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4 *China's Decision for War with India in 1962*

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Why Did China's Leaders Decide for War Against India?

Why did the People's Republic of China (PRC) go to war with India in 1962? What were the reasons for that war from the standpoint of China's leaders? What were the considerations that led the PRC's leaders to opt for large-scale use of armed force then? And how accurate were the views held by China's leaders? These are the questions this chapter addresses.

The 1962 war with India was long the PRC's forgotten war. Little was published in China regarding the process through which China decided for war—unlike in the case of the Korean War, the Indochina wars, the conflicts over the offshore islands in the 1950s, and even the 1974 Paracel Island campaign. Foreign analysts such as Neville Maxwell and Allen Whiting, writing in the early 1970s, were thus compelled to rely on inferences drawn from Chinese public statements.¹ This situation began to change during the 1990s, when a half dozen Chinese publications on the 1962 war appeared. On the Indian side, the publication in 2002 of India's long-classified official history of the 1962 war offered additional new and authoritative material.² While these sources are far from complete, they do offer sufficient new materials to warrant a revisiting of China's road to the 1962 war.

This study will postulate two major, interrelated sets of reasons why China's leaders decided for war with India in 1962.³ Ordered in the chronological fashion in which they preoccupied China's leaders, these two sets of factors were:

1. A perceived need to punish and end perceived Indian efforts to undermine Chinese control of Tibet, which were seen as aimed at restoring the pre-1949 status quo ante there.

2. A perceived need to punish and end perceived Indian aggression against Chinese territory along the border.

This study is also concerned with the accuracy of Chinese perceptions in these two areas. It will attempt to ascertain whether China's decision for war was based, to some degree, on misperceptions rather than on accurate assessment of the situation. I argue that in terms of deterrence along the border, Chinese perceptions were substantially accurate. Chinese perceptions regarding Indian policy toward Tibet, however, were substantially inaccurate.

The historiography of any war is politically sensitive, because it touches on the question of which nation bears responsibility and thus the implicit moral onus for initiating war. The 1962 war is especially sensitive in this regard, and its historiography figures prominently in the contemporary political psychology of Sino-Indian relations—on both sides of that relationship. While a scholar should ideally be oblivious to the requirements of any such pressures, this ideal is hard to realize in practice. Fortunately for a scholar who feels deep empathy with both sides in the 1962 war, this study argues that the two sides share responsibility for that war. India's policies along the border, and especially the Forward Policy adopted in November 1961, were seen by China's leaders as constituting incremental Indian seizure of Chinese-controlled territory, and there is little basis for deeming that view inaccurate. Chinese perceptions of Indian policies toward Tibet were fundamentally erroneous, however, and those Chinese misperceptions contributed substantially to the 1962 war. Hence *both sides* bear the onus for the 1962 war, China for misconstruing India's Tibetan policies, and India for pursuing a confrontational policy on the border.

Regarding the border, this study tests the Whiting-Maxwell hypothesis regarding China's road to the 1962 war by drawing on recently available Chinese accounts of the decision-making process in the People's Republic of China. Broadly speaking, Whiting and Maxwell reached the same conclusion: China's resort to war in 1962 was largely a function of perceived Indian aggression. As noted earlier, Maxwell and Whiting were forced to rely largely on inferences drawn from official Chinese statements at the time of the 1962 war. Newly available Chinese materials allow us to go "inside" the Chinese decision-making process in a way that was not possible in 1962. This offers a useful testing of the Whiting-Maxwell thesis.

Maxwell and Whiting stressed the role of Beijing's concerns regarding Tibet in the formation of Chinese perceptions of foreign threat in 1962. They generally took Chinese perceptions as a given, however, and were not concerned with exploring their objective accuracy. "It is not the purpose of this study to evaluate the accuracy of Chinese charges [against the United

States],” Whiting said regarding Chinese perceptions of U.S. policy, but he went on to note: “Preconceptions can act as filters for selecting relevant evidence of intention as well as determinants of bias in assessing the degree of threat to be anticipated.”⁴ I argue that this was indeed the case with Mao’s authoritative judgments about Indian motives.

