

India's China Policy on Conflict Management under Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Liberalism Perspective

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Abstract

Objectives: This study aims to analyze India's border dispute management policy towards China under Prime Minister N. Modi. Despite differences, both India and China wish to maintain a stable relationship for cooperation due to development needs and the trend of increasing interdependence. Liberalism theory suitably explains India's policy, as states can cooperate based on common interests rather than complete harmony.

Method: The paper employs a qualitative analysis method to examine India's conflict management policy regarding the China-India border issue under PM Modi (2014-2020). The findings indicate India adopts a pragmatic policy aimed at controlling and managing conflicts with Beijing over boundary questions.

Results: This article initially studies India's conflict management policy towards China based on liberalism theory. Accordingly, while India previously took harsh countermeasures, the country now maintains an assertive policy to defend territorial sovereignty while pursuing conflict management with Beijing to prevent escalation into all-out war.

Conclusion: The study suggests India's policy shift stems from economic interdependence and the trend of international cooperation, demonstrating India's strategic thinking influenced by factors like historical context, strategic culture, ideology, politics, and Modi's worldview building on predecessors. The findings conclude that competition in the border region causes "mistrust" in the India-China relationship. However, interdependence from globalization necessitates a peaceful, stable environment for India's economic development, prompting Modi to implement a policy of cooperation and competition with China. Although striving for peace and stable development, India will never compromise on territory or borders with China.

Keywords: India, China, boundary questions, N. Modi, conflict management, liberalism.

سياسة الهند تجاه الصين بشأن إدارة الصراع في عهد رئيس الوزراء ناريندرا مودي من منظور الليبرالية

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ملخص

الأهداف: تهدف الدراسة إلى تحليل سياسة إدارة النزاعات الإقليمية، حيث ترغب كل من الهند والصين الحفاظ على علاقات مستقرة بينهما، ويمكن تحقيق التعاون من خلال أوجه التشابه المحددة بدلاً من الانسجام، بالإضافة لذلك، قد يتعايش التعاون والمنافسة. تلقي نظرية الليبرالية الضوء على سياسة إدارة الهند للنزاع الحدودي مع الصين في ظل رئيس الوزراء ن. مودي.

المنهجية: تستخدم الورقة طريقة التحليل النوعي لدراسة سياسة إدارة النزاع فيما يتعلق بقضية الحدود الصينية الهندية تحت رئاسة رئيس الوزراء مودي (2014 - 2020) وتشير النتائج إلى أن سياسة إدارة الهند للنزاع تنبع من براغماتية نيودلبي، الهادفة إلى إدارة النزاعات مع بكين بشأن المسائل الحدودية.

النتائج: تعد المقالة دراسة أولية لسياسة إدارة الهند للنزاع بناءً على النظرية الليبرالية. حيث كانت الهند تتخذ في الماضي تدابير مضادة قاسية؛ وتتجه البلاد إلى الحفاظ على سياستها الحازمة للدفاع عن سيادتها الإقليمية ومتابعة إدارة نزاعاتها تجاه بكين، لمنع تصاعد النزاعات إلى حرب شاملة.

الاستنتاجات: توصي الدراسة بتغيير سياسة الهند، النابعة من الاعتماد الاقتصادي والتعاون الدولي، ويظهر التفكير الاستراتيجي للهند متأثر بالسياق التاريخي للبلاد وثقافتها وخلفيتها الأيديولوجية والعوامل السياسية ورؤية مودي العالمية. تخلص الورقة أن المنافسة في المنطقة الحدودية تسببت في جعل العلاقة السياسية بين البلدين في حالة "عدم الثقة". ومع ذلك، استدعى الاعتماد المتبادل وتأثير العولمة وجود بيئة سلمية ومستقرة لتنمية الاقتصاد الهندي، مما دفع رئيس الوزراء إلى تنفيذ سياسة لإدارة النزاعات مع الصين. وعلى الرغم من أن السياسة تسعى دائمًا إلى الحفاظ على السلام، فإن الهند لن تقبل أي تنازل عن الأراضي أو الحدود مع الصين.

