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莫迪政府的對中政策：  
轉移性外交政策之觀點  
Modi's China Policy: Perspective of  
Diversionary Foreign Policy

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# Abstract

Diversionsary foreign policy is a strategy which state leaders would adopt while they face domestic turmoil or low popularity. An aggressive or adventurous foreign policy would generate a rally-around-the-flag effect and enhance national cohesion so that they would achieve their own political goal. This approach of foreign policy has been widely seen in democracies, as a tactic to win the re-election or to secure their support base.

This article argues that the Modi administration applies such strategy to its China policy, especially demonstrated from three events taken place during his term, namely, Doklam dispute, Galwan Valley dispute and the revocation of Kashmir's autonomous status. In order to understand the motivation behind the policies, this article will divide the whole policy-making process into two sections, and analyze them respectively.

The first section is the external factors, which consists of historical factors, China's foreign policy and foreign stakeholders. The level analysis will be adopted while examining the next section: the internal mechanism. At an individual level, I touch upon the influence of Modi's past experience and his foreign policy framework. As for the domestic level, both governmental agencies and domestic agents are discussed. I argue that although Modi attempted to adopt diversionsary policies to win over support from Indian citizens, India's economic dependence on China has restricted the approaches he can actually implement.

Key words: Modi, Diversionsary Foreign Policy, Sino-India Relation, Border Conflicts

## 摘要

轉移性外交政策是一種在領導人面臨國內動亂或者低民調之時會採取之策略。較為冒險或者攻擊性的外交政策方針可以創造「聚旗效應」，增強國內凝聚力並順勢讓領導者達成其政治目的。這樣的政策選擇常見於民主國家，通常發生在當權者需要贏得第二次大選或者鞏固自身領導地位、穩定支持率之時。

本文旨在點出莫迪政府在對中政策上，採用了轉移性外交政策的戰略。這樣的政策選擇體現在三個重大事件上，分別為：洞朗衝突、加勒萬河谷衝突以及喀什米爾自治地位的廢除。為了瞭解政策制定之動機，本文會將政策產出的過程分為三個部分，並針對每一個部分進行獨立的分析。

第一部分為「外部因素」，主要會探討三個影響莫迪對中政策的因素。第一為中印關係的歷史，再者為中國之大戰略以及對印政策，最後會將對中印關係有重大影響力的三個國家納入討論——巴基斯坦、俄羅斯以及美國。以上三個外部因素都或多或少影響著莫迪政府對中印關係的判斷。第二部分為「內部機制」，此部分將會以層次分析的方式將政策形塑過程中的變因加以討論。在個人層次的部分，討論莫迪個人經驗以及戰略思維對其外交政策的影響。國家層次則討論政府部門——外交部、國防部以及貿易部；與國內行為者——國民大會黨、印度人民黨以及印度智庫等，分析這些行為者如何影響印度對中政策。

最後，我則依據上面的討論框架，分析三個重大事件中的轉移性外交政策因子。本文認為莫迪所採取的轉移性外交政策有別於一般的對於此類政策的認識。雖然莫迪試圖運用轉移性外交政策來凝聚民心，但其對中國的經濟依賴讓莫迪政府在政策的施行上有所侷限。

關鍵詞：莫迪、轉移性外交政策、中印關係、邊界衝突

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# Chapter 1- Introduction

## 1.1 Research Motivation

“At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.”<sup>1</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, spoke to the citizens of this newly-founded nation in August 1947. In his speech, we could see that one of the most consequential politicians in the history of India had so much hope to this new nation, expecting it to become one of the most influential state in Asia, or even in the world. At that time, it seemed so unlikely that a former colony of United Kingdom with such a diverse society would one day turn into one of the big powers which has the capacity to influence international politics.

Decades later, we have witnessed the rise of modern India. The once underdeveloped nation has been through a fundamental transformation. Not only did the economy grow rapidly, they have also gained more leverage along with the development of the nation. Following this tendency, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the party which claimed represents the “True Indian” took office for the second time, with one of the most charismatic leaders in the modern history of India — Narendra Modi.

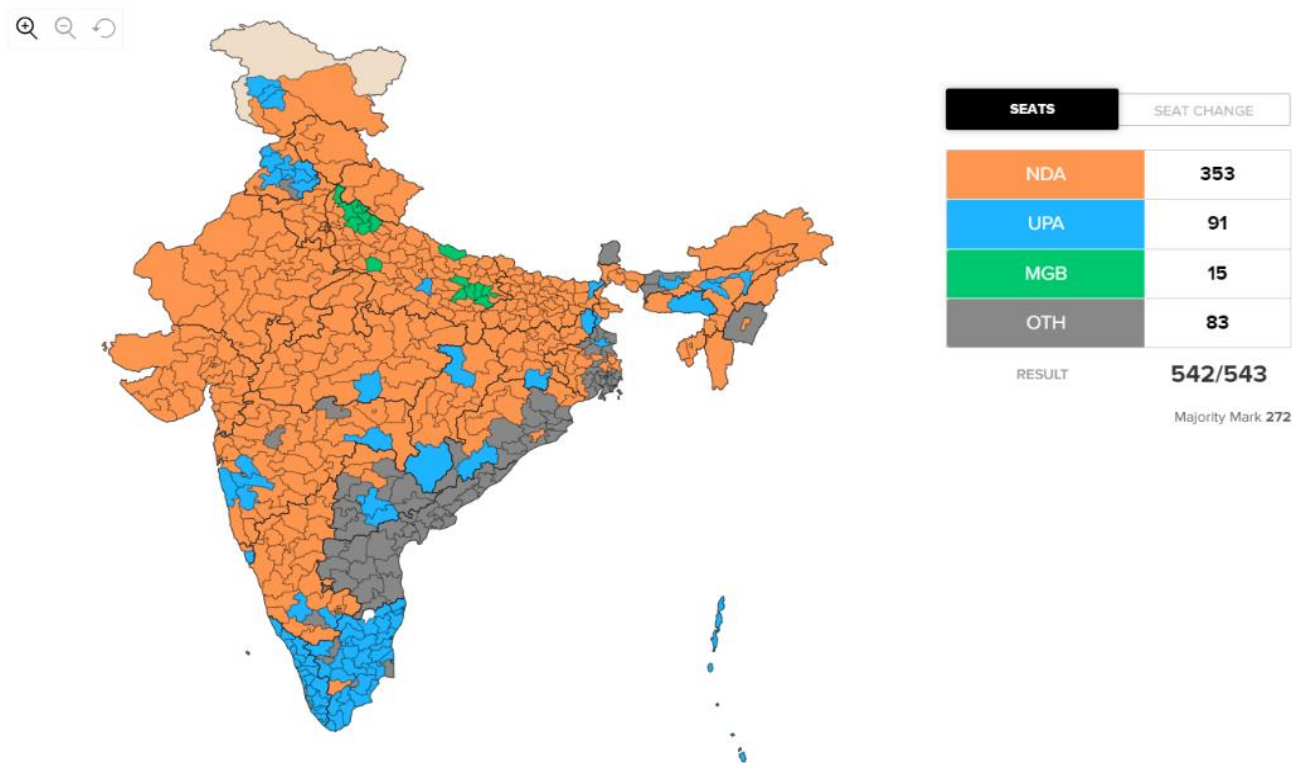
After winning the seat of Prime Minister of India in 2014, Modi won again in 2019 by a landslide (BJP won 303 seats out of 542 in *Lok Sabha*), which extended his term to at least 2024(see Figure 1). Among his 6 years’ term of service (2014-2020), he has

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<sup>1</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, “A Tryst with Destiny,” *University of Cambridge*, 1947, [https://www.cam.ac.uk/tryst\\_with\\_destiny](https://www.cam.ac.uk/tryst_with_destiny).

made plenty controversial policy which caused intense backfire from the people of India. On the one hand, he started a series of movements which aimed to reconstruct India into a “Hindu-centric nation”;<sup>2</sup> on the other hand, some of his revolutionary policies have caused great tribulation to the general people.

Figure 1- Result of *Lok Sabha* (The House of People) Election, 2019



Source: Times of India, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/elections/constituency-map>.

Take Modi’s banknote demonetization policy as an example.<sup>3</sup> In November 2016, Modi suddenly announced that five hundred and one-thousand-rupee dollar bill was going to be replaced into new design bills overnight, leaving his citizens about four hours to exchange their old currency into the new ones. Although the policy was tailored to solve black money problem as well as the evasion of tax dollars, it still led to a chaotic

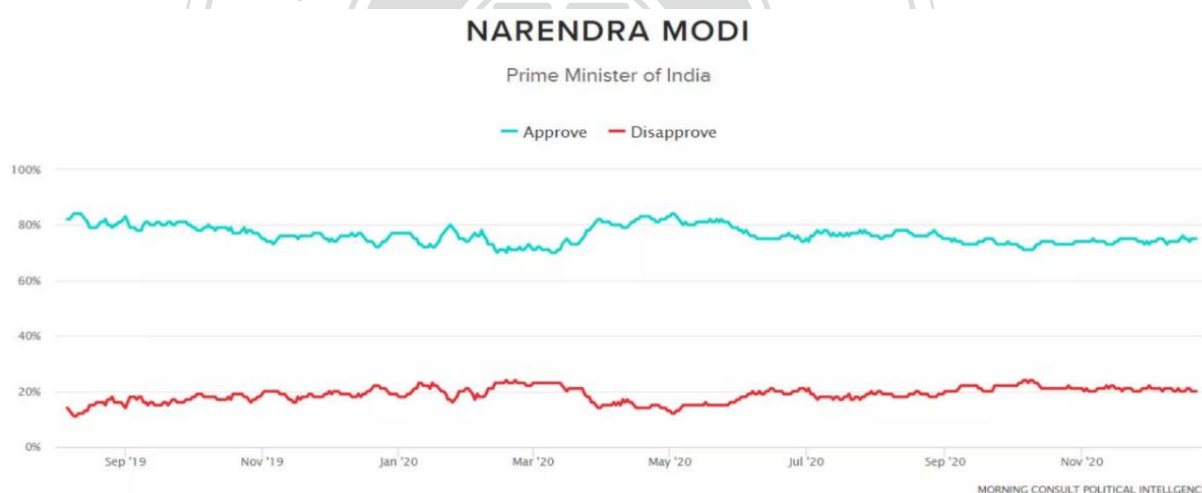
<sup>2</sup> N. Upadhyay, “Hindu Nation and Its Queers: Caste, Islamophobia, and De/coloniality in India,” *Interventions*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2020, pp. 464-480.

<sup>3</sup> J. Ghosh, C. P. Chandrasekhar, & P. Patnaik, *Demonetisation Decoded: A Critique of India's Currency Experiment*. (Oxford: Taylor & Francis. 2017), pp. 1-28.

result. This policy hit tax evaders as well as honest taxpayers. At that time, Modi received severe criticism from domestic economists,<sup>4</sup> the opposition party Indian National Congress<sup>5</sup> and even foreign scholars.<sup>6</sup>

Despite all the chaos during his first term, Modi still led BJP winning the majority in general election 2019. More surprisingly, the approval rate of Modi administration remained at a relative high point before the election (see Figure 2). It seemed that all the failed, controversial or disputed policy never posed any negative effect on Prime Minister Modi. Under his lead, the people of India seemed to be as cohesive as ever. This specific election result made me wonder that whether there were any other factors which caused the outcome neglected by the public.

Figure 2- Modi's Approval Rate (2019.9-2020.11)



Source: Factchecker, <https://reurl.cc/Kx49nR>

One of the aspects is foreign policy. According to diversionary foreign policy, one of the approach leaders would take to regain support from the domestic citizens while

<sup>4</sup> Ranjit Goswami, "Modi's Bank Note Ban Has Inflicted Pointless Suffering on India's Poorest," *The Conversation*, 2016, <https://reurl.cc/L0VL84>.

<sup>5</sup> Randeep Surjewala, "Rs 500 & 1000 Currency Notes Banned: Congress Raises Questions Against Narendra Modi Government's Shocking Move," *India.com*, 2016, <https://reurl.cc/GdQL7y>.

<sup>6</sup> John Marthinsen, "India's Demonetization: What Were They Thinking," *Babson College*, 2017, <https://reurl.cc/4yqngX>.

facing crisis is to carry out a more aggressive or adventurous foreign policy, such as a declaration of war. These leaders could earn back the support by setting up an obvious foreign target, urging those voters to back up their home country instead of supporting specific politician. Based on the theory, I came up with a hypothesis that Modi may have played the same trick, embarking on adventurous foreign policy in order to distract popular attention away from internal social and economic problems.

Particularly while Modi government was dealing with their relation with China, the other regional hegemon or probably a rising great power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, he would consider it as the object of diversionary tactics. Since the establishment of India, China has been an inevitable actor which every Prime Minister should treat with carefully.<sup>7</sup> In 1950, India chose to break their tie with Republic of China in Taiwan and established diplomatic relation with the People's Republic of China, becoming the first non-socialism state starting a formal relation with the "new" China, marking that India had recognized their future relation with China would be a critical issue for their foreign policy. In 1955, Prime Ministers of the two states Zhou Enlai and Nehru met at Bandung Conference (Asian-African Conference) held in Indonesia. They then announced five guidelines for future interaction between the two newly-established states, which is now known as the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence".<sup>8</sup> That was the beginning of a new era, marking two of the potential Asian giants were starting to regard the other as a crucial partner in the region.<sup>9</sup> For several decades, they maintain a relative peaceful

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<sup>7</sup> T. Sen, *India, China, and the World: A Connected History* (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), pp. 379-470.

<sup>8</sup> They include: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: The Time-tested Guideline of China's Policy with Neighbors," *Government of the People's Republic of China*, <https://reurl.cc/3N7kx8>.

<sup>9</sup> W. Jiabao, "Carrying Forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in the Promotion of Peace and Development," *Chinese Journal of International Law*, vol. 3, 2014, pp. 363-368.

mutual relation.<sup>10</sup> The main reason for this circumstance was because that they didn't really have conflict with national interest. From 1950, China and India have both focused on the development of their own nation, trying to construct a modern and progressive society. For China, the watershed event took place in 1979, when the supreme leader in the Chinese Communist Party Deng Xiaoping announced that they were starting a new economic strategy: "Open and Reform Policy"<sup>11</sup>, a series of plans intended to stimulate economic growth. On the other hand, India was still struggling from the authoritarian leadership from its former Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi.<sup>12</sup> The following development of history determined the different level of economic strength between the two developing countries.

Stepping into 21<sup>st</sup> century, China has become one of the great powers that no one would neglect the leverage of it. India had also sought to strengthen their ties with it. The Sino-India relation became a hot issue in the field of international relation. However, the unsolved border disputes have been the factor deteriorates their relation the most, especially the two recent conflicts taken place under Modi administration: Doklam and Galwan Valley. They both escalated the tension between the two states into a new peak. With the exacerbation of the situation, we could see the support to Prime Minister Modi was as strong as ever.

Based on the observation above, I came up with some research questions. Did

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<sup>10</sup> Z. Liu, "Following the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and Jointly Building a Community of Common Destiny," *Chinese Journal of International Law*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2014, pp. 477-480.

<sup>11</sup> C. H. Gan, & R. G. Zheng "An Empirical Study on Change of Industrial Structure and Productivity Growth since the Reform and Opening-up—A Test for the Structure-bonus Hypotheses from 1978 to 2007 in China," *China Industrial Economics*, vol. 2, 2009, pp. 55-65.

<sup>12</sup> The third Prime Minister of India, term started from 1966-1977, 1980-1984, declared state emergency in 1975 which brought India into a semi-autocratic regime period.; S. Kaviraj, "Indira Gandhi and Indian Politics," *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 21, no. 23, 1986, pp. 1697-1708.; I. Malhotra, *Indira Gandhi: A Personal and Political Biography* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, Inc. 2014), pp. 24-52.

Modi administration design his China policy to enhance the support of his voters, or was it just a coincidence? Was building support ever on his foreign policy agenda, if so, how important was it?

## 1.2 Research Purpose

This thesis aims to answer the following questions of Modi's China policy. First, according to diversionary foreign policy theory, a state tends to implement a more adventurous foreign policy when they are facing domestic turmoil. Especially for democracies, they would try to create the "rally-around-the-flag" effect right before a general election is around the corner. Did Modi's China policy meet these descriptions above? In other words, how did the Modi administration perceive internal crises and how did they design a particular foreign policy scenario to divert the attention of domestic audience.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, why China is the ideal counterpart for Modi administration to divert their domestic audience's attention to? Would other rival states fill in the role which China is playing in India's foreign policy right now? What kind of domestic turmoil would trigger Indian government to start a conflict with other countries in order to gain political benefit? How did it link to the current waves of Hindu Nationalism movement in India? Would it become the formula for future BJP government to address conflict among races or religions within the nation?

Second, can diversionary theory largely explain the conflicts or skirmishes India has with China, the one which has a lingering territorial dispute with India? How would it affect the bilateral relations between the two rising powers in Asia? To answer this particular question, I am going to analyze two most prominent conflicts between India and China under Modi's administration: the Doklam conflict in 2017 and the Galwan



Valley dispute in 2020. By examining and comparing the two conflicts, I hope to figure out a paradigm which Modi government would take advantage of while facing domestic pressure. So that we may be able to predict future conflicts among India and its' neighboring states.

Third, how would the implementation of diversionary foreign policy affect the bilateral relation between India and China in the years to come? On the international level, how would India's diversionary foreign policy affect the international relations among South Asian countries, particularly the process of integration among them since we could see that both countries could pose a huge impact on the process of integration. Moreover, as the world is expecting India to be a regional hegemon in the future, would other powers around the world like United States and European Union change their strategy toward Asia due to the volatility of Sino-India relation?

### **1.3 Research Approach**

Despite diversionary foreign policy theory is the main approach that I am going to analyze Modi's China policy, three other main international relations theories: realism, liberalism and constructivism would also be adopted for the purpose of having a more holistic picture. Furthermore, theory of foreign policy decision making would also be adopted to examine the mechanism behind it.

Realism holds a more pragmatic perspective on how states interact with each other. With the theoretical framework provided by the concept of realism, this thesis would be able to analyze India's conventional ideology on enacting China policy, especially about the part of these two Asian great powers competing with each other on the leader role in Asia and the security dilemma they are facing.



Liberalism, on the other hand, provides a more optimistic viewpoint of the future of the two countries. It emphasizes the cooperation aspect, rather than the competition one in the bilateral relation. I would take a liberal approach to understand how Indian government design its China policy under the current international regime and further elaborate on the mutual economic dependence under liberal perspective.

Constructivists would take a brand-new stance on understanding Sino-India relations. Before discussing the policies Modi designed toward China, we have to clarify how Modi himself, the ruling party BJP and the Indian government perceive China, since it would significantly influence the policy inclination of India. These three mainstream international relation theories would be adopted to understand how Modi's China policies were usually explained, and further illuminate why I believe these theories have limitations so that we need diversionary foreign policy theory to fix the fissure.

Foreign policy decision making models derived from Graham Allison's article on analyzing the Cuban missile crisis. He provided some decision-making mechanisms that are universally adopted by countries. For the purpose of taking a closer look to the dynamic, this article would also put the article through this analytical framework, particularly through the two most salient model in Allison's article, namely, rational choice theory and governmental model.

Analyzing Modi's China policy through the theoretical lens mentioned above, I believe that we could have a more unequivocal viewpoint of the logic encapsulated in Modi's China policy.

## **1.4 Research Methodology**

### 1.4.1 Comparative Analysis

Comparative methodology would mainly be used to compare the two conflicts between India and China under the Modi's administration: Doklam dispute in 2017 and Galwan Valley dispute in 2020. By comparing the origin, the reaction of Indian government during the conflict and the feedback from the domestic audience, I aim to figure out some similarities of the logic and mechanism behind them, which would help us better understand the role of diversionary policy in these circumstances. Moreover, there's a distinctive difference between the two conflicts: the general election of Lok Sabha was held in 2019, right in the middle of the two conflicts. This crucial change of factor would enhance our understanding of Modi's strategy of coping with conflicts before and after he won his second term. In comparison of these two territorial disputes taken place in his first and second term, I believe we could have a more comprehensive viewpoint of the core value of Modi's China policy.

Despite that Modi has led BJP into a new era with his "Hindutva" ideology,<sup>13</sup> he is not the first Prime Minister from BJP. Atal Bihari Vajpayee who was the Prime Minister from 1998 to 2004 is the first BJP Prime Minister<sup>14</sup>. Comparative research between the two Prime Ministers would hopefully help us learn more about how BJP developed its China policy and the reason why Modi's choice of using the diversionary policy was distinctive.

### 1.4.2 Content Analysis

In order to take a closer look at the motivation behind policy making, content analysis would be used to examine the documents, declarations, announcements and

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<sup>13</sup> J. Sharma *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2011), pp. 176-202.

<sup>14</sup> S. K. Dass, *Atal Bihari Vajpayee: Prime Minister of India* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2004), pp. 17-38.

white papers of India government, especially the Ministry of External Affairs of India and the Office of Prime Minister. Meanwhile, some of the contents from the social media of crucial governmental officials would be taken into consideration so that it would be easier for me to understand the incentive behind all policy choices.

### **1.4.3 Historical Research**

Although the main purpose of this thesis is understanding the policy-making mechanism under Modi's China policy, the historical past of India's China policy still profoundly affected how the current administration design their own. Therefore, in this thesis, I will start from introducing India's China policy since its independence and detailly track its development, hopefully would give as a grand overarching standpoint of India's China strategy.

## **1.5 Literature Review**

### **1.5.1 Realism**

Realism is the oldest and probably most prominent theory in international relation. The fundamental assumptions they have to the world we are living in affected how international relation scholars view the world for decades. Classic realism scholars stated that there are some basic rules dominating how states work. First, we are living in an anarchy world, indicating that there is no power or entity exceeds states, they should be responsible for their own survival.<sup>15</sup> Based on the assumption above, all states are rational. They would only implement the policies which are benefit for themselves, namely, altruism doesn't exist. Then, all states are considered as unitary

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<sup>15</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1979), pp. 25-41.

units.<sup>16</sup> We will not contemplate the difference within a nation despite we understand that every country has their own historical background. These fundamental assumptions are regarded as guidelines, all streams of realism developed later shared the same cornerstone.

Another salient feature of realism is balance of power. Power is a complicated concept in realism,<sup>17</sup> it is most often to be considered as an independent variable.<sup>18</sup> Morgenthau divided power into two categories, tangible and intangible measurements.<sup>19</sup> Tangible measurements are like the size of population, territory and the prosperity of economy. On the other hand, intangible factors are morale and the quality of leadership. Goldstein and Pevehouse gave a simpler definition, described it as the capability of forcing others to do what they are reluctant to do.<sup>20</sup>

Balance of power is a theory derived from previous assumptions. Since states are rational and take survival as their most essential national interest. They would attempt to balance against their opponents through two approaches. They may try to earn more power themselves by enhancing their own capacity or they could build up alliance with those states with more power<sup>21</sup>. Building on this logic, a varies of approaches of foreign

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<sup>16</sup> J. A. Vasquez, *The Power of Power Politics: From Classical Realism to Neotraditionalism* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.22-29.

<sup>17</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc, 1978), pp.35-62.

<sup>18</sup> S. Burchill, A. Linklater, R. Devetak, J. Donnelly, T. Nardin, Paterson, *Theories of International Relations* (London: Macmillan International Higher Education, 2013), pp. 51-67.; M. Hollis, & S. Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp.16-35.

<sup>19</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-85.

<sup>20</sup> J. S. Goldstein, J. C. Pevehouse & S. Sernau, *Principles of International Relations* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2008), pp.26-55.

<sup>21</sup> C. L. Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-help," *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 50-90.

policy has emerged, states might choose strategies such as bandwagon<sup>22</sup>, hedging<sup>23</sup> or accommodation to assure their own security. Walt believed that rather than balance against great power, states inclined to balance against threat.<sup>24</sup> Small states would establish alliance with those whom they think is least threatening.

Offensive realism regarded security as a limited resource,<sup>25</sup> states compete against each other in a zero-sum game to earn more security for themselves, so that they could one day become the only hegemony in the world.<sup>26</sup> Since you cannot anticipate other states' intention, strengthen your own military capacity is the only rational approach to ensure your survival.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, defensive realism would put more emphasis on preventing other state from gaining more capacity.<sup>28</sup> Through the socialization of a state in the international society,<sup>29</sup> they would learn that the most effective mean to secure themselves would be forming an alliance to maintain status quo, not expansion without limitation.

### 1.5.2 Liberalism

Liberalists have a diametrically opposite points of how the world order is formed.

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<sup>22</sup> R. L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1994, pp. 72-107.

<sup>23</sup> K. Cheng-Chwee, "The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's Response to a Rising China," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2008, pp.159-185; Kang D. C. O, *China Rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp.21-35.

<sup>24</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "The Progressive Power of Realism," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 91, no. 4, 1997, pp. 931-935.

<sup>25</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2003), pp.46-58.

<sup>26</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1990, pp. 5-56.

<sup>27</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1994, pp. 5-49.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.101-132.

<sup>29</sup> J. Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp.6-18.

Liberalism believe that human beings naturally incline to cooperation than conflict. States may have skirmishes due to conflict of national interests, but they would eventually cooperate with each other to maximize their benefits.<sup>30</sup>

Interdependence is the most vital concept in liberalism. Modern development of international trade effectively stops wars from occurring, since states embark on the war may also suffer from economic deterioration in the more integrated world.<sup>31</sup> Scholars also argue that mutual confidence would be built through the process of trade, their interaction would become a positive reinforcement for them to maintain a peaceful relation with each other.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, leaders would alter their perspective of war if the benefits they gain from trade is visible.<sup>33</sup> Some prerequisites are mentioned while adopting such theory, for instance, Kahler and Kastner illustrated that fundamental domestic consensus is required in a state to replace war with trade.<sup>34</sup> Sometimes territorial dispute plays a more crucial role than trade interests<sup>35</sup> in a government's popularity, so that rational leader would still choose to go to war.

Neoliberal institutionalism is the latest paradigm development from liberalism.

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<sup>30</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr, "Neorealism and Neoliberalism," *World Politics*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1988, pp. 235-251

<sup>31</sup> M. W. Doyle, "Three Pillars of the Liberal Peace," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 99, no. 3, 2005, pp. 463-466.

<sup>32</sup> G. John Ikenberry, "America's Liberal Grand Strategy: Democracy and National Security in the Post-war Era," *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.15-41.; Erich Weede, "Globalization: Creative Destruction and the Prospect of a Capitalist Peace," *Globalization and Armed Conflict* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003), pp.10-32.; Erich Weede, "The Capitalist Peace and the Rise of China: Establishing Global Harmony by Economic Interdependence," *International Interactions*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2010, pp. 206-213.

<sup>33</sup> K. T. Gaubatz, "Election cycles and war," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 35, no. 2, 1991, pp. 212-244.

<sup>34</sup> M. Kahler & S. L. Kastner, "Strategic uses of economic interdependence: Engagement policies on the Korean Peninsula and across the Taiwan Strait," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 43, no. 5, 2006, pp. 523-541.

<sup>35</sup> O. S. Mastro, "The problems of the liberal peace in Asia," *Survival*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2014, pp. 129-158.

They broadened the research on interdependence,<sup>36</sup> and brought out the concept of functionalism.<sup>37</sup> Functionalism reiterates the importance of ramification and spill-over, clearly states that cooperation among states in one field would expand to others if successfully completed. Interdependence among states would eventually lead to the establishment of institutions or international regimes.<sup>38</sup> Once institutions were established, it would considerably regulate the behavior of a state, and would not diminish even if the hegemony which founded it no longer dominate the system.<sup>39</sup> From a liberal viewpoint, we realize that institution would restrict state's hostile behavior against each other since anyone violated the norms would be punished by collective action.<sup>40</sup>

### 1.5.3 Constructivism

Constructivism is a relative new theory. It derived from the suspicion of the definition of anarchy. Realists and liberalists both accepted that anarchy stands for a chaotic and disorder world which could be attributed to human nature, and they developed an array of means to cope with it. However, Wendt believes that anarchy has a various of form,<sup>41</sup> depending on how the states perceive the environment they are in. Take anarchy as an example, instead of merely one single form, he argued that there are actually three types of them, which are Hobbesian culture, Lockean culture and Kantian

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<sup>36</sup> Robert O. Keohane & Joseph S. Nye Jr, "Power and Interdependence," *Survival*, vol. 15, no. 4, 1973, pp. 158-165.

<sup>37</sup> Ernst B. Haas, "Does Constructivism Subsume Neofunctionalism," *Debates on European Integration* (London: Red Globe Press, 2006), pp. 26-33.; David Mitrany, "The Functional Approach to World Organization," *International Affairs*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1948, pp. 350-363.

<sup>38</sup> Robert O. Keohane, "Twenty Years of Institutional Liberalism," *International Relations*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2012, pp. 125-138.

<sup>39</sup> L. Botcheva & L. L. Martin "Institutional Effects on State Behavior: Convergence and Divergence," *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2001, pp. 1-26.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Little, "International Regimes," *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.66-82.

<sup>41</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 88, no. 2, 1994, pp. 384-396.



culture. These three different forms of international system are determined by the accumulation of the recognition among states. The essence of the system in the world is not only about power or material, it is the combination of three factors, namely, shared knowledge, material resource and practice.<sup>42</sup>

Constructivists believe that the order we obey is constructed by how all the agents identify themselves and the rules. In other words, all of the principles are constructed, nothing exists objectively. Finnemore and Sikkink portrayed the norm life cycle to illuminated the emergence, internalization of a certain norm.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the prerequisite of understanding the world we lived in is to understand how states develop their identity,<sup>44</sup> which some scholar would described as the socialization of a state.<sup>45</sup> Depending on previous descriptions, bilateral relation could also be analyzed from the perspective of constructivism, that is, studying how your counterpart perceives you.

In order to adopted it in our study, we have to realize how India has viewed China throughout their engagement. The idea you have toward another would significantly affect the policy you make; sometimes the national identity you own would pose an impact on your foreign policy.<sup>46</sup>

#### **1.5.4 Foreign Policy Decision Making**

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<sup>42</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," *International Security*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1995, pp. 71-81.

<sup>43</sup> M. Finnemore & K. Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization*, vol. 52, no. 4, 1998, pp. 887-917.

<sup>44</sup> M. K. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 101-122.

<sup>45</sup> A. Acharya, "How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism," *International Organization*, vol. 58, no. 2, 2004, pp. 239-275; J. T. Checkel, "International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework," *International Organization*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2005, pp. 801-826.

<sup>46</sup> T. Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities & Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Cornell University Press, 2002), pp.62-80.