Two concepts from psychology are useful for understanding the Chinese perceptual filters that linked Tibet and the 1962 war: fundamental attribution error and projection. Attribution involves an individual’s inferences about why another person acts as he or she does. It is a process beginning with the perception of another person in a particular social context, proceeding through a causal judgment about the reasons for the other person’s behavior, and ending with behavioral consequences for the person making the judgment. A fundamental attribution error occurs when one person incorrectly attributes particular actions to the internal motives, character, or disposition of another individual, rather than to the characteristics of the situation in which that individual finds him- or herself. Commission of a fundamental attribution error entails systematic underestimation of situational determinants of the other’s behavior, determinants deriving, above all, from the political and social roles of an individual and compulsions on the individual arising in particular situations due to those roles. Instead of recognizing that other individuals act as they do because of their particular roles and the requirements of particular situations, observers may attribute their behavior to personal motives or interior disposition. Social psychologists have found this to be very common. There is a pervasive tendency to attribute the behavior of others to interior motivations, while attributing one’s own behavior to situational factors.⁵ Below I argue that Mao committed a fundamental attribution error by concluding that Nehru was seeking to seize Tibet from China.

Projection involves transference by one individual onto another of responsibility for events deriving, in fact, from actions of the first individual. It is very difficult for people to deal with the dissonance arising from the fact that their actions were inept or created pain for themselves and others. Rather than accept the blow to self-esteem and the psychological discomfort that comes from that acceptance of responsibility, individuals will often assign responsibility to some other individual. Thus the person actually responsible is able to reach the comfortable conclusion that he or she was not responsible. The fact that people suffered was not due to one’s own actions, but to the actions of some other person. In this way, the positive self-concept of the first individual is maintained. Below, I argue that India became the main object of Chinese projection of responsibility for the difficulties that Chinese rule encountered, and in fact Chinese themselves created, in Tibet circa 1959.

A premise of the argument developed below is that what leaders think matters. Some realists find it satisfactory to look only at interests and policies, black-boxing or ignoring the specific psychological processes through which leaders arrive at their determinations about interests and policies. It is not necessary or possible to engage this fundamental issue here. But it should be stipulated that the argument below rests on the premise that particular policies derive from specific sets of beliefs and calculations linked to those beliefs, and that different sorts of beliefs and calculations might well lead to different policies.

Tibet and the 1962 War: The Chinese View of the Root Cause

A starting point for understanding the Chinese belief system about the 1962 war is recognition that, from the Chinese point of view, the road to the 1962 war begins in Tibet. Although Chinese deliberations in 1962 leading up to the war were closely tied to developments on the border, Chinese studies of the 1962 war published during the 1990s link Indian border policies to Tibet and insist that Indian border policies derived from an Indian effort to weaken or overthrow Chinese rule over Tibet. Chinese studies of the 1962 war insist that an Indian desire to “seize Tibet,” to turn Tibet into an Indian “colony” or “protectorate,” or to return Tibet to its pre-1949 status, was the root cause of India’s forward policy and the 1962 war. These contemporary assertions mirror the views of China’s leaders circa 1962. In other words, Chinese beliefs about the nature of Indian objectives regarding Tibet deeply colored Chinese deliberations regarding India’s moves along the border.

There is unanimous agreement among Chinese scholars that the root cause of the 1962 war was an Indian attempt to undermine Chinese rule and seize Tibet. The official PLA history of the 1962 war argues that India sought to turn Tibet into a “buffer zone” (*huanchongguo*). Creation of such a buffer zone had been an objective of British imperial strategy, and Nehru was perceived as a “complete successor” to Britain in this regard. Nehru’s objective was seen as the creation of a “great Indian empire” in South Asia by “filling the vacuum” left by the British exit from that region. According to the PLA history, Nehru regarded control of Tibet as essential for “mastery over South Asia” and “the most economical method for guaranteeing India’s security.”⁶ A study by Xu Yan, professor at the PLA’s National Defense University and one of China’s foremost military historians, follows the same line of argument: Nehru aspired and worked consistently throughout the 1950s to turn Tibet into a “buffer zone.” According to Xu, Nehru had

imbibed British imperialist ideology and believed that India should dominate neighboring countries. He quotes Nehru and other early Congress Party leaders about their aspirations that India should lead and organize the Indian Ocean region. Regarding Tibet, Nehru aspired to turn that region into a "buffer zone" between China and India. This was Nehru's consistent objective throughout the 1950s. The "decisive factor" in the deterioration of Sino-Indian relations, according to Xu Yan, was Nehru's policy of "protecting" the Tibetan "splittists" after the Lhasa rebellion of March 1959.⁷

An article by Wang Hongwei of the Chinese Academy of Social Science, and one of China's senior India hands, presents a similar view. Prior to 1947, Britain's objective, Wang argues, was to bring Tibet within its "sphere of influence." Britain sought "Tibetan independence" and continually attempted to instigate Tibet to "leave China" (*tuoli Zhongguo*). Nehru was deeply influenced by this British thinking, Wang argued, through education in Britain and by assimilation of the mentality of the British ruling class. In 1959, the Indian government "supported the Tibetan rebels," permitted them to carry out "anti-China activities" on Indian territory, and even gave some Tibetan rebels military training. Simultaneous with this, India advanced claims on Chinese territory.⁸ Implicitly but clearly, the purpose of India doing this was to achieve Tibetan "independence" by instigating Tibet to "leave China."