الكلمات الدالة: الهند، الصين، المسائل الحدودية، ن. مودي، إدارة النزاعات، الليبرالية

1. Introduction

Global politics have experienced a transformation and tectonic change. As a result, under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India has been "rising" (Liem & Thao, 2021, p.43). In fact, India's rise is the adjustment of economic development policies and its foreign strategies under the inevitable movement of a great power in a new century (Binh 2019). The adjustment was demonstrated in the country's conflict management policy towards China. Before Prime Minister N. Modi assumed office, India was under the leadership of the Indian National Congress, who pursued a great history of a "Glorious India" and took it as the country's core foundation (Huong, 2022, pp. 160-162). The Congress considered itself the guardian of India's independence, democracy, and complete unification. After the partition of India into India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, India's nationalism has been doing its utmost in defending its national sovereignty or safeguarding its borders against invading forces (Kiet, 2023). Therefore, boundary questions are the most significant issue to India's nationalism under the Congress's leadership (Vaishnav, 2019). The great power's nationalist tendency has further complicated the border issue by employing assertive and harsh measures against "external invasion" (Kapesa, 2023). With Prime Minister N. Modi's administration, under BJP's leadership, a great power's nationalism plays a crucial role in the country's foreign policies; nevertheless, besides succeeding the assertive stance, the Modi administration has pursued a policy of both cooperation and competition (a typical trend for liberalism), while also applying a more flexible approach to border issues with its largest trading partner - China, instead of following the idealism of Congress.

India's China policy under Prime Minister Modi is a set of strategic responses from a peacefully rising power towards its contrarian neighbor China's aggression in the region, bearing the hallmarks of a power inclined towards peace, cooperation and always wanting to maintain order, security and stability for human development. Therefore, Prime Minister Modi's policy of managing conflict with China is one of both cooperation and competition with China in the context of interdependent economies, where any conflicting actor will directly impact the functioning of the world economy. Thereby, Prime Minister Modi's policies for managing conflict with China include a policy of cooperating with China as a partner, a policy of restraint and maintaining the "status quo" when Beijing is seen as a rival of India, a policy of balancing power when China is seen as a countervailing force, and a policy of managing conflicts related to the India-China territorial dispute when China is seen as a security challenge for India. Among them, cooperation and conflict across many fields in diverse forms, deployed at multiple levels, is India's key policy towards China. These policies not only safeguard national interests but also reflect India's perceptions of China. India-China border tensions and China's rise require India to take harsh steps. Nevertheless, as India's largest trading partner and its economic gain from China, India should be flexible in its policies on the two sides' boundary questions. Those policies are aimed at making progress on both sides' border tensions, by which the Modi government's goal is to achieve a "comprehensive set of solutions" without any concessions to China. Making every attempt to resolve the boundary questions, the Modi Government has always demonstrated India's "bold and assertive position" on the eastern part of its disputed territory with China. India's conflict on land, Vietnam's on sea.

Liberalism emphasizes cooperation in international relations that says cooperation can be achieved by specific similarities rather than harmony or unity. Moreover, cooperation and competition may coexist. According to the Hoang Khac Nam scholar, cooperation tends to increase and gradually replace conflicts in international relations (Nam, 2017). India might tackle threats if taking harsh measures to compete directly with China at the global level. Hence, both India and China wish to maintain a stable relationship with each other under the world context, the trend of growing dependence, cooperation in international relations, and development needs. Accordingly, the theory of liberalism suitably sheds light on India's border dispute management policy towards China over their boundary questions. Narendra Modi officially assumed office as the 14th Prime Minister of India in May 2014. 2020 is the first year of his second term - a reasonable period to comprehensively summarize, evaluate, and compare the continuity, adjustment, and achievements in India's border policy towards China.

Literature review

India and China are two major countries in the world and India - China relations are of great interest to Western, Indian

and Chinese scholars, so there are many research works on these two subjects. In particular, many researchers are interested in India's foreign policy under Prime Minister N. Modi, including India's policy towards China. The most striking thing is the "Adjusting India's Foreign Policy under Prime Minister N. Modi" by Ngo Xuan Binh (2017, ed.). This book analyzes the influencing factors and adjustment contents of Prime Minister Modi's foreign policy, clarifies the achievements and problems posed in India's foreign policy. The rise of China is one of the main influencing factors for India's policy adjustment under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, prompting India to choose partners to pursue its own interests. Therefore, India's foreign policy towards China is now reflected in bilateral diplomacy and alliance diplomacy aimed at resolving disagreements over border issues, economic cooperation and balancing China's influence on land and sea. However, since the research period of this project is limited to the end of 2017, the evaluation of India's foreign policy achievements and problems mainly stays at the end of 2017 (the third year of Prime Minister Modi's term).