Along with three major international relation theories, decision making model of foreign policy would also be adopted to give us a clearer picture of how Modi administration comes up with their China policy. Three basic models are the most prevalently used while analyzing the decision-making process of foreign policy, namely, the rational model, the organizational procedure model and the governmental politics model.<sup>47</sup>

Rational model could be attributed to the field of microeconomics. The most rudimentary logic behind states that people make decisions based on the degree of satisfaction of each option. A rational actor would clarify the purpose of their policy, list out the choice they have and then select the one with the paramount utility. Cashman listed out some standard procedure of a rational decision making.<sup>48</sup> The first step is identifying problem and gathering information. Then, the actor should figure out what the choices are and analyze alternatives by contemplating his objective. After implementation, evaluation is also required.

Since human being are not omnipotent, the bounded rationality theory is developed.<sup>49</sup> The traditional rationality theory indicates that a decision maker should take all of the different scenarios into account before taking the next step; however, it's impossible in reality. In most of the occasions, decision makers have limited information-processing capacities, they can only choose rationally in a limited number of options.

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<sup>47</sup> Graham T. Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 63, no. 3, 1969, pp. 689-718.

<sup>48</sup> G. Cashman, *What Causes War?: An Introduction to Theories of International Conflict* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), pp.8-25.

<sup>49</sup> H. A. Simon, "Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science," *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 79, no. 2, 1985, pp. 293-304.

Organization model underscores the importance of standard operating procedures (SOP). Bureaucratic branches would rely on an established pattern of policies, which are the least risky most of the time, while they are facing crisis. Path dependence would be created over time. In the end, only few alternatives would be taken into consideration when facing crisis, the whole decision-making procedure would lose its flexibility and resilience.

Governmental model regarded each of the division in the government as independent units. The dynamic of the organizational structure would affect how foreign policy was enacted.<sup>50</sup> The core concept states that parochialism is the motivation behind every policy; to put it in simpler words, each department would make the decision based on their self-interest. For instance, the national defense department may tend to tackle every incident militarily, while Ministry of Foreign Affairs might incline to solve it through diplomatic approaches. The finalized policy is the outcome of internal negotiation.<sup>51</sup>

### **1.5.5 Diversionary Foreign Policy Theory**

The diversionary foreign policy, which is also known as the scapegoat hypothesis or diversionary theory of war, is one of the most controversial theory in the field of international relation. The original logic behind it states that while a state is facing domestic turmoil or in-group conflict, they would tend to take a more adventurous foreign policy choice to consolidate their domestic political support.<sup>52</sup> In a simpler

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Mandel, *Psychological Approaches to International Relations* (San Francisco: Joeesy-Bass, 1986), pp.23-61.

<sup>51</sup> A. L. George, "The Case for Multiple Advocacy in Making Foreign Policy," In Alexander L. George: *A Pioneer in Political and Social Sciences*. (Berlin: Springer, Cham, 2019), pp.125-143.

<sup>52</sup> J. S. Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique," *Handbook of War Studies* (Michigan Press Ann Arbor, 1989), pp. 259-288; R. N. Rosecrance, *Action and Reaction in World Politics: International Systems in Perspective* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 1963), pp. 153-185. Wright, Q. & Wright, L. L, *A Study of War* (University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 155-168.

term, political leader would use belligerent foreign policy to solidify their support from the domestic audience. The whole theoretical background of the theory actually derives from sociology, which is called the conflict-cohesion hypothesis.<sup>53</sup>

Sociologists found out that conflicts with an out-group usually leads to cohesion within an in-group since conflicts create emergencies which would forge the centralization and conformity inside a political entity.<sup>54</sup> Some even describe as a general law of human nature,<sup>55</sup> which portrayed that human beings have the inclination to seek the support from the closer group while they are facing calamities. This ubiquitous principle could be seen over and over throughout human history, proving that it is the most instinctive action that everyone would take in the first place while facing emergencies.<sup>56</sup> The whole hypothesis has been taken for granted by scholars that no one would actually questioned the mechanism between conflicts and cohesions.<sup>57</sup>

Coser was the first scholar who has addressed the topic systematically and brought up new viewpoints in the theory.<sup>58</sup> He believed that there are prerequisites for a party to grow more cohesive under the pressure of conflicts. First, members in the party have to possess fundamental consensus of their common interest. Second, they have to

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<sup>53</sup> A. A. Stein, "Conflict and Cohesion: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1976, pp. 143-172.

<sup>54</sup> Lewis A. Coser, "Social Conflict and the Theory of Social Change," *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1956, pp. 197-207; R. W. Mack, "The Components of Social Conflict," *Social Problems*, vol. 12, no. 4, 1965, pp. 388-397; G. Simmel, *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), pp. 1-26.

<sup>55</sup> R. A. Levine, "Anthropology and the Study of Conflict: An Introduction," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1961, pp. 3-15.

<sup>56</sup> J. Bernard, "Some Current Conceptualizations in the Field of Conflict," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 70, no. 4, 1965, pp. 442-454.

<sup>57</sup> I. L. Horowitz, "The Treatment of Conflict in Sociological Literature," *International Journal of Group Tensions*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1971, pp. 350-363; N. C. Mullins & C. J. Mullins, *Theories and Theory Groups in Contemporary American Sociology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 26-52.

<sup>58</sup> Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 67-102.

identify themselves as a complete party and believe that the maintenance of the group meets their interest. Lastly, the whole group must have the same recognition and understanding of the standard of an outside menace, especially when the threat is severe and devastating. Otherwise, the whole group would break down from an outside pressure. His rationale ushered in a new era of the theory, it illustrated that diversionary foreign policy would only work under certain condition.

We can also observe some similar characteristic in Marxism.<sup>59</sup> One of the fundamental guidelines of Marxism states that the world is divided into two groups of people: capitalists, people with assets or tools, and working class, people who are hired by capitalists. Throughout the history, we can see conflicts occurring between these two groups of people. We can observe the same mechanism working behind the logic of Marxism while he is demonstrating the inequality brought by capitalism.

In the book “Poverty of Philosophy”, Marx stated that group belongingness is founded by an objective situation with conflict; facing these situations would help a group find their core beliefs and therefore establish their own unique identity. It is one of the most essential steps of the formation of a group. The description above portrayed how the working classes forge cohesiveness through their fight with the capitalists, which is similar with the circumstance I am narrating on states.

What are the common incentives for leaders to adopt diversionary policy? The most prevalent explanation is susceptible to the result of election. Economic downturn is the second most salient reason.<sup>60</sup> State leaders are eager to divert the public’s

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<sup>59</sup> R. Williams & R. H. Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford Paperbacks, 1977), pp.11-55.

<sup>60</sup> P. James, *Crisis and War* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1988), pp. 3-27; B. Russett, *Controlling the Sword: The Democratic Governance of National Security* (Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 87-118.

attention from their failed economic policy or performance, aggressive foreign policy would be on the top of their agenda.<sup>61</sup> DeRouen Jr. discovered that high unemployment rate,<sup>62</sup> which insinuated a horrible economic performance, would encourage the government to enact aggressive foreign policy. Richards, Morgan, Wilson, Schwebach and Young came up with an innovative perspective, pointed out that good leaders would have the motivation to take on challenges in foreign policy just to prove their competence.<sup>63</sup> On the contrary, ineptitude leaders would hardly bare the risk of failing in foreign policy. Similar dynamic can also be found in other articles. Brace and Hinckley observe the circle of approve rates of U.S. presidents, only to conclude that creating a rally-around-the-flag effect pose impact on a president's own reputation of competence.<sup>64</sup> Norpoth took the British government as an example, illustrated that the popularity of prime minister Thatcher ascended due to her critical decision of starting the Falkland Islands, proving her capability of leading the country.<sup>65</sup>

Many scholars have focused on how democracies would use diversionary approach to reach their internal goals. Some scholars stated that democracies would prefer "benevolent military force" as the form they deploy their troops.<sup>66</sup> They argue that conventional use of force or politicostrategic military interventions (PSIs) may bring backfire to the administration since its legitimacy is questionable; on the other

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<sup>61</sup> P. James, & J. R. Oneal, "The Influence of Domestic and International Politics on the President's Use of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 35, no. 2, 1991, pp. 307-332.

<sup>62</sup> K. R. DeRouen Jr, "The Indirect Link: Politics, the Economy, and the Use of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 39, no. 4, 1995, pp. 671-695.

<sup>63</sup> D. Richards, T. C. Morgan, R. K. Wilson, V. L. Schwebach & G. D. Young, "Good Times, Bad Times, and the Diversionary Use of Force: A Tale of Some Not-so-free Agents," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 37, no. 3, 1993, pp. 504-535.

<sup>64</sup> P. Brace, & B. Hinckley, "The Structure of Presidential Approval: Constraints within and Across Presidencies," *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 53, no. 4, 1991, pp. 993-1017.

<sup>65</sup> H. Norpoth, "Guns and Butter and Government Popularity in Britain," *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 81, no. 3, 1987, pp. 949-959.

<sup>66</sup> E. F. Kisangani, & J. Pickering, "Diverting with Benevolent Military Force: Reducing Risks and Rising above Strategic Behavior," *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2007, pp. 277-299.

hand, military action derived from humanitarian reasons or socioeconomic interventions (SEIs) would sugarcoat the action as a justified the use of force.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, those military action with humanitarian purposes are title grabbing, leaders could easily win the support from their domestic audience meanwhile divert their attention elsewhere.<sup>68</sup>

Although the theory of diversionary foreign policy is built on a firm qualitative research foundation, some quantitative researches have showed a different path. Rummel's research showed no significant correlation between internal turmoil and external conflict.<sup>69</sup> Wilkenfeld demonstrated that the structure of the bureaucratic apparatus is the key variable impacting on the possibility of interstate conflict.<sup>70</sup> Revolutionary movements taken place in centralist states are the most likely to trigger war in comparison with other types of states. Kegley, Richardson and Richter put more emphasis on the militarization degree of a state, stating that the higher militarized society it is, the more possible that we can build a casual relation between civil trifles and foreign conflict.<sup>71</sup> Hazelwood focused on the level of ethnic diversity in a nation, illuminating that a more diverse nation would more easily take foreign conflict as an approach to forge the cohesion within the nation.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> D. J. Brulé & L. K. Williams, "Democracy and Diversion: Government Arrangements, the Economy, and Dispute Initiation," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 46, no. 6, 2009, pp. 777-798; E. F. Kisangani & J. Pickering, "Democratic Accountability and Diversionary Force: Regime Types and the Use of Benevolent and Hostile Military Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 55, no. 6, 2011, pp. 1021-1046.

<sup>68</sup> G. C. Edwards III, & B. D. Wood, "Who Influences Whom? The President, Congress, and the Media," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 93, no. 2, 1999, pp. 327-344; B. O. Fordham, "Another Look at Parties, Voters, and the Use of Force Abroad," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2002, pp. 572-596.

<sup>69</sup> R. J. Rummel, "Dimensions of Conflict Behavior within Nations, 1946-59," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1966, pp. 65-73.

<sup>70</sup> J. Wilkenfeld, "Domestic and Foreign Conflict Behavior of Nations," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1968, pp. 56-69.

<sup>71</sup> C. W. Kegley Jr, N. R. Richardson & G. Richter, "Conflict at Home and Abroad: An Empirical Extension," *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 40, no. 3, 1978, pp. 742-752.

<sup>72</sup> L. A. Hazelwood, "Externalizing Systemic Stresses: International Conflict as Adaptive Behavior,"

In modern days, many scholars have regarded diversionary foreign policy theory as the framework they are using to analyze conflicts among states or the motivation behind aggressive foreign policy. Ham and Tolentino believes that Preah Vihear border conflict took place between Thailand and Cambodia is a salient example of the logic of diversionary foreign policy.<sup>73</sup> Their research illuminated that contesting historical memory is an effective stimulus for an administration to take a diversionary approach, particularly before major elections or several leaders in a party is scrambling for power. A historical disputed territory is an easy target for those politicians to aim at while facing internal uncertainty. In this case, the author argued that both countries expected to gain from the exploitation of the intense situation.

Many scholars have regarded US as the most prominent case in studying this theory. Examining the causal relation between election cycle and the possibility of engaging foreign conflicts. For instance, Stoll illuminated that US presidents are most likely to use force in the year of reelection through quantitative study.<sup>74</sup> Gaubatz also got a similar conclusion by analyzing 69 wars involving democracies (including the US).<sup>75</sup> Nincic put presidents in first term and in their second term into comparison, discovered that during 1961-1988,<sup>76</sup> presidents in their first term were more likely to deploy troops on foreign lands, both because of their capability of overcoming the bureaucratic obstacles and also their intention to solve problems through external use of force. Moreover, some scholars have drawn more attention on the president's poll

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*Conflict Behavior and Linkage Politics*, (New York: McKay, 1973), pp. 148-190.

<sup>73</sup> M. Ham & E. Tolentino, "The Use of Force at Home and Abroad Through Diversionary Foreign Policy," *The Journal of Territorial and Maritime Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2017, pp. 87-105.

<sup>74</sup> R. J. Stoll, "The guns of November: Presidential reelections and the use of force, 1947-1982," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1984, pp. 231-246.

<sup>75</sup> K. T. Gaubatz, "Election cycles and war," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 35, no. 2, 1991, pp. 212-244.

<sup>76</sup> M. Nincic, "US Soviet policy and the electoral connection," *World Politics*, vol. 42, no. 3, 1989, pp. 370-396.



number with the probability of them using force abroad. Studies has shown that there's a correlation between the popularity of the administration and engagement of foreign conflicts.<sup>77</sup> That indicates that presidents were encouraged to proposed a military action while they gained the majority's support, and vice versa. A further research demonstrated that leaders usually don't need an overarching supporter base to start a military mission. In contrary, they only have to ensure that they can get the support from the "ruling coalition".<sup>78</sup>

James and Hristoulas took conflicts which US has engaged in during Cold War as database, concluded that foreign policy making is deeply intertwined with public perceptions.<sup>79</sup> Two factors are particularly significant in determining whether presidents decide to act in an upcoming international conflict: proximity to an election and the support from the congress.

With more and more researches fixated on the nexus between internal crisis and the use of force, some scholars have been trying to redefine "diversionary approach". Rivilin argued that people usually overlooked the other roles of a president rather than the commander-in-chief.<sup>80</sup> While most scholars pose their emphasis on the military action presidents have taken to divert the attention of the public, she pointed out that the objective of all these policies is to draw the public's attention elsewhere, and U.S. presidents possess more than one strategy to do so. Non-conflictual activities such as

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<sup>77</sup> C. W. Ostrom Jr & B. L. Job, "The president and the political use of force," *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 80, no. 2, 1986, pp. 541-566; P. James & J. R. Oneal, "The influence of domestic and international politics on the president's use of force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 35, no. 2, 1991, pp. 307-332.

<sup>78</sup> T. C. Morgan, & K. N. Bickers, "Domestic discontent and the external use of force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1992, pp. 25-52.

<sup>79</sup> P. James & A. Hristoulas, "Domestic politics and foreign policy: Evaluating a model of crisis activity for the United States," *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 56, no. 2, 1994, pp. 327-348.

<sup>80</sup> Ann Fischback Rivilin, *The Diversionary Theory of Foreign Policy? American and Public Opinion*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, 2008), pp. 2-28.



speeches, visits and bargaining would also do the same trick as they attract the media's attention as well. Such narrative has been resonated in other articles. Kanat analyzed Saddam Hussein's strategy in the midst of Gulf war, concluded that Hussein has utilized multiple policy tools like threaten to use force to reach his goal of diverting domestic audience.<sup>81</sup> His study also casted light on the fact that diversionary foreign policy is a strategy which is widely used in different regime. Most of the studies before concentrated on how democracies utilize this strategy to earn public support, especially the case of United States. The article demonstrated that dictators as well use diversionary strategies and meticulously evaluated different options in order to employ the least risky policy option.

#### **1.5.6 India's Foreign Policy**

The whole framework of India's foreign policy is bolstered by two core concepts: non-alignment movement and geopolitical strategy, both pose significant impacts on the direction of India's foreign policy.

The Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) has been the essence of India's foreign policy for decades.<sup>82</sup> This principle can be dated back to 1947, when the founding fathers of India, mostly from the National Congress Party, were deciding the approach they are taking to navigate through the bipolar system in the Cold War era.<sup>83</sup> The first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, elaborated the spirit behind Non-Alignment Movement in 1948:<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> K. B. Kanat, "Diversionary Foreign Policy in Authoritarian States: The Use of Multiple Diversionary Strategies by Saddam Hussein During the Gulf War," *Journal of Strategic Security*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2014, pp. 16-32.

<sup>82</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, "History and Evolution of Non-aligned Movement," *Government of India*, 2012.

<sup>83</sup> Bandyopadhyaya, J. "The Non-aligned Movement and International Relations," *India Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1977, pp. 137-164.

<sup>84</sup> K. P. S. Menon, 'India and the Soviet Union,' in B. R. Nanda, *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years*, (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976), pp. 134.

“There is a psychological reason also for our continuing our policy of neutrality at the present juncture in world affairs. Any deviation from it will weaken us and will make us camp-followers of some group.”

From the description above, we could realize that the main concern of the newborn India government was that they were afraid joining a certain alliance, either the US’s side or the Soviet Union’s side, would bring the whole country back to the time of British colonial period, which they have to completely relied on a great power to guarantee their own security. Since then, they valued autonomy more than alliance, the capacity to determine their own foreign policy become the top national interest they were guarding.<sup>85</sup> His successors (mostly also from Indian National Congress) regarded it as the guideline for foreign policy making.

Throughout the Cold War era, India has obeyed its non-alignment tradition.<sup>86</sup> Although they might have preference or inclination on who would be the ideal ally, India had never directly joined security alliances such as NATO or participated in any military conflict which related to the competition between USSR and US. They believed that flexibility in foreign policy making would best maintain their national interest. At that time, India was the leader of a group of developing countries which were trying to take charge of their own foreign policy, not relying on either great power.

After these countries met up in Bandung Conference in 1955, the international organization “Non-Aligned Movement” was established in 1961.<sup>87</sup> Despite Non-Aligned Movement is not a strictly-formed international organization, there’s no

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<sup>85</sup> David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan. *The Oxford handbook of Indian foreign policy*, (London: OUP Oxford, 2015), pp. 80-103.

<sup>86</sup> S. Morphet, “Multilateralism and the Non-Aligned Movement: What is the Global South Doing and Where is it Going?” *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2004, pp. 517-537.

<sup>87</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Non-Aligned Movement,” Government of People’s Republic of China, 2021.

secretariat and other permanent institution, it is an organization with 120-member states (see Figure 3), covering more than 50% of the world population. Based on the fact above, we could understand that non-aligned movement was an unparalleled and indispensable strategy for those newly-independent country to navigate through such a tumultuous time like Cold War.

Even today, we can easily observe how the legacy of NAM affects the policy direction of India. India in modern days are way more intimate with western countries. Under the big picture of US-China competition, India has been regarded as the alliance of US. However, India has never established a formal security alliance relation with US and other western-leaning countries.

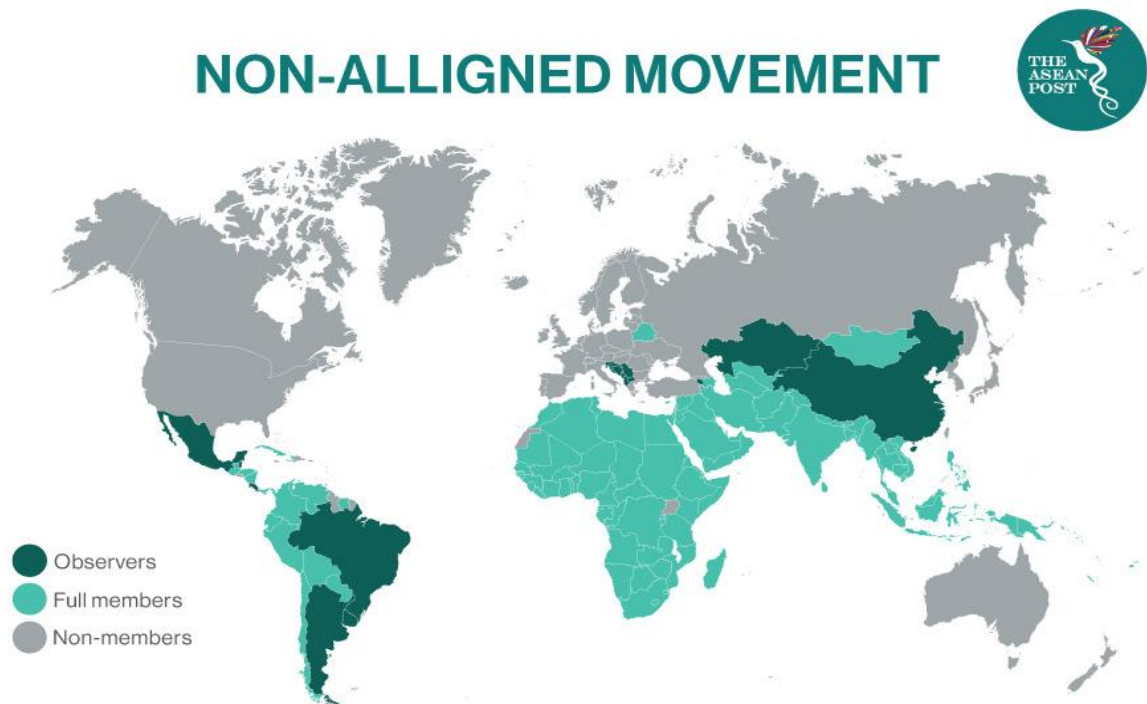
One of the most prominent examples is the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad),<sup>88</sup> a platform of four-member countries, namely, U.S., Australia, Japan and India to exchange their intelligence and maintain positive interaction. Despite the fact that these countries cooperate on key security issues, the Quad is never a formal international organization with treaty-based obligations.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, scholars sometimes would describe it as a quasi-alliance. This is one iron-clad prove of India's foreign policy still being affected by the spirit of non-aligned movement.

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<sup>88</sup> Kutty, Sumitha N., Rajesh Basrur, "The Quad: What It Is and What It Is Not," *The Diplomat*, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/o92omq>.

<sup>89</sup> Chowdhury, Debasish R, "Quad is Key to Biden's Strategy in Asia, But the Four-Way Alliance is Ambiguous and Contradictory," *Time*, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/e9l4oR>.

Figure 3- Member States of Non-aligned Movement



Source: *The ASEAN Post*, <https://reurl.cc/jqZeED>

The second pillar indicates that India considered its priority of foreign policy based on geopolitical factors. While the British was colonizing India, they built a system of ring fences to guarantee the security of their colony. As far as they were concerned, the threats they were facing are mainly from northern traditional hegemony, such as China and Russia. Consequently, they built two respective rings: the inner ring consists of the tribes in the northeastern India and kingdoms around mountain Himalayas and the outer ring which are the middle ground between India and those conventional great powers.<sup>90</sup> They would dedicate themselves into maintaining the tranquility of inner ring; meanwhile exert soft power or take diplomatic approach to maintain peace with the outer ring. This traditional strategy was fully inherited by the new-born India, that's the reason why the always consider the integrity of their territory and peace among South

<sup>90</sup> Lorne Kavic, *India's Quest for Security: Defense Policies, 1947-1965*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1967), pp.230-252.

Asian countries as their priority.

After the partition of British India, India has been the biggest country in the region of South Asia. In 1971, their main rival in the region, Pakistan, split into two, the eastern part then became Bangladesh. From then on, India became the unquestionable biggest power in South Asia. More importantly, the politicians in India also identified themselves as the “big brother” of most of the other states in South Asia, they were obligated to take care of them all. It soon developed into a mindset which regarded states within South Asia as India’s conventional sphere of influence, other actors attempting to establish alliance in this region would be considered hostile to India. This particular ideology also resonates with India’s intention to shape itself as the leader of developing countries during Cold War. India, without a doubt, was a great power among these countries and should be responsible for leading them against the first and second world.

Another reason why India must take care of states in South Asia lies in the domestic situation. India itself is consisted of a variety of races and ethnic groups. According to the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India, those aboriginals are called “Scheduled Tribes”, and there are more than 600 of these.<sup>91</sup> It reflects the diversity of the demography of India, which could be a double-edge sword. While India enjoys cultural diversity, those tribes with their unique culture and religion may become separatists if they resent the governance of the Indian authority. Throughout the history, making peace with these separatists has been a major task for them to maintain the integrity of India.

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<sup>91</sup> Ministry of Law and Justice, “The Constitution of India,” Government of India, 2019.

Moreover, these minority ethnic groups distribute across state borders, that means any turbulence from foreign countries may result in catastrophe in India. Separatists could receive assistance from foreign countries to make trouble in India, and vice versa. One of the most prominent examples is Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka.<sup>92</sup> They gained massive support from the proximate state, Tamil Nadu, in India since they were basically composed of the same ethnic group.

It led to a civil war over a decade in Sri Lanka, and after India's prime minister Rajiv Gandhi decided to intervene and sent troops to help the Sri Lanka government against the rebellion, he was assassinated in 1991 by a suicide bomber.<sup>93</sup> This event illuminated how the fate of India and its adjacent states is linked. To guarantee the tranquility domestically, Indian authority has to carefully manage its relation with other South Asian countries, which reinforced the priority of those countries on India's foreign policy agenda.

## 1.6 Scope and Limitations

For the purpose of research, the scope of "China policy" should be carefully defined first. The term "China policy" is used in a various of different to mean the strategy or attitude that one state has toward China in terms of their diplomatic relation. Under this category, any policy which may affect the bilateral relation with China would count as one country's "China policy". For instance, the most prominent China policy around the world should be United States' "One China Policy", which claimed that they

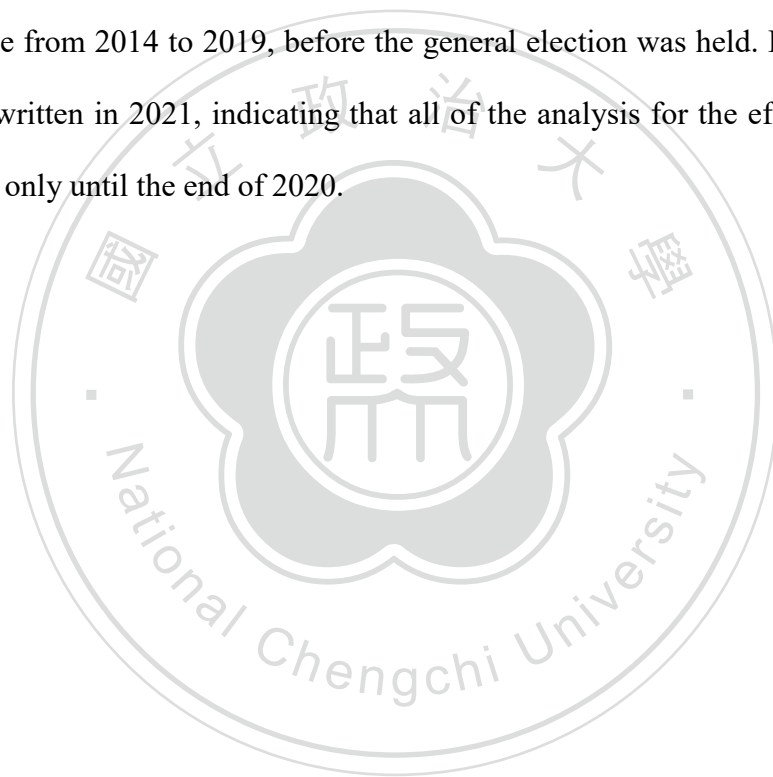
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<sup>92</sup> D. Hellmann-Rajanayagam, "The Tamil Tigers in Northern Sri Lanka: Origins, Factions, Programmes," *International Quarterly for Asian Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 63-85.

<sup>93</sup> D. S. Blakeslee, "Politics and Public Goods in Developing Countries: Evidence from the Assassination of Rajiv Gandhi," *Journal of Public Economics*, vol. 163, 2018, pp. 1-19.

only recognize Beijing government as the only legitimate Chinese government in the world.<sup>94</sup> It not only deeply influenced how U.S. perceived China, also posed a huge impact on the development of Sino-US relation. As stated above, India's China policy could be defined as "the combination of all the policies or mindsets of the Indian government which would affect Sino-India relation no matter directly or indirectly."

As for the limitations, this thesis aims to analyze the policy choice of Modi's government. Therefore, this article would mainly focus on the policies enacted during the time range from 2014 to 2019, before the general election was held. Furthermore, the thesis is written in 2021, indicating that all of the analysis for the efficacy of the policy would only until the end of 2020.



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<sup>94</sup> A. L. Friedberg, "Bucking Beijing: An Alternative US China Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 1, 2012, pp. 48-58.



## Chapter 2- The External Factors

In this chapter, I am going to elaborate on the external factors affecting Modi's China policy. The "external" factors here are referred to those which are beyond the control of Modi administration. Therefore, these are not limited to foreign actors, but also the traditions, agreements and legacies passed down by past administrations. These historical factors would be discussed in the first section. I am going to spend some time on the history of Sino-India relation as well as the history of their border disputes, since it has always been the conflict of core interests between the two. Then, I will also touch upon the legacies of India's foreign policy, namely, the non-aligned movement and India's geopolitical strategy.

In the second section of this chapter, I will elaborate on China's India policy. In the world of diplomacy, foreign policies are interactive and mutual influential. How China enacts its India policy would also affect India's China policy. Therefore, I believe it's necessary to discuss what the mainstream ideologies are of China's India policy throughout the history, and what the policy of which the Xi administration in China implementing on India is.

Last but not least, I would illuminate other foreign actors. I tend to include the actors who are universally considered as stakeholders of Sino-Indian relation. Their policies would also contribute to the outcome of Modi's China policy. They are Pakistan, the United States and Russia. Pakistan is the most understandable one since its destiny has been intertwined with India and China as a major actor in South Asia. Recently, U.S. has been active in South Asian region with its "Pivot to Asia Policy" to the "Indo-Pacific Strategy". Its interference would undoubtedly pose a huge impact on Modi's



policy. Last but not least, Russia has also been paying attention to the situation of South Asia and the India-China relation since the end of Cold War. The historic friendship between India and Russia certainly gives the latter leverage over India's China policy.

## **2.1 Historical Factors**

### **2.1.1 History of Sino-India Relation**

The relation between India and People's Republic of China dates back to the establishment of PRC. After the PRC was founded in October, 1949, most of the countries recognized it were socialist states. In April of the next year, India became the first non-social bloc state to formally recognize the PRC and forming diplomatic relation with it. It was a clear gesture from India to turn over a new leaf with the newly-established China. In 1954, then prime minister of India, Nehru, visited China in October, met the chairman of Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong.