One of the most extensive and nuanced Chinese accounts of events leading up to the 1962 war is by Zhao Weiwen, a longtime South Asian analyst of the Ministry of State Security. Zhao's account of the road to war also begins with Tibet and attribution of aggressive motives to Indian policy moves. From 1947 to 1952, Zhao writes, "India ardently hoped to continue England's legacy in Tibet."⁹ The "essence" of English policy had been to "tamper with China's sovereignty in Tibet to change it to 'suzerainty' thereby throwing off the jurisdiction of China's central government over Tibet under the name of Tibetan 'autonomy.'"¹⁰ By 1952, however, the PLA's victories in Korea, in Xikang province (later to become the western part of Sichuan province), the conclusion of the 17-point agreement of May 1951, the PLA's occupation of Tibet, and Beijing's forceful rejection of Indian efforts to check the PLA's move into Tibet had forced Nehru to change course. Nehru now began direct talks with Beijing over Tibet. There were, however, "right-wing forces" in India who "refused to abandon the English legacy" in Tibet and who pressured Nehru in 1959. Moreover, Nehru himself "harbored a sort of dark mentality," the exact nature of which is not specified, but which presumably included aggressive designs on Tibet.¹¹ These factors led Nehru to demonstrate an "irresolute attitude" in 1959. On the one hand, he said that Tibet was a part of China and that he did not want to interfere in China's internal affairs. On the other hand, he permitted all sorts of "anti-China activities and words" aimed against China's exercise

of sovereignty over Tibet. Zhao is more sensitive than other Chinese analysts to the domestic political pressures weighing on Nehru in 1959. Yet even she suggests that Nehru's "dark mentality" led him to give free rein to "anti-China forces" in an attempt to cause Tibet to "throw off the jurisdiction of China's central government."

The attribution to India by contemporary Chinese scholars of a desire to seize Tibet mirrors—as we shall see below—the thinking of Chinese leaders who decided to launch the 1962 war. This is probably due to the fact that published scholarship in China is still expected to explain and justify, not to criticize, the decisions of the Chinese Communist Party, at least on such sensitive matters as war and peace.

Indian Policy Toward Tibet

Assessment of the accuracy of Chinese views regarding Indian policy toward Tibet depends on ascertaining what actually transpired in Indo-Tibetan-Chinese relations in the years prior to the 1962 war. A brief review is thus requisite.

Indian policy toward the PRC takeover was complex. On the one hand, New Delhi opposed Beijing's military occupation of Tibet. In 1949 and 1950, India covertly supplied small amounts of arms to the Tibetan government.¹² During the same period, and while the PLA was preparing to move into Tibet, the Indian government sought via diplomatic protests to the new PRC government to prevent or limit PLA occupation of Tibet. Beijing rejected these Indian protests with stern warnings. New Delhi also initially sought to uphold Indian rights in Tibet inherited from Britain and embodied in treaties with the old Republic of China. These rights included trading missions, representative offices, telecommunications facilities, and small military contingents to guard these facilities in several Tibetan towns. Beijing viewed these rights as products of imperialist aggression against China and unilaterally abrogated the treaties upon which they were based. By 1952 or so, Nehru had accepted China's views of these old treaties and of India's derivative special rights in Tibet. Many in India, including a number of very prominent individuals, though not initially Nehru, were concerned about the fate of Tibet's Buddhist-based and Indian-influenced civilization under rule by the Chinese Communist Party. Nehru became increasingly sensitive to these "sentimental," "cultural" (terms Nehru used) interests in Tibet as the years passed.¹³

On the other hand, India actually helped China consolidate its control over Tibet. In October 1950, India refused to sponsor a Tibetan appeal to the United Nations. When El Salvador sponsored such an appeal, India

played a key role in squashing it. Many governments, including those of the United States, Britain, and many Middle Eastern countries, were willing to follow India's lead on this issue, and India's opposition to the Tibetan appeal to the United Nations was, in fact, a major reason for its nonconsideration.¹⁴ New Delhi also turned down U.S. proposals in 1950 for Indo-U.S. cooperation in support of Tibetan resistance to China.¹⁵ India also played a key role in persuading the young Dalai Lama not to flee abroad and try to rally international support for Tibet, but to return to Tibet and reach an accommodation with China's communist government—an accommodation that occurred with the 17-point agreement of May 1951. Then in 1954, India formally recognized China's ownership of Tibet as part of an effort to reach a broader understanding with China. Again, most countries recognized India's leadership on this matter. After the 1954 agreement between China and India regarding Tibet, the Indian government encouraged the Dalai Lama and his local Tibetan government to assert its autonomy under the 17-point agreement. Perhaps most important of all, until mid 1959, India allowed trade with Tibet to continue unimpeded. Prior to the mid 1950s, when new PLA-built roads into Tibet were opened, India's supply of foodstuffs, fuels, and basic goods was essential to restraining inflation in Tibet created by demand for these commodities due to the introduction of large numbers of Chinese soldiers and construction workers into a region with a subsistence economy.