In addition, there are many other researchers' scientific works, such as: "Jawaharlal Nehru-Biography and Career" by Nguyen Cong Khanh (2001); "Adjustment of Foreign Policy of the Republic of India from 1991 to 2000" by Tran Thi Ly (2000); "Relations between India and some countries in the region and implications for Vietnam" by Le Thi Hang Nga (editor, 2019); Proceedings of international seminar on "India-China Strategic Competition and its Impact on Countries" organized by Vietnam Institute of India and Southwest Asia in November 2020; Paramita Mukherjee is the author of "China and India: History, Culture, Cooperation and Competition". "Modi's New China Policy, Observer Research Foundation", Jayshree Sengupta (2018); Shrikanr Paranje (2014) with "India's Strategic Culture: the making of National Security Policy", Routledge - Taylor and Francis Groups, India; Shrikant Paranje published "India's Strategic Culture: Formulation of National Security Policy". Tan Chung (2015) with "Himalaya Calling: The Origins of China and India", World Scientific; Rajiv Sikri (2011) has the article "The Tibet factor in India - China Relations" published in Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 64 (2); Ying Zhu, Deepak Sardana, S. Tamer Cavusgil (2020) "Weathering the Storm in China and India Comparative Analysis of Societal Transformation under the Leadership of Xi and Modi", at Publishing House Routledge, Taylor and Francis Groups; Jabin T. Jacob (2017) has the article "China's Belt and Road Initiative: Perspectives from India" published in China & World Economy, Vol. 25 (5).

There are numerous studies on India and China, but there has not been any in-depth research on India's policy towards China under Prime Minister N. Modi. The research contents of India's foreign policy towards China are usually in the short time when Prime Minister N. Modi came to power or this content is often expressed in works on foreign policy of India. India in general. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in the fact that it will highlight the objectives, principles, content, and implementation of India's conflict management policy towards China under Prime Minister N. Modi (2014 - 2020).

Method research

The research paper examines India's conflict management policy towards China under Prime Minister Modi from a liberal perspective. The study's timeframe is primarily limited to 2014-2020. The paper mainly employs a qualitative analysis method by surveying secondary data relevant to the research topic. Specifically, the international relations research method aims to understand the emergence and content of India's China policy from the perspective of the interplay between geostrategic factors and the geopolitical interests of major countries in international relations. Additionally, the policy research method seeks to clarify policy formation by analyzing the influence of internal and external factors, as well as the objectives, principles, content, implementation, and impact of the policy. Furthermore, the historical research method is used to analyze historical events and phenomena that occurred during the same period but in different spaces, to elucidate the interrelationships and mutual influences of these events within a specific historical process. Finally, the content analysis method, utilizing diplomatic events, is employed to explain the implementation of India's conflict management policy towards China.

In Section 1, the paper will focus on analyzing the content of India's conflict management policy towards China under Prime Minister Modi (2014 - 2020), thereby revealing the reasons and objectives for Modi's policy of both cooperation and competition with China in the context of political tensions between the two countries due to border conflicts. In Section 2,

the paper will analyze Modi's implementation of the conflict management policy with China through three specific cases: the Doklam Logjam (June-August 2017), tensions in Jammu and Kashmir, and the Galwan Valley clash (May 2020). By analyzing these cases, it will show that despite the two sides experiencing severe conflicts and a resurgence of strong nationalism within both countries, a "political" solution aimed at stabilizing the political situation and avoiding war escalation was always the preferred approach by Prime Minister Modi and Chinese leaders.

Research Results and Discussion

1. Goals of India's conflict management policy towards China

India's conflict management policy toward China aims to facilitate the stability of India-China relations. As both are emerging powers with different national comprehensive strengths, this difference does not create a very large gap that could allow one country to impose dominance over the other's national policies and security interests. Therefore, the balance of power, economic interdependence, and the need for stable global economic development have strongly influenced India's conflict management policy toward China under Prime Minister Modi. This policy has a mixed color of cooperation and competition, cooperating in economic development, supporting a multipolar world order, and restraining political differences in the disputed border areas that could escalate into armed conflict; competing for power in important geo-political regions with the two countries' security interests in the region, such as Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, the East Sea, and enhancing the competitive development of national potentials, raising the status and role of emerging powers in the 21st century. Through this, Prime Minister Modi's conflict management policy with China has always viewed China as an important economic partner but also as the number one strategic competitor in the region.

