to strong normative pressures, particularly related to human rights. Therefore, rather than abandoning neutrality, Switzerland appears to be redefining it to stay relevant in today's geopolitical context.

When compared to other neutral countries such as Austria, Switzerland's response appears more proactive. Austria, although also a neutral country, did not fully adopt EU sanctions with the same level of political emphasis as Switzerland. This comparison shows that neutrality can be practiced in different ways, depending on how each country interprets its international obligations and normative commitments.

Regarding effectiveness, Switzerland's sanctions alone may not have had a direct impact on Russia's behaviour. However, the symbolic and diplomatic significance of a traditionally neutral country like Switzerland joining the EU's stance sends a strong message to the international community. It strengthens the collective response against violations of international law and increases political pressure on Russia, even if the material effects are limited.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that Switzerland's decision to impose sanctions against Russia in the Ukraine conflict cannot be understood as a strategic response or external political pressure. Rather, the policy reflects consistency with the normative values that Switzerland has long internalized, particularly in terms of human rights protection. As a country with a strong tradition of championing and institutionalizing human rights norms, both through its national constitution and through its international role as host of global humanitarian institutions, Switzerland has a moral responsibility not to be passive towards violations of international humanitarian law.

Through Martha Finnemore's constructivist approach, this research emphasizes that Swiss foreign policy is shaped by a system of ideas and norms that have taken root in the country's political identity and institutions. Ideas about the importance of preserving human dignity, as well as international norms about the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, are the main foundations that encourage Switzerland to take decisive steps in the Russia - Ukraine conflict. This case shows that humanitarian principles take precedence over Switzerland's neutral political position.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of constructivist theory by extending its application to the foreign policy behaviour of neutral states. It shows that even in countries with strong traditions of neutrality, internalized ideas and norms can guide decision-making in ways that challenge past practices. This supports the view that constructivism can be a useful framework not only for major powers but also for small or neutral countries facing global normative dilemmas.

Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for policymakers in other neutral states. In an increasingly complex international environment, where human rights violations are highly visible and politically charged, neutral countries must reconsider how to uphold both their historical stance and their commitment to international norms. Switzerland's example shows that neutrality does not have to mean silence or passivity in the face of injustice.

For future research, scholars could explore how Switzerland applies similar human rights-based reasoning in other conflicts beyond Ukraine, or compare its approach with that of other neutral countries such as Austria or Ireland. A comparative study could provide a broader understanding of how constructivist norms interact with neutrality in shaping foreign policy choices under global normative pressure.

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