In mid 1957, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began covert assistance to rebels in the Kham region of southeastern Tibet. Assistance rendered through this CIA program was actually quite limited, totaling only 250 tons of munitions, equipment, and supplies between 1957 and 1961.¹⁶ But CIA operations came to the attention of Chinese intelligence and thus became a concern of China's government. Tibetan refugees who found asylum in northern Indian cities (especially Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Gangtok) in the 1950s also in various ways supported resistance movements inside Tibet. Covert operatives from various countries, including the United States, Nationalist China, and the PRC, were also active in those cities. By late 1958, Beijing began demanding that India expel key leaders of the Tibetan resistance based in India and suppress activities supporting opposition to Chinese policies within Tibet. Nehru sought a middle course, restricting Tibetan activities but refusing to expel Tibetan leaders. A key question, to which we shall return below, is how much Nehru knew about CIA operations in 1957–61.

Once the Tibetan national uprising began in Lhasa on 10 March 1959, India did not wash its hands of Tibetan affairs, as Beijing insisted it do. Rather, Indian media and elected Indian politicians, including Nehru and virtually every other Indian politician, expressed greater or lesser sympathy

with Tibet's struggle. Beijing condemned a large number of Indian moves that it said encouraged the rebellion, including the Indian consul general in Lhasa's meeting with demonstrating Tibetans in the early days of the Lhasa uprising; granting asylum to the Dalai Lama; having official contact with the Dalai Lama; treating the Dalai Lama as an honored guest; permitting the Dalai Lama to meet with the media and foreign representatives; not quashing the Dalai Lama's appeal to the United Nations; granting asylum to ten thousand or so Tibetan refugees who followed the Dalai Lama to India; concentrating those refugees in camps near the Tibetan frontier; not suppressing "anti-China activities" conducted in those refugee camps; permitting or encouraging negative commentary by Indian newspapers about China's actions in Tibet; Nehru raising the "Tibet issue" in India's parliament and making critical comments about China's policies in Tibet; Nehru permitting the Indian parliament to discuss Tibet; allowing "anti-China activities" by protesters in Indian cities; not punishing Indian protestors for defacing a portrait of Mao Zedong; instigating an "anti-China campaign" in the Indian press; restricting trade between India and Tibet; and allowing the Dalai Lama to speak of "a Tibetan government in exile." All these acts, in China's view, constituted "interference in the internal affairs of China."¹⁷ Beijing saw these Indian actions as ways in which New Delhi was attempting to "seize Tibet."

CCP Leaders' Perceptions of Indian "Expansionism" in 1959

As noted earlier, the uniform belief of PRC historians of the 1990s that India wanted to seize Tibet mirrors the beliefs of China's leaders in 1959. In the aftermath of the uprising that began in Lhasa on 10 March 1959, the CCP decided to dissolve the Tibetan local government, assert its own direct administration, and begin implementing social revolutionary policies in Tibet. On 25 March, "central cadres" met in Shanghai to discuss the situation in Tibet. Mao gave his views of the situation. India was doing bad things in Tibet, Mao Zedong told the assembled cadres, but China would not condemn India openly at the moment. Rather, India would be given enough rope to hang itself (*guo xing bu yi*—literally, "to do evil deeds frequently brings ruin to the evil doer"). China would settle accounts with India later, Mao said.¹⁸

Three weeks later, as thousands of Tibetans fled into India, where outraged Indian and international sympathy welcomed them, Mao intensified the struggle against India. On 19 April, Mao ordered the Xinhua News Agency to issue a commentary criticizing unnamed "Indian expansionists."