Both the Indian National Congress (INC) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have long underlined that China is India's geostrategic rival in Asia (Rajan Menon, 2014), and asserted that their view would not change. However, things have become more and more complicated over the past two decades. The China Youth Daily compared the two countries to two football teams reporting, "The China-India competition is like a football match, in which China took the lead in the first half with a high score. The second half is getting started as India has been entering the Modi era" (Uyen, 2022). The statement signifies that Modi's adjustment in India's foreign policy towards China is to illustrate the impossibility of playing "the big game" under the old rules (Vietnam News Agency and Economic News, 2014).

The Modi's policy is demonstrated evidently through India-China boundary questions. Pertaining to those questions, the policy is aimed at controlling and managing their disagreements/conflicts as well as preventing them from escalating into all-out war through dialogue and trust-building to minimize tensions. In the visit to China (on May 15, 2015), together with China's Premier Li Keqiang, Prime Minister Modi had a talk on Chinese media, highlighting, "... On the vexed boundary questions, we agreed to continue to explore a fair, reasonable, and mutually acceptable resolution both reiterated our strong commitment to make all efforts to sustain peace and tranquility in the border region ... sensitive to each other's interests; strengthen mutual trust and confidence; continue to manage our differences, and seek solutions to outstanding issues" (Modi, 2015). India-China border tensions are bilateral and involved in third countries on the northern border such as Pakistan, Nepal, and Bhutan. During the first three years, after Prime Minister Modi took his office, the border negotiations made neither any achievements nor progress regarding the Special Representative Talks between the two countries. Nevertheless, after the Doklam Plateau incident, both sides made their commitments to resolving their conflicts through dialogue (China Media Project, 2017), in which India underlined that they would make every effort to exercise considerable restraint and take non-war measures on their boundary questions. Under pressure from political parties and media, India's government attempts to resolve their border disputes peacefully through diplomatic means (Zhang & Li, 2013).

Through analyzing and evaluating India's policy towards China, it shows that it stems from various different bases. From the liberal perspective, there are several main reasons as follows: (1) Stemming from the tendency of cooperation and competition in international relations; (2) It illustrates Modi's pursuit of mercantilism or economic nationalism in his foreign policy. Additionally, China is seen as a huge market bringing opportunities for Modi's economic initiatives to

succeed, especially for Indian companies globally; (3) China is considered India's top trading partner (Chaulia, 2016). Moreover, there are some other important reasons: (4) China is a neighboring power of India, the geographical proximity requires Prime Minister Modi or Chinese leaders to have a skillful foreign policy to resolve differences when their national capabilities are not too disparate; (5) Since the US has withdrawn resources from the Middle East and shifted to the Asia-Pacific region (Torki & Salameh, 2023), the intensifying US-China competition in this region has forced China to concentrate resources to counterbalance the US and maintain a policy of both cooperation and competition with India (Kiet, 2023). Through this, the US reducing resources from the Middle East to intervene in the issues in dispute with China, especially the Taiwan issue, has indirectly helped India divert China's resources (Serhan et al., 2017). India has taken advantage of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) to increase its power and voice before China in the region, indirectly limiting China's moves that cause disputes in the disputed border areas with India in the Himalayas; (6) "The mighty Himalayas have separated the two greatest civilizations of Asia, while also effectively preventing an all-out armed conflict in this treacherous region" (Kiet, 2023). Therefore, stemming from these premises, the Indian government has intensified its cooperative programs with China in its foreign policy in recent years.

Through a set of multi-faceted forms of diplomacy, after the standoff at Doklam, the two countries have made several attempts to bring about a positive transformation of the boundary questions. The standoff was considered a border "crisis" at Doklam plateau (as mentioned in India) and Dong Lang (as mentioned in China) in June 2017. Tensions at Doklam demonstrated India's decisiveness and China's "assertiveness". By the 2017 face-off, the India-China border tensions remains high, as a "smoldering furnace" that could turn into an armed conflict as it had been in decades (My, 2018). After the BRICS Summit in Xiamen (in September 2017) and a RIC (Russia, India, China) Foreign Ministers' meeting in New Delhi (in December 2017), the China-India border region has come to be more peaceful. In December 2017, India's National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval, and China's State Councilor in charge of managing foreign affairs, Yang Jiechi, concluded the 20th round of Special Representative Talks on the India-China boundary questions. Accordingly, "the two sides agreed that pending the final resolution of the boundary question, it is necessary to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas" (Sana Hashmi, 2018). The agreement indicated that India-China ties (known as two Asian giants) have been gradually breaking the deadlock since late 2017, especially after the Doklam standoff, thereby signifying positive developments in their bilateral relationship. Besides, India's conflict management policy is also illustrated in the Galwan valley clash (in May 2020). Despite the fact that the Government of India took countermeasures in the savage brawl between the two countries that left people dead, they managed to control the conflict and prevent it from escalating into war.