It marked a significant milestone of bilateral relation since most of the western countries didn't even recognize PRC as the representative of China yet. The next year, Asian-African Conference was held in Bandung, emblemized the peak of Sino-India relation since the two states were born no more than a decade ago. It meant a lot for both countries since they both determined to represent the interest of the third-world countries while the world was clearly divided into two groups of states. It was also a prominent implementation of the "Non-Aligned Policy", the mainstream idea of India's foreign policy since its independence.

However, everything deteriorated since the conference. In March 1959, Dalai Lama, the Tibet political leader crossed the border and escaped to India for seeking

asylum as the repression from the CCP government got stronger than ever.<sup>1</sup> Three weeks after he entered the border of India, he met with Nehru to discuss the current situation of Tibet. During their meeting, Nehru made himself pretty clear that India neither had the intention of involving in military conflict with China, nor helping Tibet gain independence.

It was too costly a price to pay for India government, the only effort India was willing to make was building a communicating tunnel between Tibet and Beijing. Nehru was unequivocal about the priority of the Indian government, which was reaching a final resolution with China about the border issue they had for decades, without causing any other friction on the already fragile bilateral relation with China.<sup>2</sup>

Although India's intention of avoiding direct military conflict with China, the outbreak of India-China war of 1962 had forever changed India's perception toward China. The defeat of the war was a complete fiasco for Nehru, which had comprehensively destroyed his prestige and reputation both within his own party, the Indian National Congress, and in India. Apparently, the integrity of its territory was regarded as the core national interest for most Indian citizens, even more serious than solving the economic or social problems.

Other failure of policy attempts was forgivable; nonetheless, a disastrous military action was not, and now all Indian people had to share the frustration. Nehru passed away two years after the end of the war, it was truly a knockout blow for an experienced politician like him who led India from a post-colony to a new born South Asian great

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<sup>1</sup> F. Michael, "Survival of a Culture: Tibetan Refugees in India," *Asian Survey*, vol. 25, no. 7, pp. 737-744.

<sup>2</sup> Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, (London: Macmillan, 2007,) pp. 262-275.

power. His passing away also marked the end of the first phase of China policy. It was crystal clear for his successors that it would be difficult for China to cooperate with India again as long as the border issue wasn't resolved.<sup>3</sup> It didn't necessary mean that the two countries could not cooperate on some certain issues, but it would be hard for them to place full trust on each other.

Another salient turn of India's foreign policy after the war was that it inevitably had to rely on U.S. to provide the arms they need to defense their own border, which indicated to give up their traditional "non-aligned policy" to some degree. Despite the fact that military support to India was a controversial topic in U.S, president Kennedy still approved to sell over a million machine gun bullets and forty thousand landmines to India.

This gesture from U.S. had forced Indian politician to reexamine their relation with the U.S. They understood that for the purpose of preventing the same debacle from happening, India will always have to rely on U.S. to a certain extent.<sup>4</sup> Insisting on an absolute autonomy on foreign policy was sometimes unrealistic when it comes to the crisis they were facing on territorial integrity.

Pakistan is also a factor should be taken into consideration when examining India-China relation. Due to the historical legacy, India and Pakistan have been nemesis since they both got independence in 1947. Based on the previous premise, how China perceives its relation with Pakistan would pose a heavy impact on its relation with India. The bilateral relation between Pakistan and China also started in 1950, while Pakistan

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

was the first Muslim country to recognize People's Republic of China.<sup>5</sup>

The next year, they formed a formal diplomatic relation, turned on a new leaf of the interaction between the two. Subsequently in 1955 and 1956, the vice president of PRC, Song Ching Ling and Prime Minister of Pakistan, H.S. Suhrawardy, paid a visit to the other country respectively, further strengthened their relation.<sup>6</sup> 1963 was an iconic year for both countries, they reached a boundary agreement through peaceful means just one year after Sino-India border war. Pakistan was regarded as the friendliest neighbor country of China and had never had any dispute with China on border issues.<sup>7</sup> Since then, the diplomatic relation between the two countries were on an even keel. More and more bilateral treaties, agreements and memorandum of understanding were signed, steadily advanced the friendly relation between the two.

Having a stronger tie with Pakistan would inevitably influence the relation with India. Especially with the outbreak of Second Indo-Pakistani War in 1965, China supported the position of Pakistan publicly, as well as giving Pakistan a 60 million development assistance.<sup>8</sup> Although China refrained from actual intervention in the war, it was still the rock bottom of India-China relation. The tension between the two countries lasted till 1971, while the Third Indo-Pakistan War, also known as Bangladesh Independence War took place.<sup>9</sup>

China voiced its strong support to Pakistan as expected, not only due to its firm

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Pakistan and China Diplomatic Relations," *Government of Pakistan*, <http://mofa.gov.pk/pakistan-and-china-diplomatic-relations/>.

<sup>6</sup> Ramachandra Guha, *op. cit.*, p 362.

<sup>7</sup> Zamir Ahmed Awan, "China-Pakistan; A Journey of Friendship (1950-2020)," *Global Times*, 2020, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1189007.shtml>.

<sup>8</sup> Anas Malik, *Political Survival in Pakistan: Beyond Ideology*, (London: Routledge, 2010,) p. 80.

<sup>9</sup> Kuo Pin, Hsieh, "The Independence Movement of Bangladesh," *Taiwan International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2018, pp. 2-14.

friendship with Pakistan, but the appeal of independence in East Pakistan or Bangladesh violated its core national interest, and they feared that without the suppression, it might lead to a catastrophic outcome domestically.<sup>10</sup> As a result, China harshly criticized the military action of India and categorized it as an intervention of other state's internal affairs<sup>11</sup>.

The international environment was also unfavorable for the normalization of relation between India and China. It started with the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relation due to the border conflict on the eastern border.<sup>12</sup> In 1969, an intense battle was ignited at Zhenbao Island the ambush of Chinese troops toward Soviet Union army. It was regarded as a chance for U.S. to improve its relation with China, which led to the rapprochement between the two in 1971. India, on the other hand, leaned toward the Soviet Union as soon as the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed in the same year.<sup>13</sup> These series of events separated India and China into different groups and the chance of amelioration seemed bleak.<sup>14</sup>

The positive indication of an improvement took place in 1976, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi initiated the restoration of diplomatic relation by the exchange of ambassadors, which were recalled in the wake of the war in 1962. In 1981, Chinese foreign minister Huang Hua visited India, creating a friendly atmosphere for the first round of border talk held in October in the same year. Seven other rounds of border talk

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<sup>10</sup> N. Jayapalan, *India and Her Neighbours*, (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Dist, 2000,) pp. 65-81.

<sup>11</sup> Donovan C. Chau; Thomas M. Kane, *China and International Security: History, Strategy and 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Policy*, (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2014,) pp. 226-227.

<sup>12</sup> William Burr, "Sino-American relations, 1969: the Sino-Soviet Border War and Steps towards Rapprochement," *Cold War History*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2001, pp. 73-112.

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, "Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation" *Government of India*, 1971.

<sup>14</sup> A.R. Basu, "India's China Policy in Historical Perspective," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1991, pp. 103-115.

were held consecutively; however, there were still some frictions between the two, including Sumdorong Chu Valley dispute and granting full statehood to Arunachal Pradesh, both happened in 1986. These events mentioned above virtually rendered the last two rounds of negotiation obsolete, it seemed that everything was back to the start.<sup>15</sup>

The sign of thawing the cold relationship took place in 1988, when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was invited to visit China. He was also the first Prime Minister to visit China after Sino-Indian War. Subsequently, President Venkataraman, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Vice President Narayanan visited China in three consecutive years from 1992 to 1994, signaled a new era of India-China interaction. The perspective politicians in India took had shifted dramatically in these years, territorial disputes were used to be regarded as indispensable with the progress of bilateral relation. Nonetheless, New Delhi started to segregate historic border disputes from other issues, which allowed the two countries to embark on normalization of relation.

The resurgence not only enhanced trade between the two, they also signed their first agreement on border issue in 1993, ushered in a new era of Sino-India relation. Building on their agreement, they decided to establish a “Military and Diplomatic Expert Group” to work as the communication tunnel between them. The expert group would meet annually and provide suggestion to the Joint Working Group founded after Rajiv’s visit to Beijing.

While the future of their relation seems more promising than ever, India’s decision of conducting nuclear test (also known as the Pokhran II nuclear test) in 1998 completely broke the harmony. Although it seemed out of a blue, it was not an accident.

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<sup>15</sup> J.K. Baral, J.K. Mohapatra and S.P. Mishra, “Rajiv Gandhi’s China Diplomacy: Dynamics and Problems” *International Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1989, pp. 257-270.

India had been planning for conducting nuclear tests for decades, the first nuclear test was in 1974 in the same spot, which was widely known as the Operation Smiling Buddha.<sup>16</sup> The motivation behind New Delhi's decision was quite complicated, but one of the reasons were generally accepted: to meet India's security needs while a nexus of China and Pakistan on nuclear weapons was predictable.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the amelioration of the bilateral relation with China, India still couldn't get rid of the perception that China was the biggest threat they were facing in terms of their security environment. The scar of the 1962 border war and the unsolved territorial dispute kept bothering New Delhi, motivated them to weaponize themselves with nuclear weapons to balance against their neighbor in the north.

Beijing was certainly upset about New Delhi taking advantage of the China threat discourse to legitimize their nuclear test.<sup>18</sup> However, Beijing had so many other security issues at hand already at the east coast, it would be best to maintain tranquility in the southeast side of their border. Meanwhile, most analysts in China believed that their security dilemma with India was still manageable through good diplomacy and consistent dialogue.<sup>19</sup> After all, China had never considered India as their major threat in terms of national security, and they still had to cooperation on a various of issue on the international stage, especially when it comes to anti-hegemony and North-South relations.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Frank Barnaby, *How Nuclear Weapons Spread: Nuclear-Weapon Proliferation in the 1990s*, (London: Routledge, 1994,) pp. 59-64.

<sup>17</sup> Hilary Synnott, *The Causes and Consequences of South Asia's Nuclear Tests*, (Oxford University Press, 1999,) pp. 12-23.

<sup>18</sup> Yuan Jing Dong, "Foe or Friend? The Chinese Assessment of a Rising India After Pokhran-II" In *South Asia's Nuclear Security Dilemma*, (London: Routledge, 2005,) pp. 147-172.

<sup>19</sup> Yuan Jing Dong, "India's Rise After Pokhran II: Chinese Analyses and Assessments," *Asian Survey*, vol. 41, no. 6, 2001, pp.978-1001.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*



Stepping into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, their relation also reached a relatively new high. The ice-breaker was when China finally recognized India's sovereignty over Sikkim in 2003, which was annexed in 1975.<sup>21</sup> Two years later, they established a strategic and cooperative partnership for peace and prosperity, which both Prime Minister Wen Jiabao of China and Manmohan Singh of India agreed that they had acquired a "global and strategic character."<sup>22</sup> With the positive atmosphere built by the agreement, the economic aspect of the bilateral relation grew rapidly.

China became the third biggest trading partner of India since 2009, and the total amount of trade increased steadily with the enhancement of political situation.<sup>23</sup> 2010 was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China and India establishing diplomatic relation, they signed a Joint Communiqué to reassure the advancement of their relationship.<sup>24</sup> In the Communiqué, they reiterated that both sides were satisfied with the progress of their relation, and they both tended to enlarge the content of their cooperation, including aspects like education, culture and commerce.

Before Modi took office in 2014, we could see that the bilateral relation of the two countries were gradually improving. Although there were still temporarily unsolvable issues between them, both sides consented to set aside the disputes in order to accomplish more in other aspects. After understanding the holistic background of Sino-India relation, I am going to elaborate on the border issues and also related agreements they've reached in the past, to draw a clearer picture of the historic factors influencing

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<sup>21</sup> J. R. Subba, *History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim*, (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2008,) p18.

<sup>22</sup> Embassy at Pakistan, "China, India Agree on Strategic Partnership," *Government of People's Republic of China*, <http://in.chineseembassy.org/eng/ssygd/zygx/t191496.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Commerce, "Country Trade Report: India, 2009," *Government of People's Republic of China*.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, "Joint Communiqué of the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China," *Government of India*, 2010, <https://reurl.cc/ogR3Xl>.

Modi's China policy.

### 2.1.2 Sino-India Border Issues and Agreements

In this section, I am going to introduce the origin of Sino-India border issues, and the current situation of the border. Then, I will also review the agreements between the two governments in terms of their border disputes, so that we could understand the legally binding obligations of the Indian government.

The distance of disputed border lines between India and China is more than 2000 kilometers long.<sup>25</sup> It is the longest disputed border between adjacent countries in the world. It can be roughly divided into three parts (see Figure 4). The eastern part starts from the border of China, India and Myanmar and ends at their border with Bhutan. The disputed area is now under control of the Indian government, which is called Arunachal Pradesh by India or South-Tibet Region by China. The border line admitted by India is the well-known McMahon Line, drawn by the British while India was still a colony under British empire in 1914, in the Simla Conference.<sup>26</sup>

Since India believes it is the legitimate heir of the British India, the border line is without a doubt the McMahon Line. China, however, claimed that they had never recognized this arrangement, alleging that this area was under the authority of Tibet throughout the history. Moreover, the sixth generation Dalai Lama: Tsang-Yang Gyatso,

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<sup>25</sup> The length of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is different for China and India since they claimed different lines. For India, it is 3,488 kilometers long, while China considers it to be only around 2,000 kilometers.; Sushant Singh, "Line of Actual Control (LAC): Where It Is Located, and Where India and China Differ," *The Indian Express*, 2020, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/line-of-actual-control-where-it-is-located-and-where-india-and-china-differ-6436436/>

<sup>26</sup> K. Gupta, "The McMahon Line 1911-1945: The British Legacy," *The China Quarterly*, vol. 47, 1971, pp. 521-545.

was born in Tawang. It became the evidence of Tibet's territorial right over this region, and later became China's testimony.

Figure 4- Disputed Border Between India and China



Source: Indo-Pacific News Twitter;  
[https://twitter.com/indopac\\_info/status/1267692568596238337?lang=bg](https://twitter.com/indopac_info/status/1267692568596238337?lang=bg).

The middle part is the border between Nepal and Kashmir which was not completely clear. The western part refers to the border in the Kashmir region, it is much complicated since it involves another stakeholder: Pakistan. India claimed sovereignty all over the Jammu and Kashmir region, including the parts occupied by Pakistan and China now. The overlapping declaration over territory derived from the 1940s, when the last ruler of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, announced he was going to join India, despite the majority of Kashmir residents were Muslims. His decision completely went against the core national interest of the newborn Pakistan, which believed that Muslims

should unite under one state, abide by the two-nation theory brought up by the Founding Father of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Only to make the already complicated situation worse, China occupied Aksai Chin, a region over 38,000 square kilometers. India insisted border line between the two should be the boundary drawn by a British investigator W. H. Johnson, or the Johnson line, making the whole Aksai Chin region their territory. Aksai Chin is critical to China due to its special location, the road between Xinjiang and Tibet would have to pass by this region.

China started to build road in this region in the 1950s, and India was pretty vigilant about it, any construction in the disputed area would be regarded as China's attempt to create a fait accompli. India would have to accept the status quo after China virtually governed this place.<sup>27</sup> India launched a formal protest toward China after a contingent found out China's plan in 1958. In 1963, China and Pakistan signed a border agreement, which Pakistan ceded part of the Kashmir under its authority to China. It posed a significant impact of the triangular relation among the involving states. After the treaty was signed, China came out fully supportive of Pakistan's stance on Kashmir.<sup>28</sup> India was quite upset about the agreement, regarding it as another encroachment on India's territory integrity.

Thirty years after the treaty which froze Sino-India relation, India and China started to negotiate and sign several border agreements to solve the problem lasted for more than half a century. The 1993 agreement was a breakthrough for both sides since

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<sup>27</sup> John W. Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001,) pp. 80-86.

<sup>28</sup> Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "Significance of Pakistan-China Border Agreement of 1963," *Pakistan Horizon*, vol. 39, no. 4, 1986, pp. 41-52.

it was the first formal paperwork of border affairs regulation.<sup>29</sup> It was also a framework, pointing out the most fundamental criteria both sides were willing to abide by. For instance, it stated that boundary questions should be resolved through peaceful and friendly consultation (Article 1). They should keep the military deployment at minimum alongside border area to prevent any possible friction (Article 2). Both sides should invite diplomatic and military experts to take part in the process of mutual consultation and the implementation of measures, which may guarantee the neutrality as well as the effectiveness of the result of negotiation reached by Joint Working Group (Article 8).

The 1996 agreement could be regarded as a more detailed regulation under the 1993 agreement.<sup>30</sup> Not only did it reiterated the peaceful solution of border conflicts (Article 1), it stipulated all the aspects mentioned in the previous agreements, including the number of weapons, the limitation of border defense force, and the type and number of combat aircrafts (Article 3, 5). The most significant outcome was the consent of not using hazardous chemicals, explosives, or hunt with guns within two kilometers of the border, considerably stabilize the situation of the sensitive area. Another worth mentioned section was Article 8, which stated that either side should provide necessary assistance to the other while personnel of one side cross the line of actual control due to unavoidable circumstances such as accidents of vehicles or natural disasters. The regulation created a precedent of kind interaction between the two, affirmed that there were still room for India and China to cooperate in certain aspects.

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<sup>29</sup> United Nation Peacemaker, "Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas", *United Nation*, 1993.

<sup>30</sup> United Nation Peacemaker, "Agreement Between India and China on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas," *United Nation*, 1996.

Nine years later, both sides signed a protocol to recall their consensus in 1996. The 2005 agreement was an obviously a reiteration of the 1996 agreement, since all of its articles started with mentioning one corresponding article in the 1996 agreement.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, it clearly stated that the protocol would be rendered obsolete if the 1996 agreement cease to be enforced (Article 8), clearly positioned itself as a subordination of the previous one. Its main contribution was providing more concrete provisions for them to obey. For instance, it regulated that both sides should not hold more than one Division in close proximity to the Line of Actual Control, that was approximately 15,000 military personnel (Article 2). Moreover, it also provided a step-by-step guidance when it comes to a face-to-face situation in Article 4, substantially reduced the possibility of escalating the tension into a conflict.

The 2012 agreements shed light on the establishment of a working mechanism for consultation and coordination, which would be headed by a Joint Secretary level official from the Ministry of External Affairs of India and Director General level official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China (Article 2).<sup>32</sup> It also stipulated the main task of the Mechanism (Article 3), the issues it should address (Article 5) and the frequency of meeting (Article 7). The primary purpose of the Working Mechanism was to create a positive atmosphere for the two sides to communicate, they were not responsible for reaching a final resolution of the border disputes.

In the subsequent year, they signed the most representative agreement among all. In the 2013 border agreement, both sides characterized their interaction as “cooperation”

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<sup>31</sup> United Nation Peacemaker, “Protocol Between India and China on Modalities for the Implementation of Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas,” *United Nation*, 2005.

<sup>32</sup> United Nation Peacemaker, “Agreement on the Establishment of a Working for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs,” *United Nation*, 2012.

on border issue, instead of the most commonly used “dispute settlement.”<sup>33</sup> It emphasized that they were not adversaries but partners on maintaining tranquility along the border, and they must collaborate to get the job done.

In Article 2, the importance of exchange of information was underscored, it could not only build confidence between the two party, but reduce the possibility of misunderstanding which often led to skirmishes. It also suggested to establish a “Hotline” between two military headquarters in order to cope with any possible accident. All in all, the latest agreement revealed that their bilateral relation had passed the incipient stage, moving toward a cooperative and friendly phase. These bilateral documents clearly showed that they made progresses in every piece of agreement they signed, and both parties’ attitude toward border issue has changed from “coping with a problem” to “maintaining peace cooperatively”. This change of narrative proved Sino-India relation actually improved through these agreements before Modi took office.

### **2.1.3 India’s Foreign Policy Legacies**

There are several characteristics of India’s foreign policy shared by all the governments after they got independence in 1947. In the first chapter, I mentioned two of the most prominent ones: the tradition of non-alignment and geopolitical strategy. In this section, I am going to further discuss these two indispensable components of India’s foreign policy, and how it would affect contemporary Sino-India relation.

As I have discussed in the first chapter, non-aligned movement has dominated the mainstream discourse of India’s foreign policy for decades. For most of the Prime Ministers after Nehru, it was a tenet which could not be violated under any circumstance

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<sup>33</sup> United Nation Peacemaker, “Border Defense Cooperation Agreement between India and China,” *United Nation*, 2013.



before the end of Cold War. One thing worth noticing is that China actually shared the same value. The incentive of initiating such movement was to unite Third World countries, to fight against colonialism, to eliminate poverty and call for self-determination. It was the first time when India and China stood together for their common interests before the irreconcilable border conflict finally broke out.

After Sino-Indian war in 1962, the bilateral relation between the two has gone through several ups and downs; however, both haven't given up the five principles which they had reached a consensus in the Bandung Conference. In the fiftieth anniversary of the conference, a number of Asian and African leader gathered again in Jakarta to reiterate the values that they all agreed to fifty years ago, and has shared them ever since.<sup>34</sup> They passed the Declaration on the New Asian African Strategic Partnership (NAASP) to underline the importance of the countries across the two continents working together to respect the spirit of the Bandung Conference.

Both President of China Hu Jintao and Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh attended the conference to show their emphasis of it, also showed that they were at the same front when it comes to some of the fundamental values they both respected and shared. Therefore, the non-aligned movement or the spirit of Bandung could be regarded as the primary pillar bolstering the bilateral relation between the two Asian great powers. No matter how fierce the border dispute was, they will always work collectively while other country behaves incompatible with their values.

Ten years later, the Asian African Conference Commemoration also took place in

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<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP)," *Government of the Republic of Indonesia*, 2019, <https://reurl.cc/eEO53Q>.

Jakarta. In the conference, Chinese president Xi Jinping gave a speech with the title of “Carrying Forward the Bandung Spirit to Promote Win-win cooperation,” indicating the importance of the cooperation among attendants.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, the Indian Minister of External Affairs Jaishankar shared his perspectives and underscored some critical issues which governments should cooperate such as terrorism, maritime security and global governance.<sup>36</sup>

Instead of building a positive image with declarative words, India took another approach to touch upon the topics that they considered essential. Based on the difference we observed, we could understand that despite they enjoy the same basic values, they sometimes took different approach to interpret those content. For India, the concrete work they could have done was what really matters, on the contrary, China would rather create a cohesive atmosphere among all countries to solidify its position as the leader of all Third World nations.

All in all, India has been taken the principles of non-aligned movement pragmatically. Although it was one of the advocators in the first place, India is willing to accommodate the change through time and develop a more suitable strategy for modern days. As its implication of the Sino-India relation, I believe it has been the common ground for the two nations for decades, to some degree alleviated the fierce border conflicts. In the future, we could expect the bilateral relation be strengthened if they still respect the outcome of Bandung Conference.

The importance of geopolitical factor is actually influenced by the legacy of

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<sup>35</sup> Embassy in the Islamic Republic of Iran, “President Xi’s Speech at the Asian-African Leaders Conference,” *Government of People’s Republic of China*, 2015, <http://ir.china-embassy.org/chn/zyxw/t1256942.htm>.

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, “Speech by External Affairs Minister at the Asian African Summit 2015,” *Government of India*, 2015, <https://reurl.cc/rg9Vbk>.

colonization and also the geographic location of India (see Figure 5). In literature review, I have elaborated on the origin and significance; therefore, this section would mainly focus on the interaction with China in the South Asian region under India's self-identified (and also de facto) leadership.

Figure 5- Location of India in South Asia



Source: *Maps of India*, <https://www.mapsofindia.com/neighbouring-countries-maps/indian-subcontinent-map.html>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, India has regarded itself as the legitimate successor of the “British India,” indicating that India inherited the sphere of influence of the British Empire in South Asia. Based on this premise, Indian government is often

sensitive while other countries showed ambition of building their impact in the same region. It could to a large extent explain India's hostile attitude toward China nowadays. As the rise of China became an inevitable trend, China has been trying to project its power elsewhere. South Asia has become one of China's target of expanding its influence due to its proximity with China. Moreover, these countries sometimes need foreign investment for its development and China, with its financial prowess and fundamental infrastructure construction experiences, would be the ideal investor.

The overlapping zone of influence set the tone for the India-China competition. Small states in South Asia were sometimes forced to support either China or India in certain issues. Furthermore, China was taking a more active role with multifaceted strategy, a combination of diplomatic, economical and geopolitical approaches to build stronger ties with South Asian countries, threatening the traditional leadership of India.

In conclusion, if we examine the interaction between China and India at the perspective of India's foreign policy, it is a little bit contradictory. On the one hand, the none-aligned movement leaves some room for India and China to cooperate; on the other hand, both countries are obviously competing against each other for a more profound influence in South Asia.

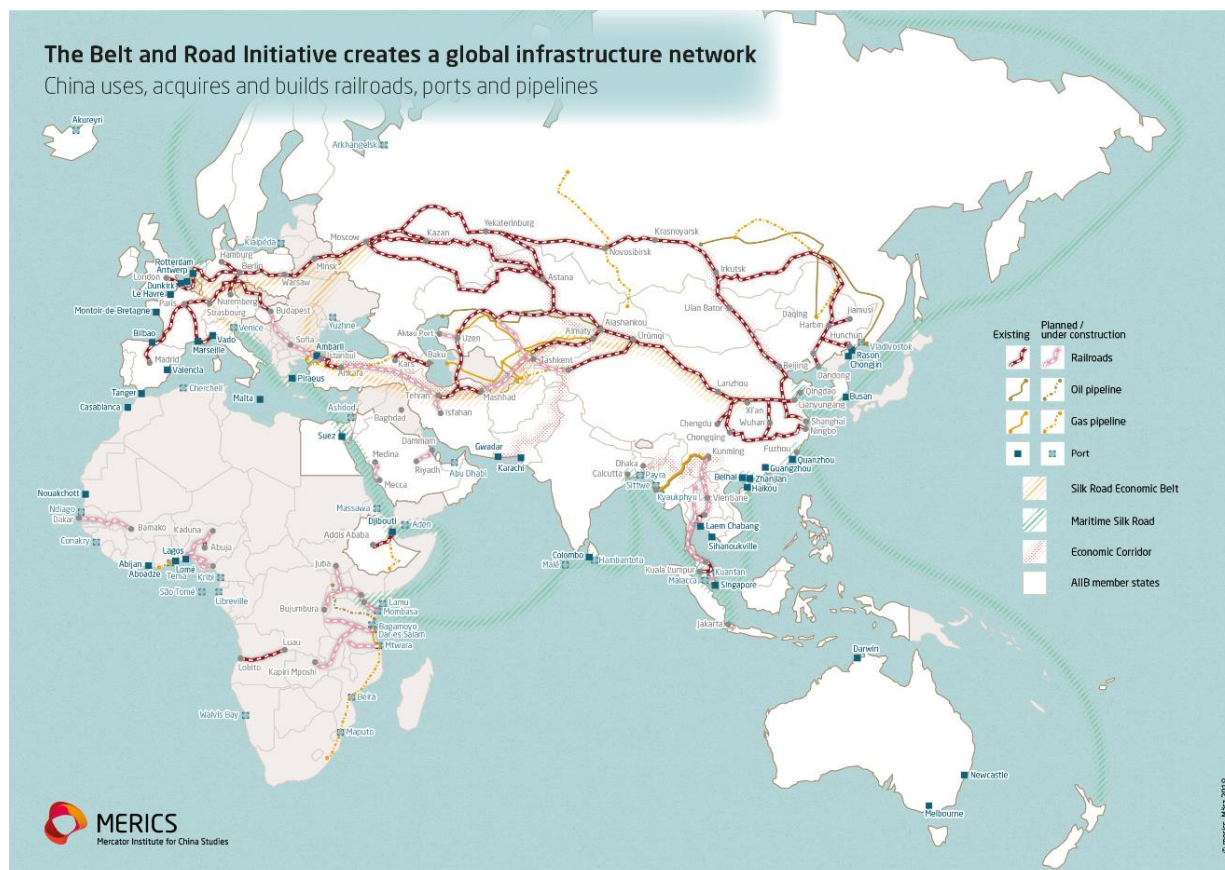
## **2.2 China's Foreign Policy**

### **2.2.1 China's Foreign Policy Framework**

When it comes to China's foreign policy grand strategy under President Xi, the "Belt Road Initiative" (BRI, or One Belt One Road, OBOR) would have to be mentioned (see Figure 6). This initiative was brought up in 2013, when President Xi

visited Kazakhstan and gave a speech in the name of “promote friendship between our people and work together to build a brighter future.”

Figure 6- The Belt Road Initiative



Source: Mercator Institute for China Studies, <https://merics.org/en/tracker/mapping-belt-and-road-initiative-where-we-stand>.

The whole initiative was composed of two parts; the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road. It was one of the most ambitious grand strategy initiated by the Chinese government, covering three continents, aiming to the resurgence of the historic Silk Road which connected the Far East to Europe. In 2015, the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Development and Reform Commission promulgated a policy white paper together,<sup>37</sup> stating that BRI

<sup>37</sup> State Council, “Vision and Actions on Joint Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road,” *Government of People’s Republic of China*, 2015, [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-03/28/content\\_2839723.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-03/28/content_2839723.htm).



would also respect the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.” China was opened for cooperation with any other region and any other country in the pursuit of prosperity together.

The first and foremost projects would be focusing on the infrastructures, China planned to invest billions of dollars in the developing countries along the New Silk Road to build structures like bridges, railroads, ports. In their perspective, it could accelerate the economic growth in these countries. Furthermore, China could also take control of these essential infrastructures, which were strategical significant most of the time, as long as the debtor nation could not pay them back. In short, they would benefit anyway.

South Asian region was heavily invested under the program since it situated at a pivotal position in BRI. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was an iconic project, marked China’s determination of the investment. CPEC could even be considered as a massive project itself, containing more than a hundred developing projects, the total amount of investment was more than 60 billion US dollars.

Those investment varied across energy, infrastructure, establishment of economic zone, social sector and hydropower, including the construction of Gwadar port.<sup>38</sup> Besides Pakistan, China also invested in Sri Lanka through the Hambantota port project, and Bangladesh in its railway construction. It was undeniable that South Asian countries was pivotal for the Maritime Silk Road both geographically and strategically.

India was unpleasant with BRI’s investment in South Asia for several reasons. First, India had always considered South Asia as its sphere of influence, and China was

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<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, “China Pakistan Economic Corridor,” *Government of Pakistan*, <http://cpec.gov.pk/index>.

deliberately undermining India's leverage over this region through financial support toward these neighbor countries. Next, some of the investments were controversial in India's perspective. For instance, CPEC intended to build highways through Kashmir region, which India insisted that it was part of the Union Territory Jammu and Kashmir.