Mao personally revised the draft commentary.¹⁹ Four days later Mao ordered a further escalation. *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*) should now openly criticize Nehru by name, Mao directed. When Mao was presented with the draft, he rejected it. The draft missed the point, Mao said. The target should not be "imperialism" but "Indian expansionists" who "want ardently to grab Tibet" (*wangtu ba Xizang nale guochu*).²⁰ Days later, on 25 April, Mao convened a Politburo Standing Committee meeting and immediately asked about the status of the revised editorial criticizing Nehru. He then directed that the criticism should "be sharp, don't fear to irritate him [Nehru], don't fear to cause him trouble." Nehru had miscalculated the situation, Mao said, believing that China could not suppress the rebellion in Tibet and would have to beg for India's help. Here Mao implied that Nehru was pursuing a strategy of fomenting rebellion in Tibet in hopes that Beijing would solicit Indian help in dealing with that rebellion. The objective was to maintain Sino-Indian friendship, Mao said, but this could only be achieved via unity through struggle. Nehru's incorrect ideas had to be struggled against.²¹ Implicit in Mao's comments was the notion that Nehru's instigation was responsible for the rebellion in Tibet.

The polemic ordered and revised by Mao appeared on 6 May 1959 under the title "The Revolution in Tibet and Nehru's Philosophy."²² The main charge leveled against India was conduct of an "anti-China slander campaign" being waged by Nehru and the Indian media over events in Tibet. Nehru's main offense against China was what he was *saying* about Tibet, and the encouragement those words gave to rebels in Tibet. In his comments, Nehru denied "that a handful of upper-strata [Tibetan] reactionaries are responsible for the rebellion in Tibet, describes the just action of the Chinese people in putting down the rebellion as a 'tragedy' and expresses sympathy for the rebellion. Thus, he commits a most deplorable error," according to the article. The "vociferous self-styled sympathizers of the Tibetan people" in fact "sympathize with those who for generations oppressed, exploited, and butchered the Tibetan people"—with the "big serf-owners" who tortured and oppressed the Tibetan people under the "cruellest and most savage serfdom in the world." Nehru was spreading such "slanders" against China in Tibet via speeches to the Indian parliament and interviews with Indian newspapers. This "slander campaign" against China had to cease. If it did not, China would hit back: "So long as you do not end your anti-Chinese slander campaign, we will not cease hitting back. We are prepared to spend as much time on this as you want to. We are prepared too, if you should incite other countries to raise a hue and cry against us. We are also prepared to find all the imperialists in the world backing you up in the clamor. But it is utterly futile to try to use pressure to interfere in China's internal affairs and salvage the odious rule of the big serf-owners in Tibet."

Nehru's sympathy for the Tibetan serf-owning class stemmed from the "dual character" of the Indian "big bourgeoisie," which by its class nature "has a certain urge for outward expansion." Thus Nehru and the Indian "big bourgeoisie" strove "to prevent China from exercising full sovereignty over its territory in Tibet." They wanted Tibet to have "a kind of semi-independent status," to be a "sort of buffer zone between China and India."

It is significant that Nehru's most egregious offense was his words. It was these words that were reflective of his "philosophy," of his inner nature, of his class character, of his role as a representative of the Indian "big bourgeoisie" and its ambitions for expansion in Tibet. Mao's close involvement in the drafting of this document makes clear that it fully represented Mao's own views.

The same day that *Renmin Ribao* published this commentary, Zhou Enlai outlined Chinese views for an assembly of socialist country representatives in Beijing. In doing so, Zhou underlined the links between Nehru's words, his "class nature," and his counterrevolutionary objectives in Tibet. Nehru and people from the Indian upper class, Zhou explained, "oppose reform in Tibet, even to the extent of saying that reform is impossible." Their motive in doing this was to cause "Tibet to remain for a long time in a backward state, becoming a 'buffer state' between China and India." "This is their guiding mentality, and also *the center of the Sino-Indian conflict*," Zhou said (emphasis added). "A section of the Indian upper class had inherited England's old policy of saying Tibet is an 'independent country,' saying that China only has 'suzerainty,' or saying Tibet is a 'protectorate.'" All these formulations were violations of China's sovereignty, Zhou said. Nehru and company claimed sympathy for the Tibetans, but "Actually, they sympathize with the serf-owners. Their objective is to cause Tibet not to advance, not to reform, to become a 'buffer country,' to remain under India's influence, and become their protectorate." This was "Nehru and company's" "basic class reaction."²³