It is clear that after the standoff at Doklam (in 2017) and the deadly clash at Galwan Valley in Ladakh, a "political" solution is the optimal choice since both India and China were profoundly aware that they would suffer heavy losses if there happened an armed conflict. The Doklam standoff, thus, proved that even though the conflict between the two nuclear-armed powers may not escalate into a military skirmish, it implies that a "cold war", "cold peace" remains in their relationship (Oanh, 2021). It may be said, despite the differences in the relations with China during the past years, India has always made every effort to keep the conflict "under their control" in the border areas based on their tradition of peaceful, neutral diplomacy and national benefits. The Doklam standoff (in 2017), the Jammu and Kashmir issue (in 2019), and the Galwan Valley clash (in May 2020) illustrated India's restraint and their conflict resolution.

2. Policy implementation

2.1. The Doklam logjam (in June-August, 2017)

In the Himalayas, the Doklam plateau, a thin strip of land bordering Bhutan (Tibet) and the Indian state of Sikkim, is a strategic corridor that serves as a vital artery connecting Indian's central region with its seven critical northeastern states. The dispute erupted when China started to pave a road in a Himalayan region at a plateau in Doklam, over which Bhutan claims its territory; while China considers it a part of its land, India recognizes it as a part of the kingdom of Bhutan. Accordingly, Bhutan opposed the project. As Bhutan's close ally in South Asia, New Delhi stood up for Bhutan's claim

and increased its military presence in the region¹. While the dispute was going on, the status of Doklam has sparked controversy. Some people argued that despite being one of the remotest places in the world, Doklam plays a critical role in Asia's "Great Game" in recent years. Thus, it is under the threat of conflict that is "likely to happen" (Thanh, 2017). A British politician and economist of Indian origin, Meghnad Desai, claimed on India Today, "It is probable for India to have an all-out war with China within a month". Besides, an editorial on the Washington Post comparing Doklam to a ticking time bomb said, "China and India, two nuclear-armed nations, have come close to the brink of conflict over a paving road ... At present, the two countries' soldiers confronted each other, barely a few hundred feet apart. The conflict demonstrated no signs of abatement since it illustrated their growing ambitions and rising nationalism". In addition, a commentary on Al-Jazeera issued a similar warning, "Two Asian giants, a land of a third of the world population, are once again on the brink of war" (Etzioni, 2017). Nevertheless, after more than 70 days of deployment at the border region since June 16, 2017, the two sides ended the standoff and agreed to disengage as well as withdrawing their troops from the disputed area. An Indian official at the Ministry of External Affairs (India) told the AP News Agency that the two sides agreed to return to the "status quo ante". The face-off is an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation to show off the two sides' power and maintain the "status quo ante" in the disputed area (Nga, 2017).

According to experts, both India and China made a wise and mature decision since if an armed conflict was triggered, they would suffer "more heavy losses than gains". Besides, the incident proved the effectiveness of Prime Minister Modi's conflict resolution policy, which can be seen below:

First, the Indian government stayed resolute and decisive, as well as making an unswerving decision at the right time. The tenacious conduct of India appeared to have illustrated that New Delhi would agree to settle their differences with Beijing but would not accept Beijing's unilateral efforts to change the status quo. Thus, both sides can only resolve their concerns about each other through diplomatic channels and dialogue. Moreover, cooperating and intervening in Bhutan's issues is not solely making their commitment to its ally - Bhutan, but also preserving its national security since the road that China was constructing will cut off the thin strip of land connecting India's center with its northeastern states in case of war. In addition, strategically, China's action put India into a rigorous test of both reaffirming its commitments to its traditional partners in South Asia as well as New Delhi's security and political role in its sphere of influence.