It directly impinged upon India's territorial integrity, stepped on the redline set by the Indian government. It led to India's boycott toward the first Belt Road Forum in 2017,<sup>39</sup> and criticized it as an "unsustainable debt burden" for countries which had taken part in.<sup>40</sup>

### 2.2.2 China's India Policy

After President Xi took office, the mainstream narrative of Sino-India relation in the new era has been an establishment of "New Great Power Relation". It was a form which China would bring up when they are emphasizing the "peaceful rise of China", they would not seek to conquer any other country or overturn the current order. Instead, New Great Power Relation focuses on a non-conflict, cooperative and mutual respectful form of bilateral relation. It was first mentioned when then Vice President of China, Xi Jinping visited U.S. in 2012, underscoring that China would not be an opponent of the U.S.

The same concept resembled China's perspective of their bilateral relation with India. For geopolitical reasons, having a stable and friendly relation with India meets

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<sup>39</sup> Bansari Kamdar, "What to Make of India's Absence from the Second Belt and Road Forum?" *The Diplomat*, 2019, <https://reurl.cc/bXVb6d>.

<sup>40</sup> Sanjeev Miglani, "India Skips China's Silk Road Summit, Warns of Unsustainable Debt," *Reuters*, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-china-silkroad-india-idUKKBN18A07N?edition-redirect=uk>.



China's national interest. China has never regarded India as their primary opponent on the international stage due to the clear disparity of power between the two.<sup>41</sup> Although some regional frictions had taken place along the border, it was never a security threat to China. For decades, their main competitor has been the U.S., the deterioration of Sino-India relation would only hinder their competition with America. Therefore, it would be only beneficial for China to regard India as a partner instead of a rivalry. The main theme of China's India policy under Xi was to create a more intimate strategic partnership despite all the skirmishes between the two.<sup>42</sup>

After Modi took office in May 2014, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, Wang Yi, visited New Delhi only ten days later as the special envoy of President Xi, reflected China's emphasis on its relation with India. In their meeting, the main agreement brought by China was that the common interest between the two definitely outweighed their divergence. They were not in a zero-sum game, win-win situation could be achieved only if they cooperate on multiple issues.<sup>43</sup>

Months later, when Xi met Modi in person, he reiterated the attitude of China toward the future of their relation. Besides what Wang Yi had conveyed in their previous meet up, President Xi elucidated on the significance of their cooperation to the world.<sup>44</sup> The world would hear them only if they voice out the same opinion, the world would pay attention to their action only when they work collaboratively.

A point worth kept in mind was that the economic aspect of their cooperation was

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<sup>41</sup> Zhao Gan-Cheng, "China and India: A Corollary to New Great Power Relations," *South Asian Studies*, vol. 2, 2014, pp. 47-57.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Prime Minister Modi of India met with Wang Yi," *Government of People's Republic of China*, 2014.

<sup>44</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Xi Jinping Met with the Prime Minister of India, Modi," *Government of People's Republic of China*, 2014.

accentuated in China's statement while solving their border issue was only mentioned in a few words. It was a clear implication that China could become a critical economic partner of India, providing the funds and infrastructure investments that India was desperately needing at that moment. Furthermore, India and China were also member states of the BRICS country group,<sup>45</sup> they would only benefit more when the five emerging countries cooperate with each other. China was inferring that comparing with the huge advantage India could get through cooperation, border disputes between them should not be the factor impeding it. The discourse of India and China should cooperate as two economies with great potentialities was brought up repeatedly ever since. It's safe to say that economic issue is on the top of their agenda or considered as a policy tool when the Xi administration was coping with their relation with India.

As for the security issue between them, China had set up several evident redlines to India. Everything else were negotiable as long as India didn't cross the redlines, two of the most salient ones were issues concerning Taiwan and Tibet.<sup>46</sup> China's sovereignty over these two places are unquestionable, any attempt of erosion would be struck back fiercely. Between these two, Tibet is the more sensitive topic for China since the Central Tibetan Administration was founded in Dharamshala in 1960.<sup>47</sup> For China, India admitting its legitimacy over Tibet was the cornerstone of their interaction. Moreover, Tibet issue is intertwined with border dispute they have with India, rendered the problem even more complicated than it already was.

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<sup>45</sup> Those five countries are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The term was first mentioned by the chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management, Jim O'Beill, in 2001.; "What is BRICS," *BRICS Brazil 2019*, <http://brics2019.itamaraty.gov.br/en/about-brics/what-is-brics>.

<sup>46</sup> There are actually three biggest contentious issues for China, often called as three "Ts", which are Tibet, Taiwan and Tiananmen; David Volodzko, "China Biggest Taboos: The Three Ts," *The Diplomat*, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/chinas-biggest-taboos-the-three-ts/>.

<sup>47</sup> Also known as "Tibetan Government in Exile," <https://tibet.net/>.

Despite the unsolved Tibet issue, China is prone to maintain status quo along the border for several reasons. First, reach a final resolution of the border issue is not urgent to China comparing with other challenges they are facing. Managing the conflict would be an acceptable solution for now. Second, rather than hinder the development of India, China's strategic goal in South Asia is to guarantee that India would never threaten China's interest in the region.<sup>48</sup> Lastly, China expects spill-over affect from economic sector to alleviate the tension in border issues.<sup>49</sup>

In conclusion, China's policy toward India is basically economy-oriented under Xi administration, all kinds of interactions which enhance their friendship were encouraged. They understood that difference of opinion on border issues exists, and were willing to solve the problem under the premise of well-communication between Beijing and New Delhi. Before any consensus are reached, China would oppose to any unilateral attempt to alter the status quo.

## 2.3 Foreign Stakeholders

### 2.3.1 Pakistan

India and Pakistan are a set of classic historic nemesis. Their conflicts dated back to the time when they both belong to the British Empire, when the founding father of Pakistan, Muhammad Jinnah, decided to establish an independent country with the majority of Muslim population.<sup>50</sup> It was a proclamation based on the "two nation

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<sup>48</sup> Tang, Shih-Ping, "The Gamble of Sino-India Relation and China's South Asia Strategy," *World Economy and Politics*, vol. 9, 2000, pp. 24-29.

<sup>49</sup> Sui, Xin-Min, "Interstate Dynamics and Security Management on the Sino-India Border: A Game Theory Analysis," *South Asian Studies*, vol. 4, 2014, pp. 1-15.

<sup>50</sup> Anand K. Verma, *Reassessing Pakistan: Role of Two-Nation Theory*, (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2001,) pp.13-16.

theory,” which enunciated that Muslims and Hindus should have the right to found their own countries. It was also the beginning of territorial dispute between the two states, primarily regarding to Kashmir, and later led to the repeatedly border skirmishes between the two nation (see Table 6).<sup>51</sup>

Table 1- Major Conflicts between Pakistan and India

| Year      | Event                    | Location         | Outcome                                      |
|-----------|--------------------------|------------------|--|
| 1947-1949 | First Indo-Pakistan War  | Kashmir          | Pakistan Occupied Part of Kashmir            |
| 1965      | Second Indo-Pakistan War | Kashmir          | Tashkent Declaration <sup>52</sup>           |
| 1971      | Third Indo-Pakistan War  | East Pakistan    | The Independence of Bangladesh <sup>53</sup> |
| 1998-1999 | Kargil War               | Kargil, Pakistan | Indian Victory <sup>54</sup>                 |

Source: Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*.

In this section, I would mainly elaborate on two dimensions of Pakistan's influence on Modi's diversionary policy. First, how the strong bilateral relation between Pakistan and China posed impact on Modi's policy. The second would be why Modi would rather choose China as the diversionary target, instead of the one which has a deeper historical

<sup>51</sup> Among all of the skirmishes between India and Pakistan, only one of them took place in the east. Others took place around the Kashmir region, including the latest one, happening in 2019.; Joanna Slater and Niha Masih, "Modi Vows Action after Dozens Die in Deadliest Attack in Indian-held Kashmir in 3 Decades," *The Washington Post*, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/indias-modi-promises-retaliation-after-worst-attack-in-kashmir-in-three-decades-kills-dozens/2019/02/15/f5dd55d6-309e-11e9-8781-763619f12cb4\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/indias-modi-promises-retaliation-after-worst-attack-in-kashmir-in-three-decades-kills-dozens/2019/02/15/f5dd55d6-309e-11e9-8781-763619f12cb4_story.html).

<sup>52</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, "Tashkent Declaration," *Government of India*, 1966, <https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/5993/Tashkent+Declaration>.

<sup>53</sup> Kuo-Pin, Hsieh, "The Independence Movement of Bangladesh," *Taiwan International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2018, pp. 1-16.

<sup>54</sup> It was initiated by Pakistan, but failed due to important misjudgments.; P.R. Chari, "Reflections on the Kargil War," *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2009, pp. 360-364.

rivalry, Pakistan.

The ironclad friendship of Pakistan and China has been an enduring threat of India. For one thing, their quasi-alliance created sense of insecurity for India, result from the geopolitical pressure inflicted by the two surrounding nuclear powers. It was really difficult for India to witness the enhancement of bilateral relation between China and Pakistan, particularly after 2015, when both sides announced that they were founding a “All-weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership.”<sup>55</sup> It was a unique description, displaying the China style hierarchical partnership, and Pakistan was placed pretty high.<sup>56</sup>

The unbreakable relation between the two countries aroused India demand to search for alliances beyond the region. Despite it didn't mean to completely abandon their non-alignment tenet, they would feel more secured if they were backed by others who shared the same concern with them, that was the time U.S. was added into the formula.<sup>57</sup> It simultaneously created a negative reinforcement for the relation between India and China. As the Sino-Pakistan relation is strengthened, India would be more likely to lean to the U.S. faction, contributes to an even greater fissure of their relation.

The dynamic doesn't necessarily indicate that there would be a harsh competition or even conflict between the two factions, the actual mechanism is more complicated

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<sup>55</sup> Huma Sattar, “China and Pakistan’s All-Weather Friendship,” *The Diplomat*, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/03/china-and-pakistans-all-weather-friendship/>.

<sup>56</sup> The top one is the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination, which was founded with Russia. Pakistan ranked two, and Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnerships are just beneath it. China mostly founded CSCP with Southeast Asian States. The next would be Strategic Cooperative Partnerships and Strategic Partnerships.; Sheng-Ru Yang, “China’s Hierarchical Foreign Relation,” *Central News Agency*, 2018, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/firstnews/201811210244.aspx>.

<sup>57</sup> Kanti Bajpai, “Narendra Modi’s Pakistan and China Policy: Assertive Bilateral Diplomacy, Active Coalition Diplomacy,” *International Affairs*, vol. 93, no. 1, 2017, pp. 69-91.

than dichotomy.<sup>58</sup> However, the big picture would still be the latent confrontation between the two groups. In this case, Modi was again provided legitimacy and autonomy of adopting diversionary policy. These policies seemed reasonable under the international structure of a bipolar system, and wouldn't bear the risk of stimulating any domestic Hindu nationalist, since China was a close friend with Pakistan.

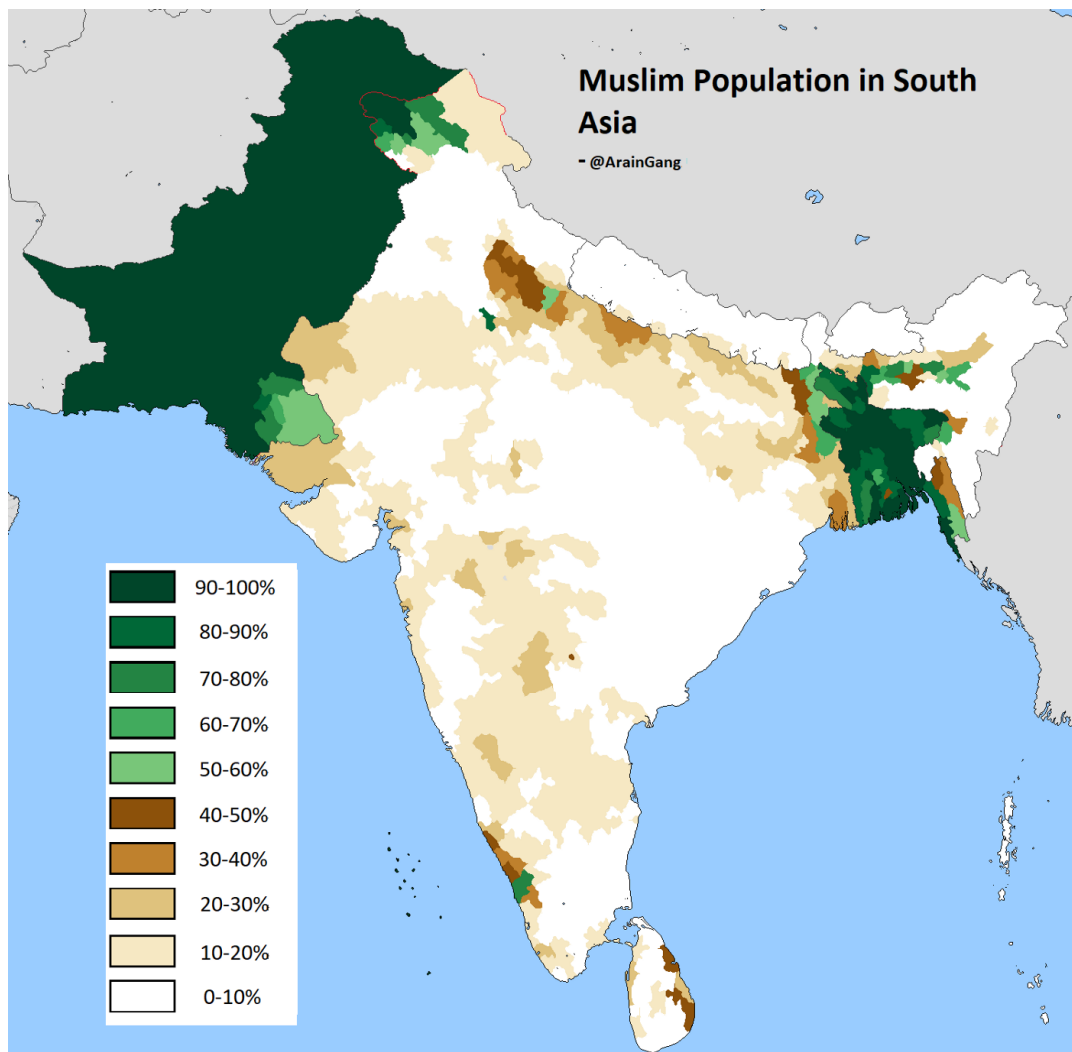
So why didn't Modi just pick Pakistan as his target of diversionary foreign policy, he had to bear the risk of worsening its relation with China, the top trading partner of India. The first reason, I would argue, is the target audience of the diversionary policy. Despite the fact that India is a Hindu-majority country, there are still around 14.2 percent Muslims spreading around India, consisting the biggest group of minorities (see Figure 10).<sup>59</sup> Although aggressive policy toward Pakistan might please the Hindu voters, but there are still more than 180 million Muslim population, who might lack of influence in the national election; however, are capable of swaying the result at local election in certain provinces.

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<sup>58</sup> Despite the historic burden and Hindutva ideology, India and Pakistan were not completely at war. Some peaceful dialogues and meet ups still took place under Modi administration, such as Modi's meet up with Nawaz Sharif during the World Cup of cricket in 2015 and the meeting of both Foreign Secretaries in 2016.; Jayanth Jacob, "Narendra Modi calls Nawaz Sharif, Opens New Indo-Pak Innings," *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/narendra-modi-calls-nawaz-sharif-opens-new-indo-pak-innings/story-or5wdgt2opkjjivRNVkbtL.html>.; Harmeet Shah Singh, "Indian Prime Minister Makes Surprise Visit, Meets with Pakistani Counterpart," *CNN*, 2015, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/25/asia/india-pm-visits-pakistan/index.html>.

<sup>59</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook: India," *Government of the United States of America*, 2021, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/india/#people-and-society>.

Figure 7- Muslim Population in South Asia



Source: ArainGang, 2019, <https://araingang.medium.com/muslim-population-in-south-asia-a8aafdf8040d>.

Furthermore, the tactic of labelling Muslims as enemy would not only harm the support base of Muslims, but also lose the votes from the moderates, who are not Muslims per se but strongly emphasize them in the country. It is the primary side-effect which would cost the rule party some local elections.

Another concern would be whether the scale of conflict stimulated by diversionary policy is manageable. If India pick up a fight with Pakistan on purpose, the chance of it escalating into a full-blown war is much bigger than the border skirmish with China.



It would be much riskier since Modi is not capable of guarantee a victory, and it may lead to a fiercer domestic turmoil. Moreover, Modi also has to take care of its reputation on the international level, which would be defiled if they figure out that he starts the war deliberately. In comparison, picking up a fight with China would be not only manageable but less risky.

### 2.3.2 Russia

During Cold War, India kept a relatively intimate relation with the Soviet Union. In 1947, Soviet Union established a formal diplomatic tie with newborn India. Prime Minister Nehru visited Moscow for the first time in 1955, in return, Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party at that time, visited back to New Delhi months later.<sup>60</sup> It was during the trip Khrushchev expressed his support to India's territory integrity, including the disputed areas of Kashmir and Goa, the latter was occupied by the Portuguese at that time.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the non-aligned principles set up by Nehru, India remained a cordial relation with Soviet Union. The main reason was India and Soviet Union had no conflict of interests. Instead, Soviet Union had been trying to foster closer ties with Third World nations, and India seemed to be an appropriate target to start. Their support resulted in their declaration of neutrality during the border war of 1962 between India and China was taking place.<sup>62</sup> It led to serious repercussion of Sino-Soviet Union relation since China had considered them one of their closest allies. The truth was, India had received

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<sup>60</sup> Jyotsna Bakshi, "Russia and India: From Ideology to Geopolitics, 1947-1998," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2010, pp. 50-90.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Arun Mohanty, "Reassessing the Soviet Stand on the Indo-China Conflict," *Russia Beyond*, 2012, [https://www.rbth.com/articles/2012/10/25/reassessing\\_the\\_soviet\\_stand\\_on\\_the\\_indo-china\\_conflict\\_18635](https://www.rbth.com/articles/2012/10/25/reassessing_the_soviet_stand_on_the_indo-china_conflict_18635).

more assistance from Soviet Union than China by the 1960s.<sup>63</sup>

The bilateral relation peaked when the two signed “Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation” in 1971, which clearly stated the mutual respect of their foreign policy and the determination of upgrading their bilateral relation into the next stage.<sup>64</sup> Their friendship maintained for more than three decades, even after the dissolution of Soviet Union, Russia inherited its intimacy with India.

They signed the “Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership” while President of Russia, Valdimir Putin, visited New Delhi in 2000, reaffirmed their good relation would prevail to the new century.<sup>65</sup> Putin himself even wrote an article, elaborating on India’s position on Russia’s political agenda, and describing the declaration “a historic step” for the two countries.<sup>66</sup>

India equally cherished their relation with Russia. When President Dmitry Medvedev of Russia visited New Delhi in 2010, their bilateral relation was elevated to a “Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.” Their cooperation was multifaceted, involving a various of sectors and fields. The primary mechanism of interaction between the two governments is through Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission (IRGIC), which meets annually and is composed of two parts.<sup>67</sup> The first

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<sup>63</sup> Robert H. Donaldson, “India: The Soviet Stake in Stability,” *Asian Survey*, vol. 12, no. 6, 1972, pp. 475-492.

<sup>64</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, “Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation,” *Government of India*, 1971, <https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/5139/Treaty+of>.

<sup>65</sup> Embassy of India, Moscow, Russia, “Bilateral Relations: India-Russia Relations,” *Government of India*, <https://indianembassy-moscow.gov.in/bilateral-relations-india-russia.php>.

<sup>66</sup> Vladimir Putin, “For Russia, Deepening Friendship with India is a Top Foreign Policy Priority,” *The Hindu*, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/for-russia-deepening-friendship-with-india-is-a-top-foreign-policy-priority/article4232857.ece>.

<sup>67</sup> Rajeev Sharma, “Top Indian Diplomat Explains Russia’s Importance to India,” *Russia Beyond*, 2012, [https://www.rbth.com/articles/2012/11/28/top\\_indian\\_diplomat\\_explains\\_russias\\_importance\\_to\\_india\\_19391](https://www.rbth.com/articles/2012/11/28/top_indian_diplomat_explains_russias_importance_to_india_19391).

part covers low politics such as culture, education, technology and trade. The other half mainly deals with defense cooperation. Besides comprehensive departmental dialogues, the India-Russia Summit also takes place every year since 2000, ensuring a smooth communication between the two leaders.

Needless to say, that Russia is a strategic partner whom India valued a lot. Not only did they give India full support on pursuing a permanent seat in UNSC,<sup>68</sup> Russia has been the major exporter of weaponry to India. Table 7 indicates that Russia's arms export to India composed of over half of the total India weaponry import. Therefore, Russia's perspective poses a huge impact on India's foreign policy, particularly toward China, another strategic partner of Russia's.<sup>69</sup>

Table 2- India's Arms Imports, 2014-2020. (Million U.S. Dollars)

|                       | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | Total |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| <b>France</b>         | 62   | 123  | 117  | 411  | 192  | 712  | 1013 | 2630  |
| <b>Germany</b>        | 28   | 59   | 40   | 33   | 5    | 71   | 74   | 309   |
| <b>Israel</b>         | 157  | 377  | 736  | 688  | 108  | 133  | 107  | 2306  |
| <b>Italy</b>          | 11   | 6    | 3    | 3    | -    | -    | 3    | 25    |
| <b>Kyrgyzstan</b>     | -    | 4    | 5    | 5    | -    | -    | -    | 14    |
| <b>Netherlands</b>    | 10   | 10   | 10   | -    | -    | -    | -    | 29    |
| <b>Russia</b>         | 1719 | 1961 | 1887 | 1411 | 1102 | 1182 | 969  | 10230 |
| <b>South Africa</b>   | -    | -    | -    | 11   | 11   | 16   | 15   | 53    |
| <b>South Korea</b>    | -    | -    | -    | -    | 26   | 190  | 216  | 432   |
| <b>Switzerland</b>    | 31   | 25   | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | 56    |
| <b>Ukraine</b>        | 48   | 48   | 34   | 14   | 14   | -    | -    | 158   |
| <b>United Kingdom</b> | 150  | 150  | 130  | 71   | 4    | 13   | 10   | 528   |

<sup>68</sup> Mohammed Badrul Alam, "Contextualising India-Russia Relations," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2019, pp. 48-59.

<sup>69</sup> Vinay Kaura, "Deepening Relationship between Russia and China," *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2019, pp. 49-66.

|                      |      |     |    |     |    |     |     |      |
|----------------------|------|-----|----|-----|----|-----|-----|------|
| <b>United States</b> | 1119 | 265 | 42 | 252 | 23 | 748 | 392 | 2841 |
|----------------------|------|-----|----|-----|----|-----|-----|------|

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), *Arms Transfer Database*, <https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php>.

It was pretty clear for the Indian government that Russia would prefer India and China to cooperate. These two states were both strategically significant for Russia, since they both established a strong partnership with Russia.<sup>70</sup> In 2019, China upgraded their ties with Russia when President Xi visited Moscow, describing their partnership as the “comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination in new era.”<sup>71</sup> These three states were underneath several international regimes, such as the BRICs and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The meeting among the foreign minister of the three countries were also frequently held, which was part of the RIC framework,<sup>72</sup> encompassing conferences and working groups of a various of issues.

For Russia’s best interest, they would do whatever it takes to maintain a peaceful relation between India and China. However, as the Sino-Russian tie seemed solid, Russia had its reservation of this relation. Since it seems that we are heading to a bipolar system which U.S. and China are the two hegemons, Moscow will not be willing to be regarded as a subservient of Beijing.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, the Belt Road Initiative has encroached the Central Asian region, where Russia considered as their traditional sphere of influence. It also directly went against with Putin’s initiative: the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Liang Yu, “China, Russia Agree to Upgrade Relations for New Era,” *XinHua Net*, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-06/06/c\\_138119879.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-06/06/c_138119879.htm).

<sup>72</sup> Vinay Kaura, *op. cit.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Sebastien Peyrouse, “The Evolution of Russia’s Views on the Belt and Road Initiative,” *Asia Policy*, vol. 24, 2017, pp. 96-102.; Alexander Korolev, “Systemic Balancing and Regional Hedging: China-Russia Relation,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2016, pp. 375-397.

The complicated trilateral relation among Russia, India and China provided Modi the flexibility and resilience he needed for his foreign policy. Russia, on one hand, could act as a buffer between China and India, guarantees that they would not have a comprehensive conflict. On the other hand, Russia's latent intention of balancing against China means that they would not prevent India from engaging low level skirmish with China. In short, Russia will not be a hindrance of Modi's diversionary policy since it doesn't violate their national interests.

### 2.3.3 United States

As a universally recognized hegemon, the attitude of the United States has been a decisive factor affecting India's foreign policy. Before Modi took office, the bilateral relation between U.S. and India which was then led by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh from the Congress Party was volatile. Although the relation seemed to peak at the time when Civil Nuclear Agreement was signed in 2008, everything went downhill ever since.

For the UPA government,<sup>75</sup> they preferred the policy of hedging when it comes to the emerging competition between the United States and China. The main reason was their nostalgic feelings toward the non-alignment policy. It would be simply unacceptable for UPA to take side in the looming Sino-America clash, they believed staying neutral would best fulfill India's national policy. Moreover, non-aligned was regarded as a tenet for the Congress Party, it would never be easy for them to abandon the core belief they succeeded from Nehru. As a result, with America's clear intention to "rebalance" Asia, UPA government was unwilling and unable to give their

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<sup>75</sup> The United Progressive Alliance, a political coalition led by the Indian National Congress. It was formed after the 2004 general election.

unequivocal response and support.

Modi, on the other hand, was not burdened by non-aligned framework. He was determined to get the bilateral relation back on track, reflecting on his frequent meeting with President Barack Obama in the first two years of his term.<sup>76</sup> The first summit they had was when Modi visited Washington in September 2014. During that visit, his determination of ameliorating the bilateral relation was completely shown. He mentioned all of the issue areas which US and India had the potential to collaborate on, including the development of technology, defense relations, security of the Indo-Pacific region and so on.<sup>77</sup>

In response, Obama described their relation as “global partnership,” and underlined that “their partnership would define the twenty-first century”.<sup>78</sup> In 2015, Modi even invited President Obama to visit India during their Republic Day celebration, making Obama the first US president to participate in such a remarkable holiday of India. In August 2016, the two sides signed Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA),<sup>79</sup> marked a significant shift of India’s defense relations with the United States. When Obama stepped down from the office, Indo-US relation was at a relative apogee, the future of the two countries was as promising as ever. Little did

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<sup>76</sup> Modi met with President Barack Obama four times in different occasions by June 2016, while his predecessors each had only one meet up with their American counterparts.; Harsh V. Pant, Yogesh Joshi, “Indo-US Relations under Modi: The Strategic Logic Underlying the Embrace,” *International Affairs*, vol. 93, no. 1, 2017, pp. 133-146.

<sup>77</sup> The Obama White House, “The President meets with the Prime Minister of India,” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KM\\_YqiKr7Ww](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KM_YqiKr7Ww).

<sup>78</sup> Narendra Modi and Barack Obama, “A Renewed US-India Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *The Washington Post*, 2014, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/narendra-modi-and-barack-obama-a-us-india-partnership-for-the-21st-century/2014/09/29/dac66812-4824-11e4-891d-713f052086a0\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/narendra-modi-and-barack-obama-a-us-india-partnership-for-the-21st-century/2014/09/29/dac66812-4824-11e4-891d-713f052086a0_story.html).

<sup>79</sup> It was a version of Logistics Support Agreement (LSA) for India, which the United States signed with states it has close military cooperation with. It was called the three foundational agreements along with Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) and Basic and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA).; “What is LEMOA,” *The Hindu*, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/What-is-LEMOA/article15604647.ece>.

they know; the upcoming Trump administration would bring their relation into a new peak.

Trump showed his emphasis on India's strategic significance in an early stage of his presidency. The first Secretary of Defense under Trump administration, James Mattis, visited India in September 2017, marked the importance of India on Trump administration's agenda. During his visit, he publicly declared India as a "pillar of regional stability and security".<sup>80</sup> Following his step, the first Secretary of States of Trump administration, Rex Tillerson, visited India on the subsequent month. He stated that U.S. would support India's emergence as a leading power while he met Indian External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj.<sup>81</sup> Before he took the trip, he also gave a speech about South Asia, which he reiterated the close ties US had with India, simultaneously blamed PRC for posing a threat on current world order, and Pakistan on their lack of effort on combating terrorism.<sup>82</sup>

It was an obvious sign of U.S. considering India as a global partner and shared the same concern with India with China on the rise and Sino-Pakistan relation getting more intimate. When Modi visited U.S. again in 2017, despite a considerably different political landscape in Washington, DC, they could still find common ground for U.S. and India to cooperate, particularly on issues like counterterrorism, national defense and maritime security.<sup>83</sup> The two-plus-two talks among top foreign affairs and defense

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<sup>80</sup> Elizabeth Roche, "James Mattis in India; US Commits to Transfer Advanced Technology for Make in India," *Livemint.com*, 2017, <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/07dee1V8WtcWIYPFcFesIM/US-commits-to-transfer-advanced-defence-technology-for-Make.html>.

<sup>81</sup> Julie Mccarthy, "Tillerson Visit Highlights India's Evolving Relationship with U.S.," *National Public Radio*, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/10/26/560224471/tillerson-visit-highlights-indias-evolving-relationship-with-u-s>.

<sup>82</sup> Gardiner Harris, "Tillerson Hails Ties with India But Criticizes China and Pakistan," *The New York Times*, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/us/politics/tillerson-india-china-pakistan.html>.

<sup>83</sup> Sumit Ganguly, "Obama, Trump and Indian Foreign Policy under Modi," *International Politics*,



officials of the two states reaffirmed the shared interest they had, which was ensuring an open Indo-Pacific and enlarged their cooperation in terms of national defense.<sup>84</sup> In spite of being implicit, the major objective of the dialogue was a preparation for the two states to work side-by-side in the face of China's threat in the region.

Some skirmishes between the two countries still existed, Trump administration expressed their concern of the huge trade deficit America had against India. However, the security concerns outweighed all the disputes between them, the bilateral relation was on a positive pathway. Especially their common concern of an emerging PRC, kept cementing their relation, propelling their collaboration and bolstering the negotiation between the two countries on other issues.

Such a supportive attitude of the U.S. government reflected on their support of India in the Sino-Indian border disputes. When the Doklam dispute took place, U.S. failed to response in the first place due to the internal strife they had at that time. Trump personally was under investigation for the Russian interference of the 2016 presidential election.<sup>85</sup> Nonetheless, we could feel the latent support from the U.S. Pacific Commander, Admiral Harry Harris, stating that China were coercive to their neighbors. Japan, one of the most significant regional partners of the U.S., also voiced out their support through their ambassador in New Delhi, who stated that "all parties involved should not take unilateral attempts to alter the status quo."<sup>86</sup> Based on the context, he

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2021, pp. 1-15.