The question of responsibility for the crisis in Tibet figured prominently in the contentious talks between Mao Zedong and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in Beijing on 2 October 1959. After a complete disagreement over Taiwan, Khrushchev turned to India and Tibet, saying: "If you let me, I will tell you what a guest should not say—the events in Tibet are your fault. You ruled in Tibet, you should have had your intelligence [agencies] there and should have known about the plans and intentions of the Dalai Lama" [to flee to India]. "Nehru also says that the events in Tibet are our fault," Mao replied. After an exchange over the flight of the Dalai Lama, Khrushchev made the point: "If you allow him [the Dalai Lama] an opportunity to flee to India, then what has Nehru to do with it? We believe that the events in Tibet are the fault of the Communist Party of China, not Nehru's fault." "No, this is Nehru's fault," Mao replied. "Then the events in Hungary are

not our fault," the Soviet leader responded, "but the fault of the United States of America, if I understand you correctly. Please, look here, we had an army in Hungary, we supported that fool [Hungarian Premier Mátyás] Rákosi—and this is our mistake, not the mistake of the United States." Mao rejected this: "The Hindus acted in Tibet as if it belonged to them."²⁴

The proposition that an Indian desire to seize Tibet underlay Indian actions continued to be central to Chinese thinking in the weeks prior to the 1962 war. On 16 October 1962, two days before the Politburo approved the PLA's plan for a large-scale "self-defensive counterattack" against India, General Lei Yingfu, head of the PLA's "war-fighting department" (*zuo zhan bu*), reported to Mao on why India had six days previously launched a major operation to cut off Chinese troops atop Thagla Ridge. Lei had been appointed to head an ad hoc small group established to probe the motives and purposes behind Indian actions. Tibet headed Lei's list of five major Indian motives. "Nehru has consistently wanted to turn China's ethnically Tibetan districts into India's colony or protectorate," Lei reported to Mao. Lei adduced various Indian actions of 1950, 1956, and 1959 to substantiate this proposition. In March 1959, Lei reported to Mao, Nehru "incited the Dalai Lama group to undertake rebellious activity of openly splitting the motherland." Nehru "always wanted to use the strength of a minority of Tibetan reactionaries to drive China out of the Tibetan areas of Tibet, [western] Sichuan, and Qinghai." When Nehru saw this "plot" of using Tibetan reactionaries to split China had failed, he "sent Indian forces to aggress against China's borders." "Yes," Mao said as he nodded in agreement with Lei's conclusions about Tibet, "Nehru has repeatedly acted in this way."²⁵

Typically, Mao Zedong stated the matter most directly and forcefully. Speaking to a visiting delegation from Nepal in 1964, Mao told his foreign visitors that the major problem between India and China was not the McMahon Line but the Tibet question. "In the opinion of the Indian government," Mao said, "Tibet is theirs."²⁶

The Erroneous Nature of Chinese Perceptions of Indian Policy Toward Tibet

The fact that China's leaders saw Indian efforts as attempts to "grab Tibet," to turn Tibet into "a buffer zone," to return Tibet to its pre-1949 status, to "overthrow China's sovereignty," or to cause Tibet to "throw off the jurisdiction of China's central government" does not necessarily mean that those perceptions were accurate. In fact, this core Chinese belief was wrong. This belief, which Chinese analysts explain underpinned China's decision for war in 1962, was, in fact, inaccurate. It was a deeply pernicious

Chinese misperception that contributed powerfully to the decision for war in 1962.

The Indian government indisputably *was* attempting to influence events inside Tibet, as well as relations between the Tibetan local government and Beijing. What is in question is not Indian actions, but the motives and purposes that lay behind those actions.

Nehru's policies derived not from a desire to seize Tibet or overthrow Chinese sovereignty there, but from a desire to uphold Tibet's autonomy under Chinese sovereignty as part of a grand accommodation between China and India—an accommodation that would, Nehru believed, make possible a global partnership between India and China. Nehru envisioned a compromise between Chinese and Indian interests regarding Tibet, with Chinese respect for Tibetan autonomy combined with Indian respect for Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. This accommodation would, Nehru believed, provide a basis for a broad program of cooperation between China and India on behalf of the peoples of the developing countries and against the insanity of a nuclear-armed bipolar Cold War. Nehru believed that by demonstrating India's acceptance of China's ownership and military control of Tibet while simultaneously befriending China on such issues as the war in Korea, the PRC's admission to the United Nations, the peace treaty with Japan and transfer of Taiwan to the PRC, Indochina, and decolonization and the Afro-Asian movement, China could be won to cooperation with India. The two leading Asian powers would then create a new axis in world politics. In terms of Tibet, Nehru hoped that China would repay India's friendship and consolidate the Sino-Indian partnership by granting Tibet a significant degree of autonomy.²⁷