Second, the Modi government stayed steadfast and restrained. With a determined and decisive policy, being restrained plays a vital role in a country's overall and long-term interests. During the Doklam standoff, Beijing deliberately provoked and pressurized India, especially Chinese media went ballistic in condemning India to threaten New Delhi to withdraw their troops, or they will have to face serious consequences. In response to those warnings, India remained restrained and refrained from issuing harsh and retaliatory statements that could be likely to escalate the situation with Beijing in order to constrain China's aggressive actions towards Bhutan as well as complicating India-China relations.

Third, Modi government managed conflicts to collaborate. The Modi government is profoundly aware that boundary questions are crucial parts in India-China relations as rising powers. Besides, competition and potential conflicts are seen as primary dimensions in multi-faceted relations. Thus, conflict management should not be a passive response, but a measure to resolve conflicts and disagreements as well as creating chances for the two countries to enhance their cooperation in other fields.

Fourth, the Indian government keeps improving and strengthening its capacity to become readily responsive and proactive. It is necessary to have a combination of resources such as diplomacy, military, and other capabilities to resolve such a complex and sensitive issue like boundary questions as well as pressurizing their counterparts. In the Sino-India border war of 1962, compared to China, India was engaged passively since its economic and military sources were less

¹ India and Bhutan signed a Friendship Treaty in 1949 and revised it in 2007. The treaty allowed India to interfere in Bhutan's affairs to help protect the country's security. In addition, Bhutan requested India's involvement to resolve its national security concerns. Bhutan is the only country in the region with which China has no formal diplomatic relations. That said, all communication is channeled through their missions in Delhi [Le Thi Hang Nga, August 20, 2017].

developed than China. As a result, India had to suffer a crushing defeat. Nonetheless, under Prime Minister Modi, India has become different. In terms of economic and military power, although the country's sources are not equal to China, they are fully capable of retaliating against China's aggressive actions proactively. Amidst the ongoing tensions at Doklam, speaking at India's Independence Day Celebration, Prime Minister Modi underlined that "National security is our top priority. Whether by sea or border, space or cyber, India is now capable of addressing every security challenge" (Yadav, 2018). India's reactions and engagement in the Doklam dispute proved New Delhi's answer to Beijing on the country's current economic and military power. Over the past decade, China has questioned India's growing economic and military power. Taking Beijing's perspective, New Delhi's economic and military power is not in a position of equality to China's; however, under a strategic view, India is considered a country with a great potential source of hard power to counter Beijing's leadership ambition as "Asia's leader".

In conclusion, the Doklam standoff highlighted the wisdom of India and China in avoiding armed conflict that would prove costly. It also demonstrated the effectiveness of PM Modi's conflict resolution approach. This involved resolute decisiveness to uphold the status quo through diplomacy, admirable restraint despite provocations to prevent escalation, strengthening comprehensive capabilities to be proactively responsive, and deft conflict management viewing differences as opportunities for collaboration. By exhibiting resolve yet restraint, bolstering national capacities, and embracing a proactive stance, India illustrated a mature strategy balancing firmness and prudence in managing complex disputes while preserving space for productive cooperation with a rising China.

2.2. The Jammu and Kashmir tensions

Jammu and Kashmir is a disputed territory between India and Pakistan. It is said that Pakistan's internationalization of Jammu and Kashmir conflict got China involved in the situation. As China's "all-weather strategic partner", Pakistan requested for China's support when India scrapped a provision in the Constitution and changed Jammu and Kashmir's administrative status from a state granted the power to have its own significant autonomy to a union territory that was directly governed by the central government. Thus, resolving the territorial dispute over Jammu and Kashmir has always been a "hot spot" that could potentially trigger conflicts and disputes among the three parties of China, India, and Pakistan over many years.

In August 2019, given approval by the Indian Parliament and Indian's President, the Modi Government officially abolished Article 370 and Article 35A of the Constitution, thereby granting Jammu and Kashmir special power in the Indian Federation. That said, the Government of India altered the administration of Jammu and Kashmir from a state with its relative autonomy to a union territory, which would be under the central government's administration. Besides, the Modi Government turned Ladakh, a disputed area between India and China, located to the east of Jammu and Kashmir, into a standalone union territory. The new territory would be separate from Jammu and Kashmir and under the direct administration of New Delhi (Ministry of Home Affairs and Government of India, 2019). In response to the reorganization, to internationalize the matter, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan went to Beijing and called on China's support. A Chinese spokesperson criticized India's moves on the reorganization of Ladakh and underscored that "India's actions challenge China's sovereign interests" (Kaura, 2020). In response to China's statement, the Modi government released a statement saying, "India has not meddled in other countries' internal affairs and expects they should do the same" (Chaudhury, 2019). The claim was further affirmed during the Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar's official visit to China in 2019. Xinhua reported that the Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, stated Beijing's clear position on Kashmir and hoped India would "play a constructive role in strengthening regional peace and stability" (Xinhua, 2019). The Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar replied to his Chinese counterpart that "the legislative changes on Jammu and Kashmir are India's internal matter... and not related to the LAC with China" (Ministry of External Affairs, 2019a). In addition, he claimed that India is "willing to exercise utmost restraint and improve its relations with Pakistan" (Xinhua, 2019). The move indicated that India would not accept China's interference or their unreasonable actions on Jammu and Kashmir issue.