<sup>84</sup> Gardiner Harris, "Trump's Rough Edges Complicates Trip by Pompeo and Mattis to India," *The New York Times*, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/02/world/asia/trump-modi-india-relations-.html>.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas F. Lynch III, "A Failure of Strategic Vision: U.S. Policy and the Doklam Border Dispute," *Strategic Insights, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University*, 2017, <https://inss.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/1428958/a-failure-of-strategic-vision-us-policy-and-the-doklam-border-dispute/>.

<sup>86</sup> Prabhash K. Dutta, "Why Japan Lent Support to India Against China over Doklam Standoff," *India Today*, 2017, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/japan-india-china-doklam-standoff-1030287->

was clearly referring to China's attempt of building roads around the Doklam area.

Trump administration became more straightforward in the next Sino-Indian border conflict. Alice Wells, the Principal Assistant Secretary of State for Central and South Asia, illuminated that they regarded PRC as the aggressor in this conflict.<sup>87</sup> Another assertive support from U.S. was when U.S. ambassador to India, Kenneth Juster, visited the state of Arunachal Pradesh, where was considered a disputed territory between India and China. Placing his feet on a disputed area which was claimed by India sent a clear message of America's support for India's governance and sovereignty over the region.

In conclusion, the U.S.'s inclination toward India was bipartisan. Both Obama and Trump administration had showed their support on several different occasions. The binding power between the two states were not only from the possibility of cooperation in several issue areas, but mainly due to their shared misgivings about PRC. The concerns they had were serious enough for them to stop wrangling over certain issues, and sustain a strategic partnership.

I believe the firm support from U.S. gave Modi an opportunity to adopt diversionary approaches while they were needed. Attitude of the U.S. government toward PRC provided Modi a certain extent of legitimacy to be aggressive. He could attribute his policy to the acquiescence of the United States, which would certainly alleviate the backfire he might get with his foreign policy.

## 2.4 Conclusion

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2017-08-18.

<sup>87</sup> Sunit Ganguly, *op. cit.*

In this chapter, I examined all of the possible external factors which may pose an impact on Modi's China policy. From a historic perspective, India and China's relation oscillated between partnership and adversary. A more accurate way to describe might be that there were some issues which they were comfortable to cooperate, while other issues were unnegotiable. As for the border issues, the most contentious topic between the two, we learnt that they had signed several agreements to tackle with their differences. However, we could still see skirmishes after those consensuses were forged.

These ups and downs of bilateral relation actually create an abundant room for Modi administration to adopt diversionary foreign policy. First, historic disputes are always the best material to instigate domestic audience's emotion. Furthermore, from BJP and Modi's foreign policy guidelines, we understand that Modi will not feel burdened to publicly confront China for public attention. The agreements and economic ties would restrict the two from actually crossing the line, upgrading a regional skirmish into a comprehensive war.

As for China, its ambition of expanding the sphere of influence most certainly threatened India's national interest.<sup>88</sup> The concern of China's "imperial overreach" was prevalently seen in Indian media, provoking a negative wave of public opinion toward China.<sup>89</sup> Under such circumstance, Modi government would gain the legitimacy of taking advantage of the border conflict to divert domestic audience's attention. Moreover, despite the hostility mentioned above, China has never regarded India as a serious threat of national security. Beijing has been optimistic and patient with their

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<sup>88</sup> Gulshan Sachdeva, "Indian Perceptions of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative," *International Studies*, vol. 55, no. 4, pp. 285-296.

<sup>89</sup> Even before Modi took office, Indian's perception toward China was quite negative. In 2013, over 80% of Indian considered China as a security threat toward India.; Rory Medcalf, "Indian Poll 2013," *Lowy Institute*, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/india-poll-2013>.

relation with New Delhi; meanwhile, they were also exerting their economic prowess to prevent New Delhi from stepping their red line.

The asymmetrical perception between the two had gained some space for Modi to enact diversionary foreign policy. He was capable of demonstrate his determination of guarding their territory by deploying military force into the border as long as he didn't step on China's red line. Small scale of conflicts alongside the border was also allowed since it would hardly turn into an actual war under current situation. An outbreak of actual war may lead his political career into an uncertainty, and might cost him disproportionately while his goal was only to divert the attention of the public.

As for the foreign stakeholders, all three states pose different extent of impact on Modi's decision; nonetheless, they all encourage him to take diversionary approach into consideration in a way. For U.S. and Russia, India's attempt of picking small fights with China somewhat was in favor of their interest. U.S. was not willing to see the two Asian great powers being too intimate, since they were basically in a comprehensive competition with China.

Russia, despite being a tradition ally of both countries, would also benefit from the India-China skirmishes, which provided him the chance to play a pivotal role in their collaboration. Another loyal ally of China, Pakistan, also incidentally facilitated Modi's determination of such policy. It would not be the primary target due to the complex historic entanglements with India and the volatility of conflicts. Therefore, the hostility toward Pakistan could be redirected to China intentionally. Diversionary policy would work effectively if the citizens hold strong emotional against their target, and the alliance between Pakistan and China certainly ensure this condition to be realized.

To put it in a nutshell, some prerequisites were met for a successful diversionary policy. The public opinion, the academics, the government officials as well as Modi himself were all prone to a more aggressive China policy. Despite some limits were imposed to a certain scale result from their dependence on China in terms of trade and economy, skirmishes and frictions with China still seemed inevitable under Modi administration.



## Chapter 3- The Internal Mechanism

In this chapter, I plan to touch upon all of the possible factors affecting the outcome of Modi's China policy. Level analysis will be adopted to help us gain a more comprehensive look of the mechanism. Since I am focusing on the internal mechanism of the policy making, only individual level and domestic level are analyzed in this chapter. I will begin with how the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi himself affected the policy. In the first section, I will focus on his past experience as well as his early political career, and analyze the correlation between these experiences and his China policy. Then, I would introduce Modi's foreign policy framework, which sheds light on Act East Policy and his construction of the great power status of India.

For the domestic level, it could be roughly divided into two huge categories, the first is about the role those governmental departments played in the decision-making dynamic. The three departments which I believed are deeply involved in the China policy making procedure are the Department of External Affairs, the Department of Defense and the Department of Commerce and Industry. The stances of these apparatuses would be examined to understand the dynamic of decision-making within the Indian government.

Other domestic actors would also be discussed, such as Indian National Congress (INC), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the influence of think tanks. The first two are the main political parties in India, which notably shaped India's foreign policy. The latter would be particularly essential since it is the current ruling party of India. Foreign policy of the previous Prime Minister who also came from this party, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, would also be mentioned in this section, so that we could get a clearer look

of the spirit behind BJP's policy. Finally, think tanks also play crucial roles in the India policy making dynamic, analyzing their impact on Modi administration is also necessary for us to understand his diversionary foreign strategy.

### 3.1 Individual Level

#### 3.1.1 Modi's Ideology

Modi has always been considered as a prominent figure of Hindutva in India. His values and principles profoundly connected with his background and experiences (see Table 1).<sup>1</sup> Before he became Prime Minister, he worked for RSS for more than thirty years, where largely constructed his political value. His pro-Hindu ideologies, very different from the secular ones from the Congress Party, were also what made him outstanding in the 2014 campaign of Prime Minister.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in order to understand Modi's foreign policy as Prime Minister, the impact of his Hindutva should be taken into consideration.

The second approach of understanding Modi's style of foreign policy is through observing his policy while he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat. It consisted a major part of his political career before he was elected the Prime Minister. Through the 14 years of his term of service, economy development has been on the top of his agenda. When he was running for Prime Minister in 2014, his economy success in Gujarat had gained widespread publicity and become a prominent feature of his campaign.<sup>3</sup> In short,

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<sup>1</sup> Andy Marino, *Narendra Modi: A Political Biography*, (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2014,) pp. 2-38.

<sup>2</sup> Pradeep K. Chhibber & Susan L. Ostermann, "The BJP's Fragile Mandate: Modi and Vote Mobilizers in the 2014 General Elections," *Studies in Indian Politics*, vol. 2, no.2, 2014, pp. 137-151.

<sup>3</sup> Jivanta Schottli & Markus Pauli, "Modi-economics and the Politics of Institutional Change in the Indian Economy," *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2016, pp. 154-169.



two main aspects would be discussed while analyzing the impact of Modi himself to his foreign policy, namely, his religious background and the economic-oriented policies.

Table 3- Modi's Early Life and Political Career before Prime Minister

| Year | Age | Event  | Remarks   |
|------|-----|--|---|
| 1950 | 0   | Born in Vadnagar, Bombay State, Republic of India. <sup>4</sup>    | The first Prime Minister born after India's independence. |
| 1958 | 8   | Attended local youth meeting of the RSS. <sup>5</sup>              |   |
| 1967 | 17  | Left Vadnagar to travel around Northern India.                     |   |
| 1971 | 21  | Joined a <i>Jana Sangh</i> protest ( <i>satyagraha</i> ) in Delhi. | Modi's first recorded political activity.                 |
| 1978 | 28  | Got promoted as a regional organizer of RSS.                       |   |
| 1983 | 33  | Received a Master of Arts degree in political science.             | Graduated from Gujarat University.                        |
| 1986 | 37  | Elected as the organizing secretary of BJP's Gujarat unit          |   |
| 1990 | 40  | Became a member of the BJP's National Election Committee.          |   |
| 1995 | 45  | Elected as BJP national secretary.                                 | BJP won the state assembly election in the same year.     |
| 2001 | 51  | Sworn in as Chief Minister of Gujarat.                             |   |

<sup>4</sup> Andy Marino, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Andy Marino, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

|             |    |  |  |
|-------------|----|--|--|
| <b>2002</b> | 52 | Won the reelection by a landslide. <sup>6</sup>          | The Gujarat Riot taken place in February. <sup>7</sup> |
| <b>2007</b> | 57 | Won the third term.                                      |  |
| <b>2014</b> | 64 | Elected as the 14 <sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of India. |  |

Source: Andy Marino, *Narendra Modi: A Political Biography*.

Some people would describe Modi's implementation of policies as reflection of his populist ideology, result from two classic features of populism which could also be seen in his governance, anti-elitism and anti-pluralism.<sup>8</sup> Anti-elitism derived from his background, as the son of a tea-seller, Modi is diametrically distinct from his political opponents, mainly from the Congress Party, whom are often regarded as the "elites" in the society. The difference was crystal clear during the 2014 campaign, when the other candidate of Prime Minister was from the family which had repeatedly take office throughout the history.<sup>9</sup>

Anti-pluralism was reflected on the religious polarization situation during Modi's term of Chief Minister in Gujarat. The ethnic violence took place in 2002 claimed more than 1000 lives of Muslims in the province, and Modi was widely condemned due to his inaction in this catastrophe.<sup>10</sup> After the incident, Modi was regarded as a populist

<sup>6</sup> Election Commission of India, "Statistical Report on General Election, 2002 to the Legislative Assembly of Gujarat," *Government of India*.

<sup>7</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, "Communal Riots in Gujarat: The State at Risk," *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics*, vol. 17, 2003, pp. 1-20.

<sup>8</sup> Jan-Werner Muller, *What is Populism*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016,) pp.5-12.; Johannes Plagemann, Sandra Destradi, "Populism and Foreign Policy: The Case of India," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 15, 2019, pp. 283-301.

<sup>9</sup> Rahul Gandhi is from the renowned Gandhi family. His father (Rajiv Gandhi, PM 1984-1989), grandmother (Indira Gandhi, PM 1966-1977 and 1980-1984) and great grandfather (Jawaharlal Nehru PM 1947-1964) were all Prime Ministers of India.; Prime Minister Office, "Former Prime Ministers," *Government of India*, <https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/former-prime-ministers/>.

<sup>10</sup> Raheel Dhattiwala and Michael Biggs, "The Political Logic of Ethnic Violence, The Anti-Muslim Pogrom in Gujarat, 2002," *Politics and Society*, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 483-516.

leader, who represented the value of Hindutva the best.

Such background posed a huge impact on his style of foreign policy. Just like all other populist leaders, he enjoyed unorthodox means of communication and propaganda. Through social media, he could directly call upon his proponents, construct a sense of cohesion which most of the time referred himself as the only legitimate representative of the “True Indian People.”<sup>11</sup> Nationalist sentiments were much easier to stimulate under such circumstance. Hindu nationalism also resulted in a hostile attitude toward people who are not “True Indian” by their definition, often referred to Muslims.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, they cared a lot about the disputes they have historically with Muslim communities, one of the most prominent one would be the territorial dispute of Kashmir between India and Pakistan. The strong emotion of their territorial integrity proliferated to other related issues, including the dispute with China. This is why border conflicts with either Pakistan or China would be an ideal source of diversionary tactics.

Furthermore, Modi also created a highly centralized decision-making mechanism. It was a key component of Modi’s term since he served as the Chief Minister, and remained as one of the most salient features of his administration.<sup>13</sup> Modi tended to determine the policy himself rather than sharing the power with his staff member, scholars described that the key levers of foreign policy of India was located in the Prime Minister’s Office instead of where it should be, Ministry of External Affairs.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Johannes Plagemann, Sandra Destradi, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Suhas Palshikar, “The BJP and Hindu Nationalism: Centrist Politics and Majoritarian Impulses,” *Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2015, pp. 719-735.

<sup>13</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, Louise Tillin, “Populism in India,” In *The Oxford Handbook on Populism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) pp. 179-197.

<sup>14</sup> Sumit Ganguly, “Has Modi Truly Changed India’s Foreign Policy,” *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 131-143.

It was quite intuitive that Modi would hog all the decision-making power, since he regarded himself as the legitimate representative of Hindu people, he should have the directly power to influence the direction of foreign policy. Furthermore, the character of Ministry of External Affairs was often weakened due to Modi's tendency of making major announcement through the BJP's channel.<sup>15</sup> Undoubtfully, these arrangements elevated the importance of BJP in the foreign policy decision making, meanwhile enfeebled the role of MEA.

As for the economic accomplishments, Modi was famous of his lead on the growth of Gujarat while he was the Chief Minister. It was best reflected during his campaign, when he advertised on "the Gujarat Mode," persuading the voters that his past success experiences would help India overcome any upcoming recession. The term "Modi-nomics" also went viral through his consistent advocacy, which indicated the core spirits of his economy policy since he was the Chief Minister: enhancing the business environment of India, investing in infrastructure and focusing on manufacturing.<sup>16</sup>

He has acknowledged the importance of China on the development of the economy since he was Chief Minister. Modi visited China four times in his term, and each of the trip was focused on the investment that China could bring to Gujarat. In fact, his strategy reached great accomplishments, the majority of China's investments were concentrated in Gujarat.<sup>17</sup> On his visit to China in 2001, he strongly appealed to the investments of Chinese corporations, stating that Gujarat would be the most transparent

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<sup>15</sup> Suhasini Haidar, "South Block in the Shade," *The Hindu*, 2016, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/south-block-in-the-shade/article8591271.ece>.

<sup>16</sup> Jivanta Schottli and Markus Pauli, "Modi-nomics and the Politics of Institutional Change in the Indian Economy," *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 154-169.

<sup>17</sup> Shannon Tiezzi, "Why China Embraces Narendra Modi," *The Diplomat*, 2014, <https://thediplomat.com/2014/05/why-china-embraces-narendra-modi/>.

and stable environment that they could find in India.<sup>18</sup> The investor meeting was a success, more than 180 representatives of Chinese companies attended, committed to invest on power sector and the infrastructure of India.

The economic achievements were remarkable. The total amount of investments reached 67 billion US dollar at the end of 2011, a nearly 20% increase compared to the number in 2009, a large share of those could be ascribed to China's investment in Gujarat. At the same year, Gujarat received proposals worth more than 15 trillion rupees.<sup>19</sup> By the Vibrant Gujarat Summit in 2013, the province had attracted more than 20 trillion rupees investment proposals.<sup>20</sup> For the public, these outcomes were achieved owing to Modi's foresight. In short, the successful story of Gujarat led Modi to the seat of Prime Minister.

In conclusion, the Hindutva ideology and populist style of Modi led to a centralized decision-making system. Modi himself got the overwhelming leverage in foreign policy. Among all the topics, national security has always been a vote clincher, especially when the nationalist sentiment was ubiquitous in India.<sup>21</sup> Hence, when the administration or Modi himself felt in need, they could also withdraw some political credits from conflicts with Pakistan or China.

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<sup>18</sup> Anath Krishnan, "Modi Courts Chinese Investment, Showcasing the Gujarat Model," *The Hindu*, 2011, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/modi-courts-chinese-investment-showcasing-the-gujarat-model/article2612458.ece>.

<sup>19</sup> Anand Adhikari, "Supersize Gujarat," *Business Today India*, 2011, <https://www.businesstoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/gujarat-is-indias-new-factory-hub-20852-2011-01-13>.

<sup>20</sup> "Vibrant Gujarat 2013: Industrialists Laud Gujarat CM Narendra Modi but Shy Away From 'Modi for PM' Chorus," *The Economic Times*, 2013, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/vibrant-gujarat-2013-industrialists-laud-gujarat-cm-narendra-modi-but-shy-away-from-modi-for-pm-chorus/articleshow/17979917.cms>.

<sup>21</sup> Anna Kim, "The New Nationalism in Modi's India," *The Diplomat*, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/12/the-new-nationalism-in-modis-india/>.

On the other hand, economic connection with China was also extremely critical for Modi administration, they never expected a full-blown confrontation with China, which would absolutely harm their economic interests. Striking a balance between the two was not only essential, but also a challenge. To put it in a nutshell, Modi's diversionary foreign policy was mainly driven by his Hindutva ideology,<sup>22</sup> under the prerequisite of not harming the economic ties with China.

### 3.1.2 Modi's Foreign Policy Framework

This section would primarily focus on Modi's mainstream foreign policy strategy. In the 2014 election manifesto of BJP, we could see that Modi's team set their agenda on three main goals: first, enhancing the economic ties with some key states; second, enlarging New Delhi's influence worldwide; and third, coping the security issue regarding border states, especially China and Pakistan.<sup>23</sup>

Modi's policy on the economic front is the most widely discussed, also known as "Act East Policy". The key states mentioned in the manifesto referred to Southeast Asian states, which had become India's emphasis of foreign strategy since "Look East Policy" was initiated by Prime Minister Narsimha Rao in 1991. The term "Act East Policy" was first brought up in 2014, when the External Minister Sushma Swaraj was visiting Vietnam. In the same year, Prime Minister Modi gave a speech at the East Asia Summit to clarify the term, stating that the policy would begin a new era of economic development, industrialization and trade.<sup>24</sup> Although the policy was first intended to

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<sup>22</sup> John Harris, "Hindu Nationalism in Action; The Bharatiya Janata Party and Indian Politics," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2015, pp. 712-718.

<sup>23</sup> BJP's Election Manifesto, 2014, <http://cdn.narendramodi.in/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Manifesto2014highlights.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Rahul Mishra, "From Look East to Act East: Transitions in India's Eastward Engagement," In *International Relations and Asia's Southern Tier*, (Berlin: Springer, 2018,) pp.310-321.

put more emphasis on economic aspect, the Ministry of External Affairs endowed the policy with cultural and political connotation.

In a statement published by Ministry of External Affairs in 2015, it clearly stated that despite Act East Policy was first an economic initiative, it has gained political, cultural and strategic dimension. While broadening the economic cooperation with countries in Southeast Asia as well as Japan, Republic of Korea and Australia, India would simultaneously seek for chances to upgrade their relations to strategic partnership.<sup>25</sup>

In this statement, the status of Act East Policy was unequivocally elevated from an economic policy to a regional strategy, India was seeking a greater role in East Asia, meanwhile, it also showed India's ambition of involving itself in the multilateral regime around Pacific rim, such as Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and East Asian Summit (EAS). Moreover, the Ministry has demonstrated on the concrete steps of reaching such goals with a multifaceted agenda including contacts among cultural institutions, people-to-people contacts, measures regarding trades and physical infrastructure cooperation.<sup>26</sup>

Based on the previous descriptions, it would be hard to ignore the latent intention of Modi administration. Despite without directly mentioning, China was often regarded as the target of containment under Act East policy. In other words, the policy was considered as a measure to balance against China's leverage in Southeast Asia.<sup>27</sup> In fact, most countries shared the concern of China's expansion in such region, India could

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<sup>25</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, "Question No. 4062. Act East Policy," *Government of India*, 2015, <https://www.mea.gov.in/lok-sabha.htm?dtl/26237/question+no4062+act+east+policy>.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Sumit Ganguly, "Has Modi Truly Changed India's Foreign Policy," *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2017, pp. 131-143.



easily build alliance with those countries including Japan, Korea and Australia. Their common concern on China's revisionist actions gave India a great opportunity to strengthen its ties with these states and build a united front of counterbalancing the rising China.

One of the salient examples was the Arbitration of South China Sea in 2014, which the government of the Philippines brought the case to the Arbitral Tribunal in accusation of People's Republic of China's violation on the United Nation's Convention on the Law of Sea. From the announcement of Ministry of External Affairs, they reiterated their support on the freedom of navigation and over flight, based on the principles of international laws.<sup>28</sup> Despite their discourse sounded neutral, it was quite noticeable that they were on the Philippines' side when China claimed sovereignty on South China Sea. Not to mentioned that India has held several military drills countries such as Japan, Australia and the United States. All of these actions indicated India's purpose of balancing China's growing presence in the region.<sup>29</sup>

The second half of Modi's foreign policy doctrine showed his ambition of enlarging India's leverage on the international stage. India's attempt of deeper involvement in international affairs dated back to the movement of Group of Four countries (G-4). Since the end of World War Two, the United National Security Council was dominated by five permanent members (or P5): United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia and China. They have held irreplaceable seats in the council and was granted "veto" power. For decades, countries have called for reformation of the security council to tackle with modern challenges. In World Summit 2005, Japan, Brazil,

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<sup>28</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, "Statement on Award of Arbitral Tribunal on South China Sea Under Annexure VII of UNCLOS," *Government of India*, 2016, <https://reurl.cc/qgVqWq>.

<sup>29</sup> Sumit Ganguly, *op. cit.*

Germany and India decided to establish a political cooperative alliance, aiming to get a permanent seat in UNSC. It began a decades long advocacy of reforming the current structure, for India, it also marked the origination of a more active role on international stage.

After Modi took office, his explicit passionate on advancing India's status gave the movement new impetus. In September 2015, Modi hosted a meeting among the heads of states of G-4 nations, and for the first time in ten years they were discussing reformation scenarios of Security Council in person.<sup>30</sup> In the conference, Modi mentioned that the world was facing new challenges nowadays, the reformation of UNSC was essential for the council to take on new tasks. On the top of that, the world's largest democracy must be included in Security Council to create greater credibility, legitimacy and representative of the Council.<sup>31</sup> From his speech, his yearning for including India in the most powerful international institution around the world was quite explicit.

Besides the pursuit of a permanent seat in UNSC, India also strived for a more significant role in bodies of United Nation. In Modi's term, India has run in several elections to various organizations. From 2016 to 2020, India had been elected the chairman or participant for at least 19 bodies under United Nations, including Human Right Council (HRC), Executive Board of UN-Women, Economic and Social Council, International Law Commission (ILC) and Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (CNGO).<sup>32</sup> India took part in almost every major issue which the United

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<sup>30</sup> Yashwant Raj, "Modi to Host G4 Meet in Push for UN Security Council Seat," *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <https://reurl.cc/ogR3a5>.

<sup>31</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, "Remark by the Prime Minister at the G4 Summit," *Government of India*, 2015, <https://reurl.cc/eEzoNQ>.

<sup>32</sup> Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York, "India and United Nations," *Government of India*, [https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/amb/India\\_United\\_Nations\\_new.pdf](https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/amb/India_United_Nations_new.pdf).

Nation has been working on, and Indian experts also made huge contributions in their respective fields. India's presence in United Nations was growing rapidly through their miscellaneous strategy.

In conclusion, Modi's foreign policy features two dimensions. On the regional level, Modi tended to expand India's sphere of influence through Act East Policy. On the international level, Modi tried to build a deeper connection with the international society through their participation of major international organizations. These two aspects could be considered as part of India's construction of a "great power status,"<sup>33</sup> which was India's solution in the rise of China and the fall of U.S.'s hegemony.

Particularly with the rise of China, witnessing it put pressure on India since they were both newly-independent developing countries in the 1950s. Now, Modi's administration felt that they were equipped with the capability of being another great power in Asia, filled in the vacancy of western powers in the region. All in all, the foreign policy framework adopted by Modi administration treated China as a competitor, providing an unparalleled opportunity for India government to implement diversionary foreign policy.

### **3.2 State Level: The Departments of the Government**

In this section, I will mainly examine the role three government branches played in the making of China policy. When it comes to India's foreign policy, three main actors would definitely be mentioned. First, Prime Minister would play a critical role of the foreign policy. As the head of the cabinet, Prime Ministers of India have been

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<sup>33</sup> Szu-Hsien, Lee, "India's Aspiration for 'Great Power Status'," In *New Perspectives on South Asia*, (Taipei: Wunan, 2015,) pp. 87-102.

given decisive power to enact the country's foreign policy. Two most salient examples would be Nehru and his daughter Indira Gandhi, both played a leading role on India's foreign policy while they were in office.<sup>34</sup>

Then, several departments are related to India's diplomacy. Ministry of External Affairs is the one responsible for all the foreign policies. Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Commerce and Industry are in charge of national security and international trade respectively, which are the issues highly associated with foreign policies. Especially at the time discussing India's relation with China, the border issues and economic reliance placed these two apparatuses in the center of the decision-making mechanism.

Another governmental agency related to foreign policy is the National Security Council, which is led by the National Security Advisor (NSA), both established in 1998 by the BJP government. The structure of NSC actually resembles the one in the United States, which is also consists of ministers across different divisions of the government. The reason why NSC is not discussed is because the overlapping function with the Ministry External Affairs and its ineffectiveness.

Since its establishment, most of the advisors had strong international relation background, despite foreign policy only composes part of NSC's duty. Three out of five advisors served in the diplomatic branch of the government before they took office.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Mu-Min, Chen, "Indian China Policy: An Analysis of Its Factors and Decision-making Process," *Taiwan International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 155-173.

<sup>35</sup> Among the three advisors, the second NSA, J. N. Dixit and the forth Shivshankar Menon were Foreign Secretaries. The first NSA, Brajesh Mishra, was Permanent Representative to UN.; Hemant Singh, "List of National Security Advisor in India," *Jagran Josh*, 2019, <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/list-of-national-security-advisor-in-india-1565602684-1>.

Furthermore, scholars had been criticizing about NSC not providing adequate institutional mechanism to serve its purpose. Both the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Defense are stronger and more efficient than NSC, so they usually take upon most of the tasks.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, I believe discussing the role of Ministry of External Affairs would be enough to cover the role NSC plays in the mechanism.

### 3.2.1 Ministry of External Affairs

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is the ministry which handles India's foreign affairs. Therefore, understanding the role they are playing would provide us a clearer perspective on India-China relation under Modi administration.

First, it is without doubt that China is an essential part of India's foreign policy. The current Minister of External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, was India's ambassador to China for four years.<sup>37</sup> It showed Modi's emphasis on their relation with China, requiring the Foreign Minister to have past experience in Chinese affairs. Another sign of additional attention on China affairs lies in the organization structure of the ministry. Affairs regarding to China and Japan are under the supervision of the Foreign Secretary, instead of Secretary of the East, who is in charge of all other East Asian countries.<sup>38</sup>

The official stands of MEA toward Chinese affairs could be observed through their

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<sup>36</sup> Shyam Babu, "India's National Security Council: Stuck in the Cradle," *Security Dialogue*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2003, pp. 215-230.

<sup>37</sup> He was also India's ambassador to the United States from 2013-2015.; Ministry of External Affairs, "External Affairs Minister," *Government of India*, <https://mea.gov.in/eam.htm>.

<sup>38</sup> Several other states which are considered essential to India are also under the coordination and supervision of the Foreign Secretary, such as United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia and Australia.; Ministry of External Affairs, "MEA Organogram," *Government of India*, [https://mea.gov.in/Images/amb1/MeA\\_organograms\\_NW\\_20\\_21nw11\\_N.pdf](https://mea.gov.in/Images/amb1/MeA_organograms_NW_20_21nw11_N.pdf).

annual reports. We can see that border conflict has been the main concern between the two countries. In the annual report from Ministry of External Affairs in India in 2020, the whole section of the relation with China mainly focused on describing the progress of their border conflict negotiation.<sup>39</sup> It was actually a critical signal since 2020 was actually the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two Asian giants, there must be more aspects or topics to mention in an annual foreign policy report.

Based on this observation, the significance of border issues on India's foreign policy agenda can be evinced. Another worth mentioned point is that India elaborate more on their negotiation with China than the combination of South Korea and Japan. It simply illustrated that China consisted the hugest share of India's East Asia diplomatic work. Even when most analysts drew attention on the strengthening of India and Japan's bilateral relation, China, on the other hand, is still the main concern when India government is dealing with its relation with East Asian countries.<sup>40</sup>

If we take all of the annual reports under Modi's administration into consideration, there are several interesting features. First, the latest annual report is the first and only one which put China under the category of East Asian region. This particular category used to compose of merely four countries, namely, Japan, North Korea (DPRK), South Korea and Mongolia. China had been put under "Neighbor Countries" rather than "East Asia" before 2020.

Through this slightly alter of the content, I believe it was a gesture of India reexamining the position China held in India's strategy toward neighboring country.

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<sup>39</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, "Annual Report 2019-2020," *Government of India*, 2020, [http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/32489\\_AR\\_Spread\\_2020\\_new.pdf](http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/32489_AR_Spread_2020_new.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

India has always upheld the importance of its neighboring country in foreign policy, especially in the aspect of establishing multilateral institutions, such as South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) or Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), both consisted of mostly South Asian countries.<sup>41</sup> China, on the other hand, expressed its intention on building its own alliance in this region, explicitly challenge the leadership of India. By the removal of China from the category, it showed India's intention to implicitly exclude China from the region.