A series of moves by Nehru in 1959 contradicts the proposition that he sought to undermine China's rule over Tibet. Nehru stated repeatedly and publicly that Tibet was part of China and that events there were a Chinese internal affair. When he granted asylum to the Dalai Lama in March 1959, he believed, on the basis of earlier comments by Zhou Enlai regarding such a possibility in 1950, that Beijing would not regard it as an unfriendly act. After the Dalai Lama's flight to India, Nehru initially thought the Tibetan leader could work out a deal with Beijing restoring a degree of autonomy and permitting his return to Lhasa—as had been the case in 1951. After the Dalai Lama's 1959 flight to India, Nehru urged the Tibetan leader to avoid speaking of independence, saying that such a goal was "impractical." Instead, Tibet should seek mere autonomy, Nehru said. India refused to support, and indeed actively discouraged, a Tibetan appeal to the United Nations in 1959 and 1960—as it had in 1950. New Delhi urged Britain and other states not to open contacts with the Dalai Lama and worked to obstruct the Dalai Lama's efforts to establish such contacts. Even after the

U.S. State Department stated in February 1960 that the United States believed the principle of self-determination should apply to the Tibetan people, India did not welcome this move. These moves do not suggest a policy of seeking to overthrow China's control over Tibet. As Tsering Shakya concluded, Nehru's handling of Tibet during 1959-60 (and indeed all the way to the 1962 war, according to Shakya), amounted to an effort to placate Beijing at the expense of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan independence.²⁸

Nehru believed that India had certain "cultural" and "sentimental" interests in Tibet by virtue of several thousand years of intimate interaction between the two countries and the fact that Tibet's unique culture had been deeply influenced by India. These interests were very limited, Nehru believed, and could best be achieved by respect for China's sovereignty over Tibet. Nehru had explained India's interests, and their limited nature, to Zhou Enlai in 1956, and believed that Zhou had been quite reasonable and even generous in his recognition of them. That agreement accommodating Chinese and Indian interests regarding Tibet was to be the foundation for Sino-Indian partnership in Asia and the world. Then came Beijing's discarding of Tibetan autonomy in 1959.

Nehru believed that he and Zhou Enlai had reached a meeting of the minds, an "agreement," in 1956 whereby India agreed to recognize China's sovereignty over Tibet in exchange for China's granting of a significant degree of autonomy to Tibet. This "agreement," according to Nehru, accommodated India's "sentimental," "cultural" interests in Tibet, and China's security and sovereignty concerns in that region, and thus provided a foundation for Sino-Indian partnership. India's encouragement of Tibetans' efforts to uphold their autonomy in the 1950s were, Nehru believed, in accord with China's promises to uphold Tibet's autonomy. During the mid 1950s, Zhou Enlai had been remarkably understanding of India's cultural interests in Tibet, or so it seemed to Nehru. India's various moves to strengthen Tibetan autonomy in the mid 1950s (tutoring the Dalai Lama on the 17-point agreement and the ways he could use it to uphold Tibet's autonomy, etc.) had been in accord with the Sino-Indian agreement. Following the uprising in Lhasa in March 1959, however, China's destruction of Tibetan autonomy "broke" this agreement.²⁹ In 1959, Beijing still had its half of the bargain (Indian recognition of China's sovereignty over Tibet) but had demolished India's part (Tibetan autonomy). Yet Nehru's response was to press Tibet to forgo claims to independence or appeal to the United Nations. Only under the mounting pressure of Indian public criticism, and sharp polemics from Beijing, did Nehru begin to adopt a more sympathetic attitude toward the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan resistance to Beijing. Nehru's clear if implicit objective was to return Tibet to its *pre-1959, not pre-1949*, status quo ante.

Nehru was dismayed in 1959 by Beijing's breaking of what he believed was the agreement between him and Zhou Enlai regarding Tibetan autonomy. He was dismayed too that Beijing apparently did not value India's friendship highly enough to respect its side of the bargain with India. Nehru's strategy was not to oust China from Tibet but to press China to compromise with the modest and limited Indian "cultural and sentimental" interests in that region, a compromise that would permit broad Sino-Indian cooperation on the world scene. Nehru's objective, in other words, was not to "seize Tibet" or deny Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. It was to persuade Beijing to respect India's limited interests in that region within the framework of Indian support for China's sovereignty over Tibet.

A second Indian objective (other than upholding India's "cultural" interest) in Tibet can be reasonably inferred: minimizing the threat posed to India by Chinese military forces in Tibet positioned on India's northern borders. While Nehru and other Indian leaders were not explicit about this, such a concern almost certainly helped inspire their desire to maintain Tibetan autonomy. An autonomous Tibet would be one with fewer Chinese soldiers and Chinese military bases. Again, this does not equate to a desire to "seize Tibet" or cause Tibet to "leave China." Rather, persuading Beijing not to militarize Tibet required reassuring Beijing that India respected and would help uphold China's sovereignty over Tibet, and that there was, consequently, no reason for China to militarize that region. As Nehru told Sadar Vallabhai Patel in late 1949, when Patel pointed out to Nehru the adverse consequences for India of China's impending military occupation of Tibet, since there was not very much that India (or any country for that matter) could do to prevent China from asserting sovereignty over Tibet, it was best for India to recognize Chinese sovereignty and work to secure India's interests within that framework.³⁰ Rather than challenging Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, it is more accurate to say that Nehru sought to persuade Beijing to respect Indian interests regarding Tibet by assuring Beijing of India's acceptance of China's sovereignty over Tibet and convincing Beijing of the benefits that would accrue to China if it compromised with India over Tibet, thereby winning Indian friendship. Nehru's hope was that Beijing would repay India's friendship by keeping the Chinese military presence in Tibet low.