The official scrapping of Article 370 and Article 35A of the Constitution on reclassifying Jammu and Kashmir led to a

new disagreement between India and China². Beijing has raised its voice to stand up for Pakistan and helped the country take the issue to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) over India's move to change the Jammu and Kashmir's status quo. However, their joint efforts came to fail since the meeting held on August 16, 2019, most of the UNSC's members argued that it was unnecessary to make any claim or consultation on the Jammu and Kashmir issue. In January 2020, China attempted to internationalize the Kashmir issue again at the United Nations; nevertheless, the country's attempts were not successful as 14 UNSC members refused discussion (Moohan, 2020). The Ministry of External Affairs of India then released a statement saying that Kashmir was a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan and requested "China to accept the global consensus on Kashmir and avoid raising the matter at the United Nations" (Associated Press, 2020). The event was seen as a significant diplomatic win by the Modi government towards China since it proved that India both gained support from the international community and sustained ties with China despite their border disagreements. Moreover, the two countries celebrated the 70th anniversary of their diplomatic relations in 2019. In addition, the two countries' leaders decided to designate 2020 as the "Year of India-China cultural and people to people exchanges" (Ministry of External Affairs, 2019b).

From the content, it can be concluded that Prime Minister Modi's approach in resolving conflicts with China regarding the Jammu and Kashmir issue aligns with the principles of liberalism. The core tenets of liberalism advocate for self-determination, sovereignty, and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations. The Modi government's decision to revoke Article 370 and Article 35A, which granted special autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir, was a manifestation of India's assertion of its sovereignty over the disputed territory. Furthermore, the Indian government's firm stance against China's interference and their rejection of China's attempts to internationalize the Kashmir issue at the UNSC demonstrate a commitment to the liberal principle of non-intervention. India maintained that the matter of Jammu and Kashmir was a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan, effectively denying China's claim to have a say in the matter. Additionally, the Modi government's diplomatic victory in gaining support from the international community at the UNSC reflects the liberal value of collective security and the recognition of India's sovereignty by the global community. Despite border disputes with China, India's decision to celebrate the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations and designate 2020 as the "Year of India-China cultural and people-to-people exchange" highlights its commitment to resolving conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy, another core liberal principle. Overall, Prime Minister Modi's approach to the Jammu and Kashmir conflict with China can be viewed through the lens of liberalism, emphasizing self-determination, sovereignty, non-intervention, collective security, and diplomatic means for resolving conflicts, while upholding the principles of international cooperation and peaceful coexistence.

2.3. The Galwan Valley clash (in May 2020)

During the brawl, India's response seemed to be more assertive while attempting to preserve its conflict management policy. The dispute erupted when both India and China were expanding their military infrastructure in the border area. After taking office as the Prime Minister of India (in 2014), Modi decided to build and widen roads in the four border areas, within 100km of LAC, including Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim to the East, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand to the West. Preceding the Doklam standoff (in 2017), those projects were executed quite slowly; however, after the incident, they had been accelerated, focusing on constructing their military infrastructures such as paving roads, border outposts, fences, parking lots, and floodlights as well as civil infrastructures such as opening roads and parking lots. Galwan Valley is located in remote Ladakh, along the LAC between India and China. The clash began on May 5-6, 2020, after a scuffle broke out between Indian and Chinese patrols on the northern shore of Pangong Tso Lake in Ladakh. By mid-June 2020, the situation was under control. Nonetheless, since 1975, it became more severe and was considered the first bloody hand-to-hand battle that resulted in heavy casualties on both sides. That said standoff in the face-off was the most intense military

² Shaksam Valley, a part of Kashmir belonging to Pakistan (PoK), is now administered by China. The Shaksam Valley was ceded to China by Pakistan in 1963 under a boundary agreement signed by both countries. Nevertheless, India did not recognize the status. The agreement helped pave Karakoram Highway running between Pakistan and China.

escalation between the two countries in the past half-decade. As a result, at least 20 Indian soldiers were killed, while China has not released an official number (Kaura, 2020). The clash led to a dramatic influence on gained achievements of the two informal summits between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping in 2018 and 2019 as well as making a change in Indian policy experts' perception towards Beijing.