Despite all the frictions, the reports of MEA also enunciated the cooperative aspect between the two nations. They formed a “closer developmental partnership” based on the common interests they shared, and frequent meeting between President Xi and Prime Minister Modi also marked the unhindered communication tunnel between the two. Besides the two leaders, high level exchange occurred constantly, varies from an array of governmental agencies. Plenty low politics issues made remarkable processes, such as cooperation in water resources and cultural interactions.<sup>42</sup>

Table 4- Meeting between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi (2018-2020).

| Time              | Location       | Occasion  |
|-------------------|----------------|---|
| April 27-28, 2018 | Wuhan, China   | Informal Summit   |
| June 9, 2018      | Qingdao, China | Shanghai Cooperation<br>Organization (SCO) Leader<br>Summit |

<sup>41</sup> China is one of the nine SAARC observers, whom are invited to the inaugural and closing sessions of every summit.; “External Relations,” South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, <https://www.saarc-sec.org/index.php/about-saarc/external-relations>.; “About BIMSTEC,” Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, [https://bimstec.org/?page\\_id=189](https://bimstec.org/?page_id=189).

<sup>42</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, *op. cit.*



|                            |                                |                               |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>July 26, 2018</b>       | Johannesburg, South Africa     | 10 <sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit |
| <b>November 30, 2018</b>   | Buenos Aires, Argentina        | 13 <sup>th</sup> G-20 Summit  |
| <b>June 13, 2019</b>       | Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan            | SCO Leader Summit             |
| <b>June 30, 2019</b>       | Osaka, Japan                   | 14 <sup>th</sup> G-20 Summit  |
| <b>October 11-12, 2019</b> | Chennai, India                 | Second Informal Summit        |
| <b>November 13, 2019</b>   | Brasilia, Brazil               | 11 <sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit |
| <b>November 10, 2020</b>   | Video Conference               | SCO Leader Summit             |
| <b>November 17, 2020</b>   | Video Conference <sup>43</sup> | 12 <sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit |

Source: *Annual Reports, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India*, [https://www.mea.gov.in/annual-reports.htm?57/Annual\\_Reports](https://www.mea.gov.in/annual-reports.htm?57/Annual_Reports).

In conclusion, India strived for maintaining a friendly relation with China on the surface. It would be too risky for them to compete against China in every aspect since there were still a visible gap of power between the two states. However, some signs have showed that India didn't completely recognize China as their partner, they still tried to balance against it at some aspect. It is safe to say that the rise of China cast long shadow over India as well as the order of the world, and the Ministry of External Affairs of India would take multifaceted approaches to navigate through the looming turbulent times.<sup>44</sup>

### 3.2.2 Ministry of Defense

As the department responsible for India's national security, Ministry of Defense

<sup>43</sup> Originally scheduled to be held in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

<sup>44</sup> Sujit Dutta, "Dealing with the Rising China," in *India's Foreign Policy: Surviving in a Turbulent World*, (New Delhi: SAGE Publication India, 2020,) pp. 232-251.

(MoD) plays a crucial role on Modi's diversionary strategy. In fact, national security has always been an emphasis of Modi's policy framework. In the 2014 Manifesto of BJP, security issues were divided into two categories: internal security and external security.<sup>45</sup> Both drew attention on the role played by MoD, particularly while addressing the comprehensive national security challenges.<sup>46</sup>

We can also understand the significance of MoD under Modi administration by its increasing budget (see Figure 7). The gradually increasing spending on national security signified that the Modi administration has put security issues on the top of their agenda. As a matter of fact, Modi has delivered several defense initiatives since he took office, for instance: the creation of a Department of Military Affairs and the appointment of a Chief of Defense Staff.<sup>47</sup> These innovations completed the command system in the Ministry, simultaneously redistribute the works and responsibilities so that the bureaucratic system could be more efficient.<sup>48</sup>

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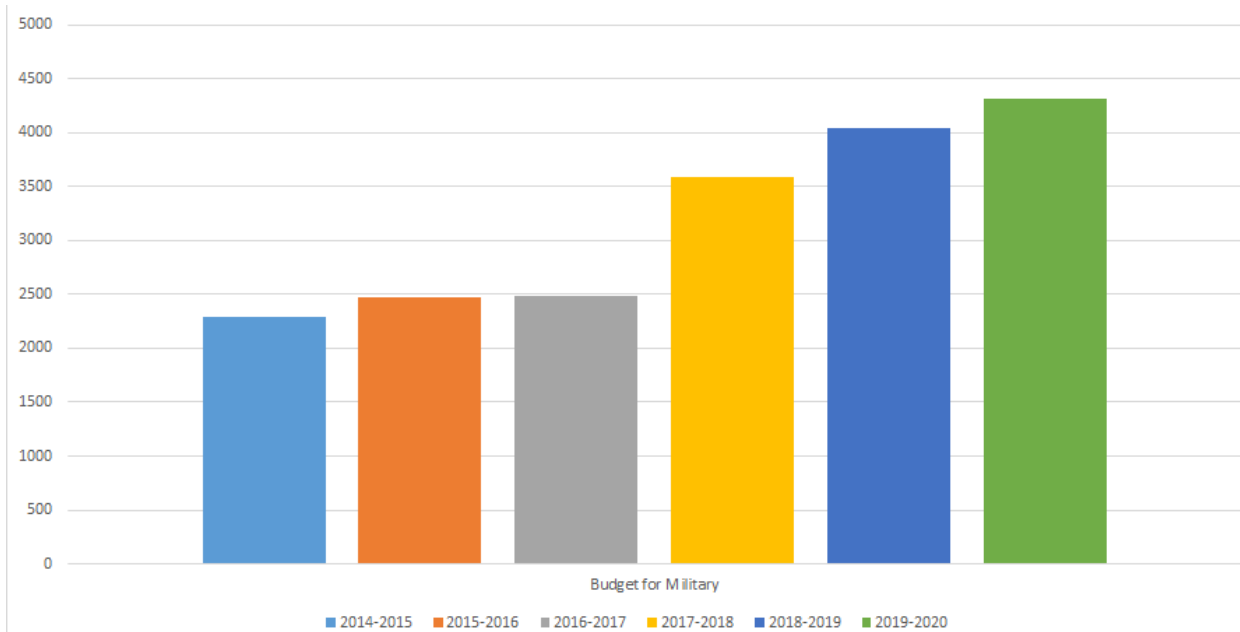
<sup>45</sup> BJP's Election Manifesto, 2014, <http://cdn.narendramodi.in/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Manifesto2014highlights.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*; Among all the security challenges, border security was mentioned first of all. Other issues pertained to national security, such as cyber, food, water and energy were also mentioned.

<sup>47</sup> Jeff M. Smith, "Waking the Beast: India's Defense Reforms under Modi," *The Diplomat*, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/tag/modi-defense-policy/>.

<sup>48</sup> A.K. Singh, "Modi 2.0 and National Security: What's Been Done and What's Left to Do," *The Quint*, 2020, <https://www.thequint.com/voices/opinion/modi-govt-second-term-national-security-defence-achievements-way-forward-challenges>.

Figure 8- Military Budget at Modi's Age (2014-2020)



Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Defense, Government of India,  
<https://www.mod.gov.in/documents/annual-report>

Guarding the land border has always been the major task of Indian army. Their annual reports stated that three hotspots were the most concerned by the Indian military, namely, Kashmir, the Northeastern Region and their northern border with China.<sup>49</sup> The deployment of their army was highly concentrated in these three spaces since they were also the most likely location for an outbreak of conflict or war. Depending on the description above, army was regarded as the primary force for maintaining the integrity of their territory, which was the national interest they cared the most. Therefore, Indian government had heavily invested in army since Modi became Prime Minister (see Table 3).

<sup>49</sup> Ministry of Defense, "Annual Report 2014-2015," *Government of India*,  
[https://www.mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/AR1415\\_0.pdf](https://www.mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/AR1415_0.pdf).

Table 5- Defense Expenditure on every Service (Billion Rupees).

| Year / Service   | Army   | Navy  | Airforce |
|------------------|--------|-------|----------|
| <b>2013-2014</b> | 944.6  | 333.9 | 577.1    |
| <b>2014-2015</b> | 1194.3 | 324.4 | 538.9    |
| <b>2015-2016</b> | 1306.5 | 348.6 | 522.1    |
| <b>2016-2017</b> | 1422.9 | 371.3 | 537.7    |
| <b>2017-2018</b> | 1546.5 | 388.3 | 623.1    |
| <b>2018-2019</b> | 1566.2 | 416.8 | 638.7    |
| <b>2019-2020</b> | 1663.8 | 453.6 | 689.4    |

*Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Defense, Government of India.*

With such an asymmetrical structure of funding, India's determination of securing their own land boundary was quite unequivocal.<sup>50</sup> Beyond all the preparation of Indian military for the potential conflict, they still uphold the positive atmosphere they had with China on border issues. In their reports, all of the confidence building measures seemed to lead the dialogue between the two states into a phase of friendly interaction. However, some indications still showed that India never discarded their vigilance on border issues. While addressing on Doklam dispute on their report in 2017, they first praised the hardworking both sides had made to maintain tranquility. But they still added that Indian army would "continuously monitor Chinese activities and be

<sup>50</sup> The tilting investment on army is quite unique around the world. For example, the United States' military distribute the budget nearly equally to all military services.; Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, "National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2020," *Government of United States of America*, [https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2020/FY20\\_Green\\_Book.pdf](https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2020/FY20_Green_Book.pdf).

adequately prepared.”<sup>51</sup>

All in all, the Ministry of Defense of India would not be afraid of any confrontation despite all the ongoing conversations and dialogues between the military and diplomatic sectors of both countries. From my perspective, Modi could adjust its strategy resiliently under such condition. To implement diversionary policy required the military to be prepared, not aggressive. Modi could exaggerate a small skirmish when he feels needed, and later comfort domestic as well as foreign audiences through the ongoing confidence building measures.

### 3.2.3 Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Since Modi ran for Prime Minister in 2014, economy issues have been on the top of his agenda. He was also renowned of his accomplishments in terms of economic development as the Chief Minister of Gujarat.<sup>52</sup> Needless to say, economic success enhanced Modi's chance of winning the Prime Minister election considerably, and he hoped to replicate the experience of Gujarat to the whole nation.

As the two most populous countries on the world, the destiny of the two economic entities are inextricable. China has been the biggest trading partner of India even before Modi administration (see Figure 8); China, on the other hand, also cherish India's market which has great potentiality. Furthermore, China could perfectly fit in Modi's economic blueprint. During his campaign in 2014, one of the slogans of his was “First

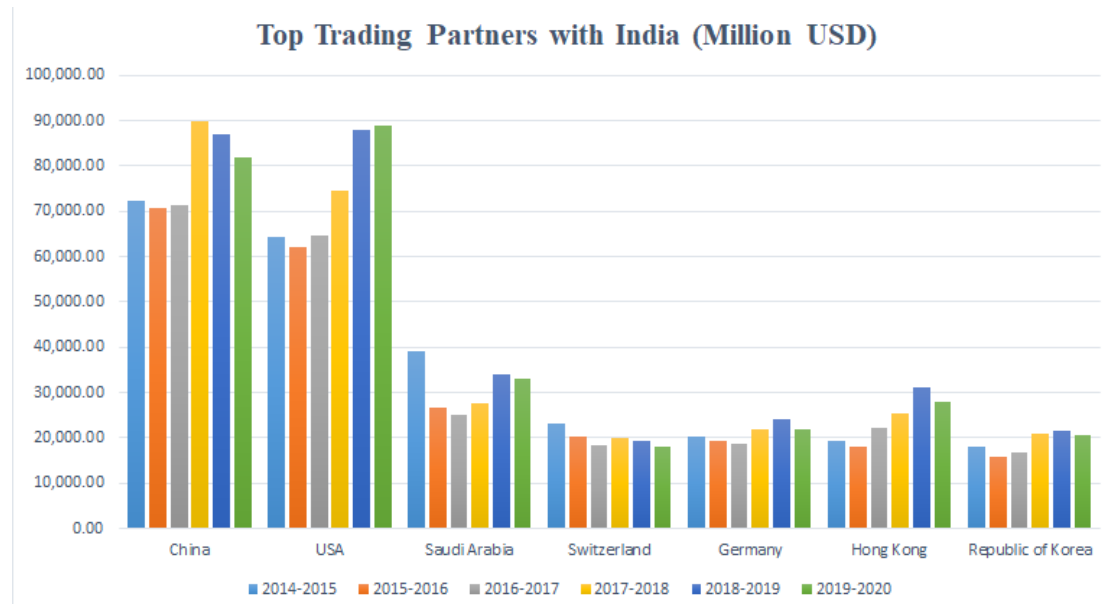
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<sup>51</sup> Department of Defense, *Government of India*, *op. cit.*

<sup>52</sup> While most people attributed the success of Gujarat to Modi's leadership, some scholars believe it is debatable.; Maitreesh Ghatak and Sanchari Roy, “Did Gujarat's Growth Rate Accelerate Under Modi,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 49, no. 15, 2014, pp. 12-15.; Arvind Panagariya, “Here's Proof That Gujarat Has Flourished under Modi,” *Tehelka*, 2014, <http://old.tehelka.com/heres-proof-that-gujarat-has-flourished-under-modi/>.

Develop India,” which enunciated on attracting foreign investment to lead the development of India’s infrastructures.<sup>53</sup>

Figure 9- Total Amount of Trade with Top Trading Partners (2014-2020).



Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Trade Statistic, Government of India.

As a rising country with full of funding at hand, China’s grand strategy of foreign investment resonates with Modi’s economic policy. Although India rejected to participate in Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP),<sup>54</sup> which was massive trade deal among China, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the ASEAN countries; however, China still heavily invested in India (see Table 4).

Table 6- China’s FDI in South Asia (Ten Thousand US Dollars)

| Country/Year | 2014  | 2015  | 2016 | 2017  | 2018  | 2019  |
|--------------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| India        | 31718 | 70525 | 9293 | 28998 | 20620 | 53460 |

<sup>53</sup> Krzysztof Iwanek, “The Political Economy of Hindu Nationalism: From V.D. Savarkar to Narendra Modi,” *International Journal of Knowledge and Innovation in Business*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1-38.

<sup>54</sup> Panu Wongchaum, Patpicha Tanakasempipat, Liz Lee, “India Rejects China-backed Asian Trade Deal, as Others Move Ahead,” *Reuters*, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-asean-summit-idUSKBN1XE09T>.

|                   |        |       |       |       |        |       |
|-------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| <b>Bangladesh</b> | 2502   | 3119  | 4080  | 9903  | 54365  | 37549 |
| <b>Nepal</b>      | 4504   | 7888  | -4882 | 755   | 5122   | 20678 |
| <b>Sri Lanka</b>  | 8511   | 1747  | -6023 | -2527 | 783    | 9280  |
| <b>Pakistan</b>   | 101426 | 32074 | 63294 | 67819 | -19873 | 56216 |
| <b>Maldives</b>   | 72     | -     | 3341  | 3195  | -155   | 694   |

Source: Ministry of Commerce, "2019 Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment," People's Republic of China, <http://images.mofcom.gov.cn/hzs/202010/20201029172027652.pdf>.

As we could see, despite the rejection of RCEP as well as Belt Road Initiative, India has still been one major object of investment from China, which almost caught up on China's most intimate ally: Pakistan. In short, the development of India's economy, which was portrayed in Modi's prospect, would demand China's collaboration at a minimum extent. The economic reliance on China set some limitation for diversionary approaches. India would prefer not to have a falling out with China, which might pose a negative impact on their economic ties. Therefore, CBMs and meetings with President Xi were necessary after conflicts took place, to ensure their trading relation remains unharmed.

### 3.3 State Level: Other Domestic Actors

#### 3.3.1 Indian National Congress

Indian National Congress (INC) is the primary opposing party under Modi



administration. As the only political party which has existed since independence, they have governed most of the time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with a rich history interacting with China. The latest time they took office was in 2004, when the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), a political coalition led by INC, won the majority.<sup>55</sup> Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has then held the office for 10 years, until they lost the 2014 election.

In order to understand their attitude toward China, we could observe the two terms of UPA government. Their foreign policy owned some distinguished features. The first was the fact that they placed a high premium on economic development. The Prime Minister himself was an economic expert, who served as the Chief Economic Advisor and the governor of the Reserve Bank of India in previous administrations. It was quite intuitive for him to take the resurgence of Indian economy as his priority.

The government released the “Common Minimum Program” as a template for their future policies in 2004.<sup>56</sup> It clearly stated that their government should build closer trade and investment ties with China, as well as political and economic ties with neighboring countries in South Asia. From the comparison of the two descriptions, China was obviously perceived as the major trading partner of India. Most of the foreign policy related to China at that time was economy-oriented.<sup>57</sup> Acting in concert with Singh’s “Look East Policy,” these policies constructed the government’s economy grand strategy.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Raviprasad Narayanan, “India-China Relations: The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Phase,” *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2008, pp. 24-31.

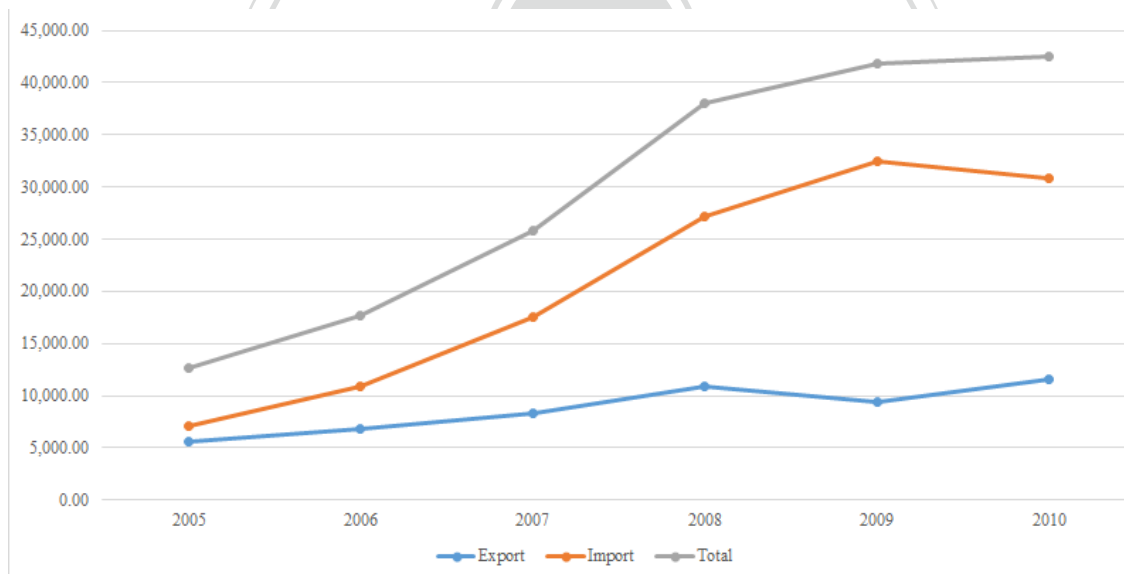
<sup>56</sup> Amiya Kumar Bagchi, “The Common Minimum Programme: The Finances of the State Governments and the Urgent Tasks of Repair and Reconstruction,” *Social Scientist*, vol. 32, no. 7, 2004, pp. 3-16.

<sup>57</sup> Raviprasad Narayanan, *op. cit.*

<sup>58</sup> Look East Policy was initiated in 1991 by the Narasimha Rao administration. It was complex strategy mixed with security cooperation and economic integration with Southeast Asian states. Singh administration expanded its coverage to the Pacific rim, placed ASEAN at the core of the policy.; Thongkholal Haokip, “India’s Look East Policy: It’s Evolution and Approach,” *South Asian*

The outcome was satisfying for UPA government. During their first term, their total amount trade with China was increasing gradually (see Figure 9). China also became the third biggest trading partner of India at the end of 2009, and soon replaced U.S. as the biggest partner in 2011.<sup>59</sup> In contrary, India was only the tenth biggest trading partner of China. In fact, with the growing trade number, trade deficit with China was also rising, which caused private sectors in India appealing to introduce trade barriers against imports from China. At the global stage, the two took united front, deemed themselves as the representative of developing countries. For instance, they both called for support of the Doha Development Round of WTO.

Figure 10- India's Total Trade Amount with China, 2005-2010 (Million Rupees)



Source: Trade Statistics, Department of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, <https://commerce.gov.in/trade-statistics/>.

With fruitful progress in trading, these successes spilled out to other aspects of their relation. As mentioned in previous chapter, both sides signed several agreements on border issues, signifying that they both committed to solve the problem peacefully.

*Survey*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2014, pp. 239-257.

<sup>59</sup> Mu-Min, Chen, *op. cit.*

The Singh administration shed lights on the common challenges they were facing collectively, and the opportunity of cooperation instead of the existing conflict of interest. When Singh gave a speech at the Central Party School in Beijing while his visited China in 2013, he emphasized that both countries need “a stable, secure and prosperous Asia Pacific region,”<sup>60</sup> and that was exactly the goal which they could both work on.

Six principles should be followed to ensure the peaceful engagement of the two countries, including exchanging of high-level personnel, maintaining tranquility in the border area and enhancing policy coordination.<sup>61</sup> In conclusion, he mentioned that the world was large enough to accommodate the development aspiration of both countries. His speech definitely exemplified a close partnership India had with China at that time, after they just designated the previous year as the “Year of India-China Friendship and Cooperation.”<sup>62</sup>

The Congress Party’s relatively mild attitude toward China had incurred heavy criticisms from the opposition party. Modi, who was then the candidate of Prime Minister, accused Singh of being weak and had encouraged China to encroach Indian territory.<sup>63</sup> They even regarded signing agreement with China on border issues was a compromising of India’s national interest, which was completely unacceptable to the Indian people.<sup>64</sup> In one of his speech as a candidate, Modi even made provocative

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<sup>60</sup> Manmohan Singh, “India and China in the New Era,” *The Hindu*, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/resources/manmohan-singhs-speech-on-indiachina-relations-at-the-central-party-school-beijing/article5268097.ece>.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, “Annual Report 2012-2013,” *Government of India*, p.6.

<sup>63</sup> Andrew MacAskill, Bibhudatta Pradhan, “Manmohan Singh Attacked for Being Weak on China,” *Mint*, 2013, <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/px7yRPc1IsW9wS15QeKi7L/Manmohan-Singh-attacked-for-being-weak-on-China-in-preelect.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Masood Hussain, “BJP Blasts UPA’s China Policy,” *The Economic Times*, 2013, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/bjp-blasts-upas-china->

remarks against China in terms of its foreign policy, enunciating that he swear to defense every inch of India's territory.<sup>65</sup>

Although the provocative language was partly result from his populist style, the other clear reason of using those words was delineation of his China policy with Singh's. Modi attempted to hold a tough and unyielding policy toward China on border issues. His success of 2014 election was partially built on the recognition of the citizens on his different approach toward China. From my perspective, it was the cornerstone of his diversionary policy, allowed him to act more aggressive than his predecessor. One thing worth noticed was that Modi acknowledged the economic significance of China to India; therefore, he also emphasized the economic collaboration of both countries, as the previous Prime Minister did.

### 3.3.2 Bharatiya Janata Party

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is a political party formed on the foundation of Hindu nationalism or Hindutva. It emphasized the cultural legitimacy of the Hinduism, regarding other religions (mainly Islam) as the intruder of the Hindu culture.<sup>66</sup> Their goal is to guard the genuine Indian culture from the interference of other culture and to protect the authentic Indian cultural, national and religious identity. The ideology they had is similar with two other nationwide organizations: "*Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, RSS*" the Hindu Nationalist Volunteer Organization and "*Vishva Hindu Parishad, VHP*" the Universal Hindu Council. They are often called the "*Sangh*

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policy/articleshow/26712863.cms.

<sup>65</sup> Deepal Jayasekera, "India: BJP PM Candidate Modi Makes Provocative Anti-China Speech," *World Socialist Web Site*, 2014, <https://reurl.cc/dGomj8>.

<sup>66</sup> David Ludden, *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996,) pp. 269-271.

*Parivar*” which stands for the RSS family.<sup>67</sup> In short, the whole belief system of Hindutva is deeply carved in the spirit of the political party, leading to a right-wing, nationalist and Hindu-centric foreign policy.

The first time BJP became the ruling party was in 1996,<sup>68</sup> when Atal Bihari Vajpayee became the first Prime Minister from a party other than the Indian National Congress. His foreign policy direction epitomized BJP’s mindset at that time since he was also an early founder of the party, profoundly affected his successors. Vajpayee’s foreign policy displayed a few distinctive characteristics, the first dimension was about his aggressive security policy. In 1998, Vajpayee made a controversial decision regarding to their national security, to conduct nuclear test at Pokhran. At the time he had to bear the risk of condemnation from all around the world, since the non-proliferation of nuclear weapon had become a general consensus among nations, reflected by the signatory of Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996, merely two years ago.<sup>69</sup>

In his defense, the reason of carrying out such a contentious plan was to deter presumed enemy, referring to their neighbor in the north, who also conducted their first nuclear test thirty years ago and has been conflicted with India due to border issues. Besides, more and more politicians had growing concern of the friendship between China and their historic opponent, Pakistan. Capable of retaliation through nuclear weapon seemed necessary for them, a strong attitude toward this issue also presented

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> The administration collapsed in 13 days since they could not forge a majority in the Parliament. They formed a stable majority government two years later.; Kenneth J. Cooper, “Indian Government Falls After 13 Days in Power,” *The Washington Post*, 1996, <https://reurl.cc/kLEaZG>.

<sup>69</sup> Office for Disarmament Affairs, “Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT),” *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/ctbt/>.

that national security was on the top of their agenda to their domestic audience.<sup>70</sup>

Based on the descriptions above, we could see that BJP was attempting to embark on a path contrary to the Congress Party's traditional approach, a liberal, secularist and anti-violence foreign policy mindset.<sup>71</sup> They adopted a hawkish approach to cope with their security threats, which in their standpoints were mainly from Pakistan. Another dimension where showed their Hindutva style of foreign policy was on their unwavering attitude toward territorial integrity.<sup>72</sup> Indian government has always put emphasis on keeping their territory intact, this was the origin of all the border disputes to neighboring countries. The BJP government had uplifted the importance to the next level, it was not only about the integrity of their land, but the ongoing competition of resources between Hinduism and Islam. Their anti-secularity leitmotiv made them difficult to make room for negotiation in such a crucial topic.<sup>73</sup>

Another distinctive feature of BJP's foreign policy rhetoric laid on their relation with the U.S. It was extremely unorthodox since the Nehruvian tradition of non-aligned movement had dominated the main narrative of India's foreign policy for more than half a century. This friendly ambience was created by the diaspora of Indian in the U.S., who were mostly BJP's proponents, resulted from their strong support toward these Indian expatriates, in sharp contrast to the Congress Party's indifference.<sup>74</sup>

Consequently, these oversea Indians became lobbyists for the BJP government,

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<sup>70</sup> Sanjeev Kr. H.M., "Foreign Policy Position of Bharatiya Janata Party towards Issues of India Pakistan Relations," *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 68, no. 2, 2007, pp. 275-291.

<sup>71</sup> J. C. Kundra, *Indian Foreign Policy: 1947-1954*, (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1956,) pp. 55-60.

<sup>72</sup> Chris Ogden, "Norms, Indian Foreign Policy and the 1998-2004 National Democratic Alliance," *The Round Table*, vol. 99, no. 408, 2010, pp. 303-315.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Sheeram S. Chaulia, "BJP, India's Foreign Policy and the Realist Alternative to the Nehruvian Tradition," *International Politics*, vol. 39, 2002, pp. 215-234.

which further enhanced the bilateral relation between the two and subsequently promoted the India-United States Civil Nuclear Agreement in 2005.<sup>75</sup> It was another salient example of BJP abandoning the traditional route set by the Nehru. Lastly, the China factor was also considered as a critical variable which facilitated the U.S.-India rapprochement.<sup>76</sup> They shared the same concern of China's growing leverage to the Pacific rim as well as the Indian Ocean region, incentivized them to cooperate on security issues.

In conclusion, the BJP's diplomatic narratives showed two characteristics, their hawkish security policy derived from Hindutva ideologies and their abandonment of conventional foreign policies adopted by the Congress Party. Through these innovations, the BJP administration inaugurated in 1998 compelled a turn of norms, from an idealist tenet originated in Nehru's age to a more realistic viewpoint. These massive changes were significant at that time and was passed down as a core belief of the party since then.

### 3.3.3 Think Tanks

Think tanks usually play an irreplaceable role in the policy advisory system. Administrations would rely on their report to provide authentic and instant information for them to make efficient as well as effective decisions. Scholars has recognized the importance of think tanks in policies, since these institutions were specifically established to create expert discourses in order to influence the decision of policymakers.<sup>77</sup> Some even defined think tanks as an entity which were capable of

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<sup>75</sup> Department of States, "U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation," 2005, *Government of the United States of America*, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/sca/c17361.htm>.

<sup>76</sup> Sheeram S. Chaulia, *op. cit.*

<sup>77</sup> James G. McGann, "Think Tanks and the Transnationalization of Foreign Policy," *Connections*, vol.



influence the policy by any means, neglecting the function of an actual institution.<sup>78</sup>

In India, think tanks flourished in recent years. In 2020, India has the third most think tanks in the world, only listed after the two great powers, United States and China.<sup>79</sup> Among the top 176 think tanks in the world, there were 7 India-based ones (see Table 5). A various type of think tanks were on the list, with multifaceted research issues, their influences permeated into different aspects of the India's policies.

Table 7- Major Think Tanks in India

| Name   | Founding Time | Location  | World Rank 2020 <sup>80</sup> | Focus   |
|--|---------------|-----------|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Observer Research Foundation</b>                                    | 1990          | New Delhi | 20                            | Foreign Policy, International Affairs, Security Issues <sup>81</sup>                |
| <b>Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis</b>                      | 1965          | New Delhi | 41                            | National Security, Military Affairs, Defense Issues <sup>82</sup>                   |
| <b>Centre for Civil Society</b>  | 1997          | New Delhi | 83                            | Education, Environment, Governance <sup>83</sup>                                    |
| <b>Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations</b> | 1981          | New Delhi | 110                           | Global Economic, Development Issues, Multilateral Trade, Urbanization <sup>84</sup> |

2, no. 1, 2003, pp. 85-90.; P. Hart, A. Vromen, "A New Era for Think Tanks in Public Policy? International Trends, Australian Realities," *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 67, no. 2, 2008, pp. 135-148.

<sup>78</sup> Hartwig Pautz, "Revisiting the Think Tank Phenomenon," *Public Policy and Administration*, vol. 64, no. 4, 2011, pp. 419-435.

<sup>79</sup> In 2020, there were 2203 and 1413 think tanks in the United States and China respectively. India, on the other hand, only had 612, but still nearly 100 more than the fourth on the rank, United Kingdom, with only 515 think tanks.; James G. McGann, "2020 Global Go to Think Tank Index Report," *University of Pennsylvania*, 2020, p 44.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60-74.

<sup>81</sup> Observer Research Foundation, "About," 2019, <https://www.orfonline.org/about-us/>.

<sup>82</sup> Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis, "About MP-IDSA," 2020, <https://www.idsa.in/aboutidsa>.