There were also powerful domestic pressures working on Nehru in 1959. Criticism of Nehru's policy of befriending and placating China began to mount in 1958 as Indians became aware that China rejected the legitimacy of the McMahon Line. With China's fierce repression of the Tibetan resistance in 1959, domestic Indian criticism of Nehru's China policies became intense. Nehru struggled to respond to this mounting criticism of his handling of relations with China. He explained the political reality in comments

to parliament on 4 May: failure to grant the Dalai Lama asylum would have won the support of only a "few thousand" Indians, while "hundreds of millions" welcomed the granting of asylum. It was simply "impossible" not to grant asylum, Nehru explained.³¹ Tibetan refugees streaming into India after March 1959 offered firsthand accounts of Chinese vicious repression that were further sensationalized by India's media. There was widespread revulsion in India at China's bloody and brutal repression in Tibet. As Jaiprakash Narayan, one of India's foremost Gandhians, put it in mid 1959: "Tibet may be a theocratic state rather than a secular state and backward economically and socially, but no nation has the right to impose progress, whatever that may mean, upon another nation."³²

Ascertaining the exact relation of Nehru to Tibetan resistance, both armed and nonviolent, and to U.S. covert operations is crucial for determining the accuracy of Chinese perceptions. Regarding nonviolent Tibetan resistance, the evidence is fairly clear: Nehru, and India, did give low-key support to such resistance. Nehru's statements to parliament in 1959, plus his comments to Intelligence Bureau chief B. N. Mullik in the mid 1950s, indicate that Nehru saw strong but nonviolent and unarmed Tibetan resistance to unlimited Chinese rule in Tibet as one way to help maintain a substantial and genuine degree of Tibetan autonomy—while recognizing and accepting Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.³³

Regarding Nehru's attitude toward *armed* Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule, and his knowledge of covert CIA operations in support of that armed resistance, the evidence is, unfortunately, unequivocal. The closest study of India's decision-making process during this period, by Steven Hoffman, concluded: "It is unclear how much India's government knew in 1958 or 1959 about the major CIA program" to support the Tibetan armed resistance.³⁴ Nor does the official Indian history of the 1962 war, published in late 2002, shed any light on this question. Mullik maintained in his memoir that Nehru told him that *armed* Tibetan resistance would be suicidal and counterproductive and insisted that peaceful, nonviolent resistance was the best way. Tsering Shakya also concluded that Nehru and other Indian leaders were not aware until after the 1962 war of the extent of U.S. activities in support of Tibetan armed resistance. They had assumed, Shakya concludes, that Chinese Nationalist airplanes had been making the various mysterious flights protested by Beijing.³⁵ On the other hand, John Knaus, the CIA field officer in charge of covert support for the Tibetan rebels in the late 1950s and early 1960s, points to a communication from an official of the Indian Home Office regarding fighting inside Tibet and the Tibetan insurgents' need for arms. The U.S. government might be interested in this information, the Indian told the U.S. representative. Knaus calls this a "signal" to the United States from Nehru.³⁶ Kenneth Conboy and James

Morrison, in a study based on interviews of U.S. participants in those covert operations, concluded that Nehru and Mullik, at least, knew the general parameters of and tacitly condoned U.S. covert operations in Tibet.³⁷

This author's guess is that that Nehru, Mullik, and perhaps a few other people in the Indian government understood at least the broad contours of U.S. covert operations into Tibet but chose to turn a blind eye to them. Given the scope of U.S. activities among the Tibetan refugee community at that juncture, and given India's good domestic intelligence services, anything else seems improbable. But even if we stipulate that Nehru knew of and turned a blind eye to U.S. covert operations in Tibet, it does not necessarily follow that the Indian objective was to seize Tibet or overturn Chinese sovereignty there. A far more economical explanation, and one in line with Nehru's conciliatory handling of the Tibet issue outlined above, and also congruent with the evidence of Nehru's hope of striking a grand bargain with China, is that Nehru