Preceding the Ladakh clash, the Modi government maintained the "Wuhan consensus" approach to China. Nevertheless, after the incident, India has begun to take "retaliatory" moves. Specifically, India suspended or withdrew infrastructure projects carried out by Chinese contractors in India. Besides, about 60 Chinese apps have been banned in India (Sunil & Beniwal, 2020). Moreover, on Hong Kong issue, at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) meeting in Geneva on July 01, 2020, the Permanent Representative of India to the UN said, "We (India) are keeping a close watch on recent developments in Hong Kong" and despite not directly referring to China, he underscored that "India expects that the relevant parties will take into account these views and address them properly, seriously, and objectively" (Associated Press, 2020). India has been taking more assertive steps in its relations with China with its economic and geopolitical measures. Despite the long history of ups and downs in relations with China, India has made several attempts to keep things "under control" during their border conflicts. Those attempts have resulted from India's tradition of peaceful, neutral diplomacy and based-national interests.

Thereby showing, in resolving conflicts with China, Prime Minister Modi's government has demonstrated a new approach based on liberal principles. Although India has traditionally upheld peaceful and neutral diplomacy, after the bloody standoff in the Ladakh border region, New Delhi has shown bolder and more assertive steps in its relations with Beijing. Economic sanctions such as banning apps from Chinese companies and suspending infrastructure projects undertaken by China in India are clear signals that New Delhi does not want its relationship with Beijing to continue along the same old path. Additionally, India's remarks on the Hong Kong issue at the United Nations Human Rights Council reflect the Modi government's new stance of not hesitating to criticize China's actions when they relate to national interests. With these moves, it can be seen that India is gradually bringing its relationship with China into the framework of liberalism, where principles such as free trade, democracy, and human rights are placed at the forefront.

Conclusion

Through analyzing the conflict management policy from a liberal perspective, it is argued that it is the interdependence between the two largest (China) and the third largest (India) economies, coupled with the objective factors stemming from the trend of international cooperation in the 21st century, that India under Prime Minister Modi has implemented a peaceful, prudent, robust and pragmatic conflict management policy towards China. India's conflict management policy towards China under Prime Minister N. Modi proved India's "assertive government". The assertiveness profoundly affects the country's foreign policy thinking and fluctuations in India-China relations in the period 2014 - 2019. Remarkably, Prime Minister Modi's assertiveness does not come from a balance change and India's relative power but originates from changes in the country's mindset in deploying its foreign policies that demonstrated evidently on the boundary questions. Under the Modi government, New Delhi's policies towards Beijing are a continuation and an adjusted successor to the former government's policies, especially the principle of strategic autonomy and a position of equality to China. Despite the border disputes between the two countries, India has endeavored to maintain stable development within the framework of "cold peace" between New Delhi and Beijing by implementing a conflict management policy that combines both cooperation and competition towards its top trading partner.

Tensions between India and China over the border dispute have made each relationship always in a state of "lack of trust" in each other. China wants to impose its own version of the "strategic frontier" on India. It is time for India to update its contingency plan on this issue in its response policies. Despite implementing a policy of conflict management with China, India will certainly never accept any territorial or border compromises by its political leaders with China in order to have borders. peace world. In addition, India will also not accept any concessions made by Indian political leaders to China as it will degrade India's strategic position in the eyes of the international community. Therefore, the trend of both

cooperation and competition is an important highlight in Prime Minister Modi's policy of managing conflict with China (2014 - 2020). Through this, the article shows that Prime Minister Modi's policy of managing conflict with China from a liberal perspective reveals a new nature in international relations, not every dispute over national security interests leads to a power competition aimed at the ultimate goal of eliminating the opponent as realist theory asserts (Hong & Hiep, 2014, p.97). On the contrary, the competitive India-China relationship from a liberal perspective shows a competitive relationship aimed at asserting the position and power of a rising power rather than a mutually destructive relationship.

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