<sup>83</sup> Centre for Civil Society, "About US," 2020, <https://ccs.in/>.

<sup>84</sup> Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, "About ICRIER," 2020, <http://icrier.org/abouticrier/about-icrier/>.

|   |      |           |     |  |
|---|------|-----------|-----|--|
| <b>Development Alternative</b>                          | 2010 | New Delhi | 138 | Technology Innovation, Environment Management <sup>85</sup>              |
| <b>Delhi Policy Group</b>                               | 1994 | New Delhi | 142 | Strategic Issues, International Affairs <sup>86</sup>                    |
| <b>Centre for Policy Research</b>                       | 1973 | New Delhi | 173 | Economic Policy, Environmental Law, International Relation <sup>87</sup> |
| <b>Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relation</b> | 2009 | Mumbai    | -   | Foreign Policy, International Security, Geoeconomics <sup>88</sup>       |
| <b>Institute of China Studies</b>                       | 1969 | New Delhi | -   | China Domestic Politics, China International Relation <sup>89</sup>      |

*Source: Illustrated by the author.*

If we distinguished the think tanks from its affiliation, there are four main categories.<sup>90</sup> The first are the think tanks belong to the Indian government or mainly funded by the government. They would focus on the topics assigned by governmental institutions, one of the most prominent examples is the Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis, which is funded by the Ministry of Defense in India. The second would be the ones founded by universities or research centers, they work independently most of the time. The third categories are think tanks owned by private sectors, these think tanks had the highest level of autonomy and are seldom affected by certain actors. The last ones would be those affiliated to certain corporations, such as the Tata Institute of

<sup>85</sup> Development Alternative, "About US," 2010, <https://www.devalt.org/Aboutus.aspx>.

<sup>86</sup> Delhi Policy Group, "Mission Statement," 2021, <https://reurl.cc/VEo49y>.

<sup>87</sup> Centre for Policy Research, "About," 2019, <https://cprindia.org/about>.

<sup>88</sup> Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations, "About Gateway House," 2011, <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/about-us/>.

<sup>89</sup> Institute of China Studies, "Mission and History," <https://www.icsin.org/mission-history>

<sup>90</sup> Lu Yang, "Indian Think Tanks Still Adopt a Western Perspective on China," *Carnegie-Tsinghua, Center for Global Policy*, 2020, <https://carnegietsinghua.org/2020/07/17/zh-pub-82410>.

Social Science, a subordinate of the Tata Group.<sup>91</sup>

Despite think tanks which concentrate on foreign policy and international relation only composed of about 15% among all Indian think tanks, they hold huge leverage on foreign policies.<sup>92</sup> The most well-known ones concerning India-China relations would be Observer Research Foundation, Gateway House and Institute of China Studies in Delhi and Chennai Centre for China Studies. In the latter section, I am going to elaborate on the perspectives taken by these think tanks toward China, and analyze its influence on Modi's implementation of diversionary policy.

The general view on China shared by Indian think tank was considering it as a competitor. They acknowledged that the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be the century of a China-centric Asia at large, where India could play a crucial role, but not a decisive role.<sup>93</sup> How should the second largest democratic in the world fit in the regional world order led by a non-democratic country would be the issue which India would have to deal with in the upcoming years.

From the researches they have done, China's influence to South Asian countries and India and China's possibility of clashing as the two emerging Asian giants were the two topics most concerned.<sup>94</sup> The first referred to China's Belt Road Initiative, which for some observers was an attempt to meddle in the order India has dominated in this region.<sup>95</sup> The second would take a stand on power transition theory, regarding China

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<sup>91</sup> Tata Institute of Social Science, "Instructions," 2020, <https://www.tata.com/community/education/tata-institute-of-social-sciences-tiss>.

<sup>92</sup> Lu Yang, *op. cit.*

<sup>93</sup> James G. McGann, "2020 India Think Tank Forum," *University of Pennsylvania*, 2020, p.9.

<sup>94</sup> Harsh V. Pant, "India's Rise is a Reality," *Observer Research Foundation*, 2021, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/indias-rise-is-a-reality/>.

<sup>95</sup> Asanga Abeyagoonasekera, "How China Won Over Local Agency to Shackle Sri Lanka using a Port City," *Observer Research Foundation*, 2021, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/how-china->

as the emerging regional power who is not satisfied with the distribution of power now, and acts as a revisionist afterwards.<sup>96</sup> Therefore, these researches valued the friendship among India and its western allies, warned the threat that China posed on India from many dimensions.<sup>97</sup>

With most of the think tank researchers and scholars regarded China as a competitor, or even a threat, Modi possessed more legitimacy to adopt diversionary policy against China. It would be a decision with zero cost and could hardly backfire if the consensus of the academics were inclined to be vigilant or even hostile to China. Even though they understood the economic importance of China to India, advocacy of reducing trade dependency to China occupied the mainstream discourses.<sup>98</sup> They understood that under status quo, India still had high dependence on China, but they should strive for reducing it in case someday China would use it as a weapon to manipulate India.

In conclusion, think tanks in India are supporters of “China threat theory” to some extent.<sup>99</sup> They never completely wiped out the possibility of the two countries working

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won-over-local-agency-to-shackle-sri-lanka-using-a-port-city/; Priyanka Madia, “China’s Belt and Road Initiative: History In the Making,” *ICS Analysis*, 2020, <https://reurl.cc/kZWa4G>; Sayantan Halder, “Growing Chinese Engagement in Bangladesh: Implications for India,” *ICS Analysis*, 2020, <https://reurl.cc/a9DL0Q>.

<sup>96</sup> Ronald L. Tammen, Jacek Kugler, Douglas Lemke, Allan C. Stam III, Mark Abdollahian, Carole Alsharabti, Brian Efrid and A.F.K. Organski, *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century* (New York: Chatham House Publishers of Seven Bridges Press, 2000), pp7-10.; Harsh V. Pant, “China’s Revisionism: From Hong Kong to India’s Borders,” *Observer Research Foundation*, 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/china-revisionism-hongkong-india-borders-67086/>.

<sup>97</sup> Jai Kumar Verma, “Quad is to Check on Chinese Assertiveness in Indo-Pacific,” *Chennai Centre for China Studies*, 2021, <https://www.c3sindia.org/geopolitics-strategy/quad-is-to-check-on-chinese-assertiveness-in-indo-pacific-by-jai-kumar-verma/>; Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, “How China Strengthens the Quad,” *Observer Research Foundation*, 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/how-china-strengthens-the-quad/>.

<sup>98</sup> Santosh Pai, “Deciphering India’s Dependency on Chinese Imports,” *ICS Analysis*, 2020, <https://www.icsin.org/uploads/2020/10/26/af20f760b3644df1571b4e8e98b876.pdf>; Madhu Bhalla, “The China Factor in India’s Economic Diplomacy,” *Observer Research Foundation*, 2021, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/china-factor-india-economic-diplomacy/>.

<sup>99</sup> Denny Roy, “The ‘China Threat’ Issue: Major Arguments,” *Asian Survey*, vol. 36, no. 8, 1996, pp. 758-771.

together, but they put more emphasis on warning the looming threat of a rising China could pose to India. Under such circumstance, diversionary foreign policy would be not only effective, but popular.

### 3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I go through the possible factors influencing the mechanism of Modi's China policy decision-making via systematic analysis. On the individual level, the background of Modi himself holds a great deal of leverage over the outcome, since the populist style of leadership had formed a Prime Minister-centric decision-making dynamic. The governmental division's policy implications laid some ground rules for China policy. As for his foreign policy grand strategy, this chapter focuses on Act East Policy and the construction of great power status of India. These two salient policies demonstrated Modi's ambition of catching up with China in terms of its foreign policy.

From a diplomatic and military perspective, China has been a threat on national security, meanwhile a competitor of India's sphere of influence around South Asia. However, China was also an essential partner of India from the viewpoint of the trading sector. The conflict of roles played by China prompted the Modi administration to be especially careful while adopting diversionary policy. On one hand, expressing their willingness of competing or even combating against China would be necessary under the current development of situation. On the other hand, they would also have to be extraordinarily cautious to prevent any irreversible damage impedes on the current trading environment with China.

The opposition party, Indian National Congress, provided another impetus for Modi to act aggressive to China, due to the weakness showed in the previous

administration. Modi was eager to prove that they would not succumb to China, unlike what his predecessor did. Bharatiya Janata Party tells a different story, they have regarded China as their main competitor, a standpoint established since the Vajpayee administration. Think tanks in India also promoted the “China Threat Theory,” which indicates that the PRC would overturn the current world order and establish a new one that strongly in favor of them. These discourses forged the support of adopting tough countervailing measures to China.



# Chapter 4- The Policy Outcomes

## 4.1 The Diversionary Policies

Based on the previous chapters, diversionary policy to China was a favorable option for Modi. It could reach several goals simultaneously. First, of course, to divert the failure of domestic policies or internal turmoil that Modi administration was facing. Second, it could also raise the popularity of the ruling party as well as Modi himself, enhancing their chance of winning the next election. Last but not least, they may be able to strengthen their ties with some foreign stakeholders who also regard China as their biggest threat or competitor, namely, members of the Quad.

With these benefits, acting aggressive to China seemed an ideal and harmless policy choice; however, we should always keep in mind that there's a catch of the scenario: China still outweighs all other states as the primary trading partner of India, they could easily affect the economic development with tariffs and direct investments in India. Although some might argue that it is interdependence, which allowed the Indian government to fight back, China is still much more developed and least dependent on India.

Under the premise mentioned above, I believe India has developed a new kind of diversionary approach, with some distinguished features (see Table 8). The most distinctive feature of Modi's Diversionary policy would be its attribution. For most of the other scenarios, the head of government would consider such policy due to the low popularity or uncontrollable domestic chaos. Neither of those happened under Modi administration; in contrary, he was driven by the nationalist expectation of his



supporters and the demonstration of his capability.

Along with the unique origin, the approaches he took were also one of a kind. Instead of initiating a war, he would passively participate in a conflict without the determination of pursuing a final resolution. Border conflicts with China is an excellent demonstration of it. Besides the deployment of military, he would also use populist languages to gain spotlight from the media, which is another viable mean to achieve the purpose of diverting the public's attention. These activities shared a characteristic, which the administration bear minimal risk of applying these strategies.

Table 8- Comparison between Traditional and Modi's Diversionary Policy

|                         | <b>Traditional Diversionary Policy</b> | <b>Modi's Diversionary Policy to China</b>                    |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Cause</b>            | Domestic Turmoil, Low Popularity       | Expressing Capacity, Nationalist Sentiment                    |
| <b>Approach</b>         | Initiating a War                       | Passive Involvement, Words of Proclamation, Domestic Policies |
| <b>Cost calculation</b> | At all Cost                            | Balancing between Political and Economic Impact               |
| <b>Choice of Target</b> | Primary Rival                          | A Manageable Target   |
| <b>Result</b>           | Reelection                             | Reelection, High-Level Meetings, Negotiation                  |

Source: Illustrated by the author

The cost-price ratio was also a factor Indian government would take into consideration. Since the target they were employing the diversionary policy was their top trading partner, striking a balance between the political benefits and the potential

economic repercussion would be particularly crucial for them. Other governments applying the same strategy will not have the same burden since the outbreak of a war would be considered a success for them. The last noticeable difference would be the expecting outcome of the policy. Normally other actors adopted diversionary policy would not care about the result of the conflict they embarked on, they would pay more attention on the result of the next election if they were democracies or the popularity of their leaders if they were autocracies. India portrayed another kind of story, which winning the next election was just a fraction of it.

Modi administration actually paid attention on the solution of each border conflict they had with China, usually through ongoing exchange of opinion and negotiation. As far as I am concerned, the following gestures could also be construed as an act of diversionary policy, since those casted light on the capability of solving an international skirmish peacefully by the Modi administration. Nonetheless, the declaratory meaning outweighs the virtual benefit, trespassing and frictions around the border still happens even after five treaties regulating it.

All in all, Modi's diversionary policy is quite distinctive from the current diversionary policy theory. First of all, he would not initiate a conflict on purpose, it would be an additional risk to bear and it was deemed an unnecessary or redundant cost to pay for the administration. Second, they would rather choose to prevail an ongoing skirmish, or they would not act proactively to end their dispute with China, which is the more beneficial strategy to adopt in order to act in concert with the populist public opinion. Diversionary policy fits perfectly in the face of China's threat on the territorial integrity of India.

The degree and extent of the involvement of Modi administration would be

determined by several disciplines. New Delhi would never step on the red line set by Beijing, result from the dependence of trade. Lastly, I would construe the conversation between the two leaders as an indispensable step of the diversionary policy, or the final phase. It completely displayed the competence of Modi government to end a conflict peacefully, which through orchestrated propaganda would also raise the popularity of Modi. On the other hand, it also gained prestige for New Delhi on the international level. Peacefully conversations are always more preferable than military confrontation for the international society.

An unorthodox approach of diversionary policy would also be discussed in this chapter, which I would argue that the revocation of Kashmir's autonomy status could also be construed as an act of diversion,<sup>1</sup> only with a distinct pattern. Besides a direct engagement of a military conflict, altering the status of a contentious territory would certainly get on China and Pakistan's nerve. The autonomous status of Kashmir was granted by the Article 370 of Indian Constitution,<sup>2</sup> abrogating it would be a costly political act with severe side effects; nevertheless, Modi administration still decided to prevail it. I believe it was an attempt of cementing its definite governance over the region; meanwhile, a redirection of the attention of the public from its ill performance in some domestic affairs.

In the next section, I am going to examine the two prominent border conflicts with China at Modi's age: the Doklam dispute in 2017 and Galwan Valley dispute in 2020, to distinguish the elements of diversionary policy and to illustrate on the dynamic of it.

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<sup>1</sup> Amy Kazmin, "Jammu and Kashmir Autonomy: How It Began and Why It Was Scrapped," *Financial Times*, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/b12f9148-b78e-11e9-96bd-8e884d3ea203>.

<sup>2</sup> Robina Khan, Muhammad Zubair Khan, Zafar Abbas, "Moving Towards Human Catastrophe: The Abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir Valley," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2021, pp. 78-85.

Furthermore, I would also analyze the revocation of Kashmir's autonomy to have a comprehensive understanding of India's diversionary strategy.

## 4.2 Border Conflicts with China under Modi

### 4.2.1 Doklam Dispute

Doklam is a highland between Bhutan and China, both countries claimed sovereignty over this place due to its strategic value.<sup>3</sup> On June 1<sup>st</sup> 2017, China asked India to tear down two forts near the China-India border at Sikkim, but India rejected the request. Five days later, China broke the forts down with two excavators, formally ignited the conflict between the two. Engineering team from China started to build a road in the disputed area on June 16<sup>th</sup>, which notified India beforehand. Then, on June 18<sup>th</sup>, India army crossed the border to stop China from building the road, it quickly escalated into a standoff (see Figure 11).

Entering July, the tension at border area was palpable. Beijing stated that Nehru accepted the "Convention between Great Britain and China Respecting Tibet," which unequivocally gave China sovereignty over Doklam region.<sup>4</sup> It was an extremely serious violation of the Charter of United Nation and the fundamental principles of international laws that Indian army trespassed an already delineated boundary.<sup>5</sup> Beijing claimed there had been a consensus about this issue with Bhutan,<sup>6</sup> however, Bhutan

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<sup>3</sup> Chun-Ju, Chen, "Impact of the Doklam Incident on China-India Border Issue and China-India Relations," *Wenti Yu Yanjiu*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2018, pp. 105-116.

<sup>4</sup> Satow Ernest, "Convention Between the United Kingdom and China Respecting Tibet, Signed April 27, 1906," *American Journal of International Law*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 78-80.

<sup>5</sup> Tzu-Chuan, Huang, "Ministry of Foreign Affairs: India Sending Troops over the Boundary, A Severe Violation," *People.cn*, 2017, <http://military.people.com.cn/BIG5/n1/2017/0704/c1011-29380718.html>.

<sup>6</sup> The Economic Times, "No Dispute with Bhutan in Doklam: China," 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/no-dispute-with-bhutan-in-doklam-china/articleshow/59456533.cms>.

never admitted there was such agreement, and issued condemnation to Beijing's attempt to alter the status quo at Doklam area.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 11- The Disputed Territory at Doklam Region



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Facts and China's Position Concerning the Indian Border Troops' Crossing of the China-India Boundary in the Sikkim Sector into the Chinese Territory*, Government of People's Republic of China, 2017.

The situation kept deteriorated when China started a military drill in the nearby mountains.<sup>8</sup> China's attitude got much tougher since August, its ambassador, Luo

<sup>7</sup> The Straits Time, "Bhutan Protests against China's Road Construction," 2017, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/bhutan-protests-against-chinas-road-construction>; The Times of India, "Bhutan Rejects Beijing's Claim That Doklam Belongs to China," 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/bhutan-rejects-beijings-claim-that-doklam-belongs-to-china/articleshow/60001311.cms>.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Marcus, "China-India Border Tension: Satellite Imagery Shows Doklam Plateau Build-up," *BBC*, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-42834609>.

Zhao-Hui proclaimed that the pre-condition of a border negotiation was the withdrawal of Indian army from the border.<sup>9</sup> Beijing also threatened to revoke their recognition of India's annexation of Sikkim if the situation kept deteriorating.<sup>10</sup> People's Liberation Army, state owned media and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China all put out formal announcements with harsh words, warning Indian government not to provoke Chinese government; otherwise, it would not end well.<sup>11</sup>

Chinese scholars identified this incident as Indian army's illegal trespassing China's territory. There were several common explanations for the action taken by India governments. First, Chinese scholars pointed out that the election of president of India was actually around the corner when the border standoff was proceeding.<sup>12</sup> The election was held merely one month later on July 17<sup>th</sup>, and Prime Minister Modi was desperate to help the candidate who was also from BJP, Ram Nath Kovind, to win the election, as a means to stabilize the support base of BJP. Kovind ended up winning the election with a dominating 2930 votes, which was perfectly in line with Modi's plan. It not only expanded his influence in *Lok Sabha* (House of the People), but formed a countervailing force against the INC in *Rajya Sabha* (Council of States).<sup>13</sup>

Second, Modi showed his ambition to divert domestic audience's resentment to elsewhere. His policies like tax reformation and expropriation had instigated complaint while solving actual problems. It was an excellent opportunity for Modi to regain the support by fomenting the nationalist sentiment. After 1962 border conflict between the

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<sup>9</sup> Madhu Bala, "Doklam Dispute: Sino-Indian Perspectives," *Ascent International Journal for Research Analysis*, vol. 2, no. 3, p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Li-Ming, Wu, "Three Suggestions to India," *Xinhua*, 2017, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2017-08/03/c\\_1121427634.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2017-08/03/c_1121427634.htm).

<sup>12</sup> Tsui-Ping, Chu, "Understanding Sino-India Strategy Competition from Doklam Standoff," *World Affairs*, vol. 17, 2017, pp. 28-29.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



two countries, China has been an easy target for Indian leaders to blame on while they were facing domestic turmoil. Finally, Modi also intended to solve the problem of India's heavy reliance on China's products. He hoped to cut down the import by the impending boycott which Indian citizens may launch voluntarily.

An innovative perspective comes from the audience cost theory.<sup>14</sup> This theory demonstrates that while democratic leaders negotiate with a foreign opponent, they would be punished by domestic audiences if they back down. After the conflict begins, factors such as relative power and national interests would not pose any impact on the outcome; on the contrary, the result would be determined by the state's capacity to exhibit their audience cost.

Fearon illuminated the mechanism which carries out audience cost in another research.<sup>15</sup> There are two approaches for leaders to create audience costs. On the one hand, ex post cost is the cost they have to bear if they do not follow through their commitment or threat; on the other hand, there's the sinking cost which you have to bear financially when you are conducting military action.

In Doklam dispute, some scholars would say that Modi government generated audience cost by sending its troop to the disputed border between China and Bhutan.<sup>16</sup> They deployed several brigades of army alongside the border which wasn't even theirs. It was regarded a strong signal of expressing their intention to block Chinese troops. However, India didn't gain any advantage on negotiation through these activities, on

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<sup>14</sup> James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 88, no. 3, 1994, pp. 577-592.

<sup>15</sup> James D. Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Trying Hands versus Sinking Costs," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1997, pp. 68-90.

<sup>16</sup> Xie Chao, "The Limitation of Audience Costs Theory: A Critique Based on India's Bargaining Behavior in the Doklam Standoff," *South Asian Studies*, vol. 1, 2019, pp 29-54.



the contrary, it became a burden for the administration to persuade their citizens in accepting the result which they may have to sacrifice a bit to reach a consensus. In this scenario, public opinion works as a double-edged sword. While backing down would be severely punished, acting aggressive and exhibiting a strong attitude would be rewarded.

New Delhi had unequivocally showed that they could not tolerate China's unrestricted ambition of expansion in the Doklam dispute, especially toward its tradition allies or states which were historically under the protection of India, such as Bhutan.<sup>17</sup> India had always considered South Asia as its conventional sphere of influence; therefore, China's attempt to challenge India's leadership was simply unacceptable to New Delhi.<sup>18</sup> Their response were predictable, they demonstrated their stark irritation toward China's decision of constructing roads on Bhutan's territory.<sup>19</sup>

Reasons above provided Modi legitimacy of conducting a diversionary approach. Beijing's action was generally regarded as an encroachment on India's interest. Despite all the reason of initiating a conflict in a larger scale, we could still observe New Delhi's rational consideration at some point. One of the reasons was that the undetermined border could act as buffer zone, so that both sides could restrain themselves, not to be excessively aggressive.<sup>20</sup> I would argue that it could be attributed to Modi's diversionary mindset, which shed light on striking a balance between exploiting political interest and the inevitable economic reliance on China.

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<sup>17</sup> Medha Bisht, "Bhutan-India Power Cooperation: Benefits Beyond Bilateralism," *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 36, no. 5, 2012, pp. 787-803.

<sup>18</sup> Szu-Hsien, Lee, "The Implications of Sino-Indian Doklam Standoff: Rethinking of India's Geopolitical Environment," *Review of Global Politics*, no. 60, 2017, pp. 15-20.

<sup>19</sup> Chun-Ju, Chen, *op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Ping-Kuei, Chen, "The Deescalating Effect of Unsettled Borders on Enduring Territorial Disputes: An Analysis on the 2017 Doklam Standoff," *Wenti Yu Yanjiu*, vol. 59, no. 3, 2020, pp. 1-44.

A valid evidence of such argument was the informal summit held about the Himalayan border region started from 2013. Modi's comments afterwards indicated that he understood India should still cooperate with China under current situation, they would benefit more by creating a positive atmosphere of collaboration, instead of engaging in a full-blown and comprehensive conflict with China.<sup>21</sup> He admitted that both nations are important actors for global peace and progress, India and China must "work together in trust and confidence, sensitive to each other's interest."<sup>22</sup>

For many observers, it was a figure of speech recognizing the important role China played on the economic development of India. They had enjoyed the benefit of Chinese investments, which to some degree accelerate the economic growth of India.<sup>23</sup> They also euphemistically expressed that they were not against the rise of China, but they were concerned about the actually impact on India's core interest posed by the "rise." There were room for these two Asian emerging powers to work together, the possibility of cooperation should never be eliminated despite the frequent border skirmishes.<sup>24</sup>

It was undeniable that this informal meeting has reached fruitful results, particularly in the economic dimension. They had forged consensuses on topics such as investments in Afghanistan, building smart cities and energy developments.<sup>25</sup> Progresses could also be seen in aspects such as cultural interaction and certain security issues, for instance, combating terrorism. Analysts had pointed out that it was a sign of the bilateral relation was back in track, both parties understood the significance of the

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<sup>21</sup> Alyssa Ayres, "A Few Thoughts on Narendra Modi's Shangri-La Dialogue Speech," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/few-thoughts-narendra-modis-shangri-la-dialogue-speech>.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, "Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue," *Government of India*, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Sujit Dutta, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, "India-China Informal Summit at Wuhan," *Government of India*, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

partnership they built.<sup>26</sup> However, it did not come close to prevent the next border conflict from happening, which took place merely two years later.

As far as I would argue, the ups and downs of the bilateral relation perfectly demonstrated the features of Modi's diversionary policy. The fluctuating situation between them was inevitable since New Delhi never meant to reach a perpetual peace in the border area. Even after five bilateral agreements were signed and the positive atmosphere created in the Wuhan meeting, conflicts still outbroke in Galwan Valley, and it was an ever fiercer one. Soldiers from both parties had sacrificed in this dispute.

The dialogues and conferences after a conflict were necessary, so that situation would not be out of control. In this case, leaders meeting in Wuhan certainly alleviated the whole nervous atmosphere, everything was "back on track" ostensibly. To me, it could be considered as the end of the diversionary policy, and Doklam dispute has demonstrated a classical pattern of the diversionary policy New Delhi usually adopts under Modi administration.

#### 4.2.2 Galwan Valley Dispute

The border conflict between China and India in 2020 was actually composed of a series of skirmishes. On May 6<sup>th</sup>, soldiers from both China and India had physical conflicts at Pangong Lake, southern of Galwan Valley.<sup>27</sup> There were approximately 250 soldiers involved in Indian military, soldiers injured from both sides. Three days later, on May 9<sup>th</sup>, another physical conflict outbroke at Nathula around Sikkim.

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<sup>26</sup> Srikanth Kondapalli, "Perspective: Modi-Xi Meeting in Wuhan Highlighted the Restoration to the Original State, Doklam Standoff Has Been Past Incident," *BBC*, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/world-43949860>.

<sup>27</sup> Rahul Singh, "A Timeline: India-China's Deadliest Border Clash Since 1975 Explained," *Hindustan Times*, 2020, <https://reurl.cc/eEYdx7>.

This time, four Indian army and nine people's liberation army were injured respectively, further escalating the tension between the two countries. The next day, Indian military confirmed the physical conflict and claimed that Chinese army should take full responsibility of it since they were the one initiated aggressive behavior. On the other hand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in China held a media conference, alleged that India was the one who crossed the "Line of Actual Control" unilaterally, and Beijing would take all necessary measures to cope with this situation.<sup>28</sup>

Figure 12- The Status Quo of India-China Border at Aksai Chin



Source: Marcelo Duhalde, Dennis Wong and Kaliz Lee, "India-China Border Clash Explained," *South China Morning Post*, 2020, <https://reurl.cc/a9mLXX>.

<sup>28</sup> Marcelo Duhalde, Dennis Wong and Kaliz Lee, "India-China Border Clash Explained," *South China Morning Post*, 2020, <https://reurl.cc/a9mLXX>.

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, India strongly denied the accusation of China, explained that Indian military was only patrolling along their territory, China intentionally blocked their path. Since then, both sides assembled the troops they had around the border, showing that they were both unwilling to negotiate on such a crucial topic highly related to their territorial integrity.<sup>29</sup> New Delhi declared their ironclad determination, underscoring that they would not allow China to trample upon their dignity, while China claimed that the border area between the two states still maintain tranquility and they insisted the problem should be solved through official communication channel.<sup>30</sup>

In the beginning of June, the two great powers showed their intention of the possibility of de-escalation. On June 6<sup>th</sup>, General Harinder Singh, the commander of the Fourteenth Corps of Indian Army, and General Liu, the commander of People's Liberation Army at Southern border met at Moldo to exchange their opinion on current incidents.<sup>31</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China gave a positive comment on this meeting, while Indian foreign minister refused to comment on the result of this meet up, merely acknowledged that defense and foreign affair department on both sides were negotiating and seeking a solution to the skirmish they had.<sup>32</sup> They keep on communicating for a week; however, on June 15<sup>th</sup>, while authorities expressed their confidence on reaching a final solution, the most severe physical confrontation outbreak in Galwan Valley, causing casualties on both sides.

Two days after the conflict, Prime Minister office of India announced a declaration,

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Russell Goldman, "India-China Border Dispute: A Conflict Explained," *The New York Times*, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/17/world/asia/india-china-border-clashes.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Hua Chua-Ying's Regular Press Congress," *Government of People's Republic of China*, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/y2vhdrsz>.

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Defense, "India-China Border Situation," *Government of India*, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/y6lrzwdj>.

confirming that there were soldiers of India lost their lives in the conflict, expressing prime minister's deepest condolence to their family, and emphasizing that their sacrifice would not go in vain.<sup>33</sup> This declaration unequivocally showed that India would guard their territory at all cost. Despite they were a peace-loving country, they would protect their country whenever they face provocation from other states.

At the same day, Ministry of Defense of India called on a conference, gathering all the high-ranking officials to figure out a solution; meanwhile, mourning the soldier's lives lost in the conflict. Beijing also held a conference that day, attributing all the responsibility of the conflict to India, underscoring the fact that Indian military violated the consensus they had, transgressed illegally and fomented the tension. Therefore, Indian military had to take full responsibility of the casualty, China would keep negotiating with the Indian authority in terms of the latest development of the border conflict. China would by all means maintain peace alongside the China-India border, they would expect India to do the same reciprocally.

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, foreign ministers of both country, Wang Yi from China and Subrahmanyam Jaihankar from India communicated through phone call.<sup>34</sup> They agreed to cope with the conflict took place at the western border impartially, at the meantime, abided by the agreement they reached beforehand. On June 19<sup>th</sup>, prime minister Modi convened a "All Party Meeting" to discuss the situation of border conflict. In the conference, Modi underscored that he had authorized the military to take all the actions they considered necessary to tackle with the possible development of the

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<sup>33</sup> Prime Minister's Office, "English Rendering of PM's Remarks on the Situation in India-China Border Areas" *Government of India*, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/y4h2jtlc>.

<sup>34</sup> Pradip R. Sagar, "100 Days On, India-China Border in Ladakh Still Remains Tense," *The Week*, 2020, <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2020/08/13/100-days-on--india-china-border-in-ladakh-still-remains-tense.html>.



situation. They had also clarified their stance with government of PRC, anticipating a positive response from Beijing.<sup>35</sup>

Then, both countries decided to assign the job to Special Representative (SR) on the Boundary Question.<sup>36</sup> National Security Advisor of India Ajit Doval and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Wang Yi was assigned the positive respectively to carry on the negotiation between the two. On July 5<sup>th</sup>, the two representatives communicated through telephone to exchange their opinion on the latest development. They agreed that both sides need to stop the engagement in sensitive areas to prevent another escalation.

However, in the end of August, India again accused China of taking aggressive and provocative military action in the South Bank area of Pangong Lake, in order to take control of the region, change the status quo. Fortunately, China failed due to the precautionary measures India had taken. The spokesperson of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected to admit there's any transgression in the border area from China, reiterating that both sides were still engaging through diplomatic and military approach.<sup>37</sup>

The next meet up of high-ranking officials were on September, when the Indian Minister of Defense Raksha Mantri met his counterpart, Minister Wei Feng-He of China

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<sup>35</sup> Rahul Shrivastava, "Galwan: How PM Modi's All-party Meet May Unfold, Open Ready with Tough Questions," *India Today*, 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/narendra-modi-all-party-meet-galwan-valley-china-border-tension-1690689-2020-06-19>.

<sup>36</sup> Nayanima Basu, "India, China Special Representatives Talks Key to Keep the Peace, Should Continue: Experts," *The Print*, 2020, <https://theprint.in/india/india-china-special-representatives-talks-key-to-keeping-the-peace-should-continue-experts/429373/>.

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Zhao Li-Jian's Regular Press Congress on June 28th," *Government of People's Republic of China*, 2020, <https://reurl.cc/mqej8M>.



in Moscow for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting in September.<sup>38</sup> The two foreign ministers met subsequently to exchange opinions. Minister Wang from China expressed that it is normal for two great powers to have some skirmishes, the critical thing is that those should not become the obstacles between the two, hindering the progress of bilateral relation. Minister Subrahmanyam emphasized that solving border conflicts was not the prerequisite of the amelioration of Sino-India relation. He believed that both sides had the same target: restore peace and tranquility along the border line as soon as possible.<sup>39</sup>

Based on the mutual understanding, they reached five consensuses. First of all, they both agreed to abide by an array of prior agreements, including not to escalate the conflict. Second, troops from both sides should keep a necessary distance from each other. Third, they should by all means restrict themselves from crossing the Line of Actual Control. Forth, they must keep the tunnel between the two countries open, so that they could still negotiate through diplomatic or military section. Last but not least, after the tension is eased, they should build mutual trust through new confidence-building measures to prevent future conflicts from happening.<sup>40</sup>

Several meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) were held afterwards, at the meantime, meetings between Senior Commanders were also ongoing, the last time held on January

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<sup>38</sup> Shankhyaneel Sarkar, "At SCO Meet, Rajnath Singh Tells China to Restore Status Quo at LAC," *Hindustan Times*, 2020, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/at-sco-meet-rajnath-singh-tells-china-to-restore-status-quo-at-lac/story-ylvhTnX21W0A9A8nEsFRRK.html>.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Geeta Mohan, "Border Standoff: India, China Hold 20<sup>th</sup> WMCC Meeting, Agree to Work for Complete Disengagement in All Friction Points Along LAC," *India Today*, 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/india-china-hold-20th-wmcc-meeting-agree-to-work-for-complete-disengagement-in-all-friction-points-along-lac-1751008-2020-12-19>.

24<sup>th</sup>, 2021.<sup>41</sup> It was widely regarded as the temporarily end of Galwan Valley conflict. In its report, India held an affirmative attitude toward the result of the meetings, while China also believed that these negotiations had helped the overall development of bilateral relation.

Based on the pattern of diversionary policy, I have reasons to believe that conflicts are still a possible scenario of future border situation. This doesn't mean the confidence building measures are rendered completely obsolete, they still function as a buffer between two states, preventing border conflicts from developing into a larger scale war. Also, it worked as a foundation of a positive ambience, so that the two states could proceed the enhancement of their partnership in other domains.

### 4.3 The Revocation of Kashmir's Autonomy Status

In August, 2019, both *Rajya Sabha* (Council of States) and *Lok Sabha* (House of the People) of India pathed the bill which altered the status of Kashmir permanently: The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill 2019.<sup>42</sup> The bill repealed the special status Kashmir enjoyed under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which conferred it to own a separate constitution and autonomy over the internal administration of the central government. Laws passed by the Indian parliament would not automatically take effect in Kashmir, unless the parliament of Kashmir gives its concurrence.<sup>43</sup> Certain policies promulgated by the central government are not applicable to Kashmir without the permission of the autonomous government.

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<sup>41</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, "19th Meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs," *Government of India*, 2020, <https://reurl.cc/DgkoQR>.

<sup>42</sup> Ministry of Law and Justice, "The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill 2019," *Government of India*, 2019, <https://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2019/210407.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> K. Venkataramanan, "Explained: How the Status of Jammu and Kashmir Is Being Changed," *The Hindu*, 2019, <https://reurl.cc/MAQlpm>.

The new bill cancelled all the privileges Kashmir previously entitled. The most outstanding change was the adjustment of administrative district. The whole autonomous region was divided into two new Union Territory: Jammu and Kashmir in the east and Ladakh in the west (see Figure 13), both directly administered by the central government.<sup>44</sup> The bill also posed a huge impact on the structure of the government. The top administrative official used to be “Governor,” which was replaced by “Lieutenant Governor,” whom was designated by the President. It was similar to the system of Union Territory of Puducherry.

Legislative branch of the government was also reformed. The parliament of Kashmir was bicameral at first, a new Legislative Assembly was established in substitution. There are 107 seats in the new parliament, 24 of them would remained in vacancy to symbolize the other half of Kashmir under the governance of Pakistan. The function of law-making of the parliament would still exist, but would be constrained by the Constitution. Furthermore, the right of policing and maintaining public order were both revoked, central government could easily meddle in local governance.<sup>45</sup>

New Delhi’s action fomented tension among three states whose interests were involved in this region. The spokesperson of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a formal protest to Modi’s unilaterally attempt to change the status quo in such a volatile area.<sup>46</sup> Beijing believed that New Delhi had illegally place China’s territory under the governance of India, which would never change the fact that China owned

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<sup>44</sup> Happymon Jacob, “Toward a Kashmir Endgame? How India and Pakistan Could Negotiate a Lasting Solution,” *United States Institute of Peace*, no. 474, 2020, pp. 2-24.

<sup>45</sup> Ministry of Law and Justice, *op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Geng Shuang’s Regular Press Congress on October 31st,” *Government of People’s Republic of China*, 2019, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjdt\\_674879/fyrbt\\_674889/t1712346.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/t1712346.shtml).

sovereignty over this region. The spokesperson also urged New Delhi to solve the territory disputes under the regulation of United Nation Charter, resolution of the Security Council and the bilateral agreements between them.<sup>47</sup>

Figure 13- Proposed Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh



Source: Map of World, 2020, <https://www.mapsofworld.com/india/jammu-and-kashmir/>.

The reaction of Chinese government reflected the significance of the attitude of Indian government toward Kashmir. The autonomous status New Delhi granted to Kashmir for decades could be regarded as the establishment of a buffer zone.<sup>48</sup> Buffer zones are mostly defensive, and serve the strategic goals of the states. Some scholars may find the concept of buffer zone hard to fit in the current international law

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Michael Greenfield Partem, "The Buffer System in International Relations," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1983, pp. 3-26.

system,<sup>49</sup> but they all admitted it functions well for maintaining tranquility between two rival states.

Autonomy could be construed as a quasi-buffer zone. Past Indian government has shown their sincerity by not interfering local affairs of Kashmir, leaving some ambiguity for making peace among other stakeholders. Granting a special status to Kashmir also demonstrated that New Delhi acknowledged that there's a difference between Kashmir and other "ordinary" territory. Despite there weren't any official declaration about their position, it showed that Indian government understood these regions were disputed.

In fact, China and Pakistan also adopted the same measure toward this region. Kashmir under Pakistan's control is called Azad Jammu and Kashmir,<sup>50</sup> which Islamabad conferred with full autonomy. They had their own administration, legislation and even jurisdiction, including its own supreme court.<sup>51</sup> As for China, it was under Tibet Autonomous Region. The similar policy choice illustrated a tacit understanding among them, which was a de facto recognition of the complicated status of the region.<sup>52</sup> It also explained why other two states would express their strong resentment about New Delhi's behavior.

The revocation of Kashmir's autonomous status met several Modi's strategic targets.<sup>53</sup> First, Modi had to meet the expectation of his voters. With a landslide

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<sup>49</sup> Eian Katz, "Buffer Zones in International Law Between Here and There" *The University of Chicago Law Review*, vol. 84, no. 3, 2017, pp. 1379-1424.

<sup>50</sup> Ershad Mahmud, "Azad Jammu and Kashmir's Quest for Empowerment," In *Society and Politics of Jammu and Kashmir*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021,) pp. 79-97.

<sup>51</sup> Azad Jammu and Kashmir Government, "History of AJ&K," *Government of Pakistan*, <https://www.ajk.gov.pk/history>.

<sup>52</sup> Asghar Ali Engineer, "Kashmir: Autonomy Only Solution," *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 30, no. 35, 1995, pp. 2167-2168.

<sup>53</sup> Happymon Jacob, *op. cit.*



victory in May, voters would expect him to pay them back with a more radical policy against Muslims. Kashmir, a region with a majority of Muslim, became an ideal target to cater to his supporters. Second, Modi needed a reasonable excuse to intervene Kashmir, so that it would not become a threat of national security. Finally, it sent a signal to China and Pakistan, reiterating that Modi would not give up on fighting for this region.

All in all, I believe such legislation led by Modi administration accounts for part of his diversionary strategy. The motivation was purely political, a response to the anticipation of his proponents. With an already high popularity, abolishing the privileges Kashmir previously enjoyed would not cost him a penny; conversely, it helped sustained his support bases. Furthermore, domestic audience, both proponents and dissenters, would move their focus to this particular legislation, instead of other issues which may require more attention.

The policy appeared to be a domestic policy on the surface, which Modi could argue that it was merely an adjustment of internal administrative district. However, it violated the unwritten rules abided by all three states, which remained a consensus among all parties, that they would not alter the status quo of the disputed region unilaterally until they made a further arrangement of it. This “shared knowledge”, from a constructive perspective, had certainly shaped the behavior of the three states. Modi’s ruthless act of change ruined the balance which was not easy to come by. By this criterion, I believe it could be considered as a diversionary foreign policy in disguise.

## **4.4 Conclusion**

Diversiory foreign policy was originally designed to explain the aggressive behavior of low popularity leaders, either in democracies or autocracies. In democratic regime, leaders or ruling parties face the pressure of re-election, they have to demonstrate their capacity of securing their national interest in time, or at least plant a positive impression in the minds of the voters, which doesn't require them to conquer their opponents or win a war. Although it is not the case for autocratic leaders, there is still a possibility for them to take on challenges within the ruling circle, they are also required to show an iron fist on certain national security-related issues.

India, as far as I am concerned, displayed a distinct pattern or dynamic of the diversionary policy. It shares some similarities with the conventional discourses of the theory. Modi also tended to take the most common approach of diversion: engagement of a conflict. Despite the different origin, location and result of the two border conflicts analyzed in the chapter (see Table 9), they both showed Modi's unreserved determination and unfear of embarking on a military clash with China.

On the surface, it was an act reflecting the fortitude and perseverance of the administration, which certainly won a lot of support from the domestic audience. I would argue that it also served Modi's political interest, which was one of the core essences of diversionary strategy. Deploying troops and belligerent behaviors could be sugarcoated as a patriotic act. Whatever the outcome is, ruling party could harvest the reputation of securing their national interest. Moreover, those supports for use of force can out-spilled to other sections, which could lead to the victory of either nationwide or local election, stabilizing the base of support for Modi.

Table 9- Comparison between Doklam and Galwan Valley Dispute

|  | <b>Doklam Dispute</b> | <b>Galwan Valley Dispute</b> |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------------|
|  |                       |                              |



| <b>Time</b>                | June 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2017                      | May 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2020                                     |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Incentives for Modi</b> | Presidential Election,<br>General Election        | Pandemic, Local Elections                                      |
| <b>Another Stakeholder</b> | Bhutan, Mainly Supports<br>India                  | Pakistan, Mainly Supports<br>China                             |
| <b>Casualty</b>            | Several injured from both<br>sides. <sup>54</sup> | 4 PLA soldiers and 20 Indian<br>soldiers killed. <sup>55</sup> |
| <b>Subsequent Events</b>   | Wuhan Meeting                                     | Special Representative<br>Meeting, WMCC                        |
| <b>Domestic Reaction</b>   | Winning the Presidential<br>Election              | Boycott Chinese Products,<br>Winning most Local Elections      |

*Source: Illustrated by the Author*

Modi had achieved his goal after both disputes. In the presidential election, the candidate from BJP, Ram Nath Kovind, won the seat by 65% of the votes. It also built a good atmosphere for the upcoming campaign of general election. As for 2020, BJP won by landslide in local elections. One of the most distinguished examples was Gujarat, BJP won all eight seats which were previously held by INC lawmakers.<sup>56</sup> The ruling party also overturned the result in Madhya Pradesh, one of the most populous provinces in central India. They won 19 out of 28 seats, which were 18 more comparing

<sup>54</sup> Sanjeev Miglani, Fayaz Bykhari, "India, China Soldiers Involved in Border Altercation: Indian Sources," *Reuters*, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-china-idUSKCN1AV29F>.

<sup>55</sup> The Economic Times, "China Admits Four PLA Soldiers Killed In Galwan Valley Clash with Indian Army," 2021, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-officially-admits-five-military-officers-soldiers-killed-in-galwan-clash-with-indian-army/articleshow/81102120.cms?from=mdr>.

<sup>56</sup> Karan Manral, "Gujarat By-election Results 2020: List of Winning Candidates as BJP Wins all 8 Seats," *Hindustan Times*, 2020, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/gujarat-by-election-results-2020-list-of-winning-candidates-as-bjp-wins-all-8-seats/story-KFNW9DLjppFe38h3IwGLuK.html>.

with their last election.<sup>57</sup> Similar results also took place in provinces like Manipur and Karnataka, where were not deemed as the support base of BJP.<sup>58</sup>

Boycotting Chinese products was a byproduct of the fully ignited nationalist sentiment of Indians. They were upset about the border conflict as well as outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, both propelled them to boycott Chinese products as a revenge.<sup>59</sup> The Modi administration also acted as catalyst in the movement, they asked ecommerce platforms to display the country of origin on new products.<sup>60</sup> It was not a difficult decision for the authority since the boycott helped Modi promoted his “Make in India” policy, encouraging citizens to buy products made in India.<sup>61</sup>

Besides the implementation of traditional means of diversionary policy, the revocation of Kashmir’s autonomous status demonstrated the diversity of his approaches. It was a controversial policy because Jammu and Kashmir have remained autonomous since its establishment, no one could predict the ripple effect of the abolishment at that time. In retrospective, despite it was not a foreign policy by definition, it functioned as a diversionary strategy. Fomenting the tension between Hindus and Muslims has always untied the Hindu community behind Modi, which would support Modi no matter what.

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<sup>57</sup> Sidharth Yadav, “Madhya Pradesh Bypolls: BJP Wins 16 Seats, Secures Government,” *The Hindu*, 2020, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/madhya-pradesh-bypoll-election-results-2020/article33068480.ece>.

<sup>58</sup> The Times of India, “Manipur Assembly Bypolls: Independent Candidate Wins One Seat,” 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/imphal/counting-of-votes-for-manipur-assembly-bypolls-under-way/articleshow/79141364.cms>.

<sup>59</sup> Kenneth Rapoza, “India Goes All in On Boycott China,” *Forbes*, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2020/07/10/india-goes-all-in-on-boycott-china/?sh=6b6708916e19>.

<sup>60</sup> Kirtika Suneja, Alnoor Peermohamed, “Boycott China: Display Country of Origin by August 1, Ecommerce Companies Told,” *The Economic Times*, 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/display-country-of-origin-by-aug-1-govt-to-ecomm/articleshow/76864214.cms>.

<sup>61</sup> Grady McGregor, “How India’s Made in China Boycott Could Backfire,” *Fortune*, 2020, <https://fortune.com/2020/06/30/india-china-boycott/>.

New Delhi's unilaterally action of revision deeply irritated other two stakeholders in the region. We can't affirm Modi was intended to provoke China and Pakistan, but the outcome was certainly beneficial for him. He reunited the nation after him, constructed himself and his party as the best choice of guarding the nation's interest. That was reflected on the result of the general election in 2019, which BJP won in an even wider range comparing with 2014.

To put it in a nutshell, I believe the three cases discussed in this chapter presented also the characteristics of Modi's diversionary policy. He would not initiate a war himself, but he would definitely take advantage of the ongoing conflict to achieve his political goal. China is a better target than Pakistan because skirmishes with China were easier to manipulate, both sides have the basic consensus of not letting the border skirmishes harming the current partnership. Confidence building measures would take place after the conflicts, yet their effectiveness was questionable. The Kashmir's case showed his resilience of adopting such strategy, not restricted by the ordinary framework of diversionary policy that we usually see.

# Chapter 5- Findings and Conclusion

## Research Findings

The whole decision-making process of Modi government carrying out its diversionary policy is separated into three sections in the thesis, namely, the external factors, the internal mechanism and the policy outcomes. While analyzing these elements, I argue that actors, no matter domestic or foreign, all contribute to the final outcome of the policy.

Actors and factors pose impact in two ways. Some may act as the catalyst or even the igniter of the policy. Their existence encourages Modi administration to take on a more antagonistic policy toward China. The others set some ground rules for Modi to obey, preventing such policy to go overboard, developing into a comprehensive military conflict. In the table below, I would categorized all of the actors or factors I have discussed in previous chapters into two: encouragements or limitations (see Table 10), corresponds to the two different functions they played respectively.

Table 10- The Actors and Factors of Modi's Diversionary Policies

| Category         | Actors / Factors   | Influence to Diversionary Policy  |
|------------------|--------------------|---|
| External Factors | Historical Factors | <b>Limitation.</b> Provided Past Patterns of Interaction.                                 |
|                  | Agreements         | <b>Limitation.</b> Legally Binding Documents Mitigate the Tension.                        |
|                  | China's Policy     | <b>Encouragement.</b> Asymmetrical Perception Enlarges New Delhi's Room for DFP.          |
|                  | Pakistan           | <b>Encouragement.</b> DFP Toward China can also be Regarded as Hostility Toward Pakistan. |
|                  | Russia             | <b>Encouragement.</b> Seize the Chance of Being the                                       |

|                           |                                   |  |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
|                           |                                   | Mediator Between the Two.  |
|                           | United States                     | <b>Encouragement.</b> Strengthening their Alliance with the Quad, Balancing against China.                     |
| <b>Internal Mechanism</b> | Modi Himself                      | <b>Encouragement / Limitation.</b> Hindutva Ideology and Emphasis on Economic Development.                     |
|                           | Ministry of External Affairs      | <b>Limitation.</b> Highlighting the Importance of their Collaboration and Economic Partnership.                |
|                           | Ministry of Defense               | <b>Encouragement / Limitation.</b> Deployment of Troops Alongside the Border and Appeals to Peaceful Solution. |
|                           | Ministry of Commerce and Industry | <b>Limitation.</b> Economic Dependence on China.   |
|                           | Indian National Congress          | <b>Encouragement.</b> Underscoring their Difference with INC's Weak Response to China's Emergence.             |
|                           | Bharatiya Janata Party            | <b>Encouragement.</b> Considering China as a Threat Historically.  |
|                           | Think Tanks                       | <b>Encouragement.</b> Negative Impression to China At Large.   |

*Source: Illustrated by the Author*

The table above enunciates how internal or external actors and factors influences Modi's China policy. Limitations mostly derives from the historic background and the governmental departments of India. Both their past interactions and the agreements they signed provided an interactive pattern for Modi government, which depict the redline of China. Officials also appear to prefer negotiation more than the use of force. However, sometimes their actions were not in sync with their declarations. In spite of the peaceful appeals from their officials, the reality may develop in a diametrically

direction.<sup>1</sup>

As for the encouragements, it can be roughly separated into two groups. The first I would call the type of positive reinforcement; it indicates that India's aggressive policy to China coincides with their interest or strategic goals. Therefore, they would not reject or even encourage Modi's military action in border area, such as think tanks in India or countries like the United States.

The second category is the type of negative reinforcement, which means they have a different policy inclination with Modi government, so that they would not consent with India's tough response to China. Nevertheless, they are the main opponents or rivalries of Modi administration, so their dissensions actually encourage Modi government to adopt diversionary policy. The two prominent examples are the opposition party: Indian National Congress and the main rival of India on the global stage: Pakistan.

All of the actors or factors analyzed in the thesis allowed Modi to adopt diversionary policy in a way, and he also got the ideal outcome from his perspective. Due to Doklam dispute, his party won the presidential election of 2017. Although president in India is more of a ceremonial figure, he still possesses certain power in legislative, executive and judicial branches.<sup>2</sup> Galwan Valley dispute helped BJP won more seats at local parliament of Madhya Pradesh, which were previously held by INC lawmakers. And the revocation of Kashmir's autonomous status not only allowed him

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<sup>1</sup> Both Doklam disputes and Galwan Valley disputes showed that despite New Delhi showed their intention to a peaceful solution in the first place, these disputes still lasted longer and took place repeatedly.

<sup>2</sup> A. G. Noorani, *Constitutional Questions and Citizens' Rights: An Omnibus Comprising Constitutional Questions in India: The President, Parliament and the States and Citizens' Rights, Judges and State Accountability*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005,) pp.3-68.

to win the general election of 2019 by a landslide, but helped him remain high popularity even after the election.

In conclusion, Modi demonstrated a new type of diversionary foreign policy, which was also smoothly executed. The atmosphere of domestic politics and on the international stage allows him to pick up a fight with China, hardly bearing any risk. The high expected gains and low risks impelled Modi administration to implement its diversionary strategy.

I would anticipate the same pattern occurred repeatedly under Modi administration if the fundamental conditions for such tactic to success have not changed. The policy would only fail under two conditions; first, when Beijing no longer tolerates their small skirmishes with India, any provocative action would lead to stark retaliation. Second, domestic audience express their fervent hope of enhancing diplomatic relation with China; then, the trick would no longer summon their support like it usually does.

### **Situation of South Asia**

Diversionary policy establishes unnecessary volatility between India and China, which happens to be the two dominating powers in South Asia. States like Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are caught between the two major powers, which would have to deal with their relation with both India and China carefully.

In this section, I am going to take a closer look at the influence to South Asian countries. As the hegemon in the South Asia, India has led the process of integration within the region. Take South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as



an example,<sup>3</sup> the integration among South Asian states spanned in many different issue areas, such as agriculture, environment, social affairs, education and tourism. It has explicitly showed India's intention of cementing its traditional sphere of influence. With this goal in mind, the biggest external threat from their perspective would be China, who is pursuing the same goal.

China has shown its ambition of meddling in the regional order of South Asia, especially with its Belt Road Initiative, placing investments in several South Asian states to expand its leverage over those countries. It obviously contradicted India's national interest in this area, rendering the situation difficult for small states in the region. They are placed in an impasse which they could not afford to offend either sides, but any policy slightly inclined to one would be offensive to the other. In order to understand their situation, I will analyze it from both political and economic aspects.

Table 11- Amount of Trade with South Asian States (2020, Million USD)

|                   | <b>India</b> |         | <b>China</b> |         |
|-------------------|--------------|---------|--------------|---------|
|                   | Exports      | Imports | Exports      | Imports |
| <b>Bangladesh</b> | 8200.85      | 1264.74 | 15075.54     | 799.7   |
| <b>Bhutan</b>     | 738.6        | 405.73  | 13.56        | 0.03    |
| <b>Maldives</b>   | 226.57       | 6.00    | 275.69       | 5.77    |
| <b>Nepal</b>      | 7160.35      | 711.61  | 1167.47      | 16.26   |
| <b>Pakistan</b>   | 816.64       | 13.97   | 15357.67     | 2124.3  |

<sup>3</sup> There are eight member states in SAARC, includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.; South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, "About SAARC," 2020, <https://www.saarc-sec.org/index.php/about-saarc/about-saarc>.

|                  |         |        |        |        |
|------------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>Sri Lanka</b> | 3800.91 | 903.69 | 3842.7 | 317.76 |
|------------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|

*Source: Department of Commerce, Government of India; General Administration of Customs, Government of People's Republic of China.*

The table above showed the total amount of trade among South Asian countries with India and China. Among these countries, Bhutan and Pakistan are the only two which have a partial reliance on either India or China. The other four states can not afford to give up either party, striking a balance between the two is the primary issue they have to cope with.

In fact, the competition between India and China of their economic influence could actually be beneficial for them, the fierce contest between the two would require them to invest more in these peripheral states to expand their influence. Therefore, the best response of theirs would be taking part in all the projects led by the two great powers, such as the Belt Road Initiative by China and South Asian Free Trade Area by India.<sup>4</sup>

Political situation is far more complicated than the economic one. Basically, states in South Asia have a deeper political tie with India due to geographic proximity and historic backgrounds. Nevertheless, the emergence of China has changed the dynamic of interaction in South Asia. The direct impact toward these states is that the political parties could be roughly categorized into pro-India and pro-China parties (see Table 12).

The political decoupling of India and China derived from Modi's diversionary policy would bring two major impacts. For one, the domestic political situation in these states would be polarized since every election equals to a decision between

<sup>4</sup> Signed in January 2004 and came into effect in January 2006, all members of SAARC joined in the agreement.; Department of Commerce, "Overview of South Asian Free Trade Area," *Government of Sri Lanka*, <https://reurl.cc/eErd8L>.

bandwagoning India or China. For the other, leaders of the states should still carefully nurture their ties with both sides despite the preference in their mind. It would take more wisdom and courage for the leaders to navigate through such tumultuous situation.

Table 12- The Pro-India and Pro-China Parties in South Asia

| Country                       | Pro-India Party            | Pro-China Party               |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Bangladesh<sup>5</sup></b> | Bangladeshi Awami League   | Bangladesh Nationalist Party  |
| <b>Maldives<sup>6</sup></b>   | Maldivian Democratic Party | Progressive Party of Maldives |
| <b>Nepal<sup>7</sup></b>      | Nepali National Congress   | Communist Party of Nepal      |
| <b>Sri Lanka<sup>8</sup></b>  | Sri Lanka Freedom Party    | Sri Lanka People's Front      |

*Source: Illustrated by the Author*

All in all, for most South Asian states, they would prefer a better Sino-Indian relation, so that they would not have to pick sides between the two great powers. However, the diversionary policy implemented by Modi revealed that the bilateral relation between the two would be volatile in the foreseeable future. Except for those who have a coherent preference between the two, most South Asian states would have to carefully manage their relation with both India and China. In other words, the region would remain a battlefield for India and China to compete the capability of exerting

<sup>5</sup> Mu-Min, Chen, "The New Realm of Competition Between India and China, the First-handed Observation of Bangladesh," The Storm Media, 2017, <https://www.storm.mg/article/219378?page=1>.

<sup>6</sup> Tien-Sze Fang, "The Development of China-Maldives Relation: Momentum and Limitations," International and Public Affairs, vol. 1, 2015, pp. 81-104.

<sup>7</sup> Mu-Min, Chen, Deciphering India: The Uncertain Emerging Power, Taipei: Wunan, 2016, pp. 161-164.

<sup>8</sup> Zheng, Wang, Feng, Ye, "China-Sri Lanka Relations in the Context of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road: Motives, Challenges and Prospects," *Asian Perspective*, vol. 143, no. 3, 2019, pp. 481-503.

their influence.

## **Research Outlook**

Modi's policies toward China were the main target analyzed in this thesis. With a diversionary policy approach, we have a clear framework to examine the adventurous foreign policy designed by the Modi administration. Yet, I still believe there are some potential issues worth future researches.

Despite I have explained the reason of choosing China as the object of diversionary policy in previous chapter, Pakistan remains a probable target if Modi decides to enlarge the scale of their policy someday. In the article, I believe China surpasses Pakistan as the target of the diversionary policy because of risk control and consideration of the political interest. However, Pakistan is still the primary opponent of India from every aspect, it would not take a lot of effort to elicit the resentment to Pakistan from the Indian people.

Someday BJP government may figure out an approach to overcome the risk of a full-blown war, and they may also totally neglect their support from Muslims and their sympathizer or completely ignore the repercussion of stirring up historic hatred. Then, the prerequisite of taking a diversionary approach toward Pakistan would be met. In this case, I believe India's diversionary policy toward Pakistan would be a topic with great potentiality.

As for the level analysis in this thesis, despite my attempt to include all the factors influencing the outcome of the policy, there is still room for improvement. India, as the second most populous country in the world, has far more domestic interest groups than

the three mentioned in third chapter. I believe they all play certain roles on leveraging Modi's China policy from different aspect. For instance, Tibet has been a contentious and sensitive topic between India and China since their political leader, Dalai Lama went into exile. The diaspora of Tibetan in India would have leverage over India's policy.

On the international level, some other states could also be taken into consideration. Japan is a salient example. Situated at northeast Asia, Japanese government placed high premium on their relation with China. On the one hand, China has become their biggest exporting partner since 2020,<sup>9</sup> and Japan also participated in several economic integration led by China in the Asian Pacific.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, the emergence of China leads to a deep unsecured sentiment of Japan, their revisionist behaviors and expansion-oriented policies drives Japan to build a closer partnership with its traditional allies. Generally speaking, Japan actually shares the dilemma and uncertainties with India. As a member of the Quad, Japan cooperates with India on some security issues, which makes them another major stakeholder of Modi's policy to China.

The other dimension deserves further research is the expansion of the connotation of diversionary theory. The mainstream diversionary policy theory still focuses on taking advantage of military actions as the approach of diverting domestic audience's attention. Wars, needless to say, remains the most effective and efficient mean to forge public opinion within a state. However, I believe the fundamental conditions for wars

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Finance, "Trade Statistics," *Government of Japan*, <https://www.e-stat.go.jp/en/statistics/00350300>.

<sup>10</sup> John West, "The China-Japan Economic Relationship is Getting Stronger," *Marsh McLennan*, 2020, <https://www.brinknews.com/the-china-japan-economic-relationship-is-getting-stronger/>.

to occur have changed. Nations now have a basic mutual understanding of regarding the use of military as the last option. Such consensus is best reflected in Article 33 of the United Nation Charter,<sup>11</sup> which suggests all nation to solve their disputes with peaceful means, such as negotiation, enquiry, conciliation, arbitration and mediation.

With the emergence of new universally accepted disciplines, orthodox methods of implementing the diversionary policy become less and less viable. Party who initiates a war for domestic political interests may be accused of committing war crimes; meanwhile, they cannot guarantee the support of their citizens if their action lacks of legitimacy. Under these circumstances, states would have to find a substitution of the conventional military approach. In other words, the implementation of diversionary foreign policy should not be limited to the demonstration of hard power.

The essence of diversionary policy lies in whether the government has successfully constructed the public's opinion. Adopting an aggressive foreign policy would create an image of a strong and functional government, enhancing the chance of the incumbent to win the next election. I would argue that the key component of the diversionary tactic is propaganda, rather than the use of force. From a result-oriented perspective, the goal is forming a positive impression of the current government and ignore their incompetence simultaneously. In modern days, media usually plays the role of framing the public's impression toward the authority. Therefore, I believe there would be a paradigm shift in diversionary theory, from a military-based to a dissemination-based policy.

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<sup>11</sup> United Nation, "United Nations Charter," <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/chapter-6>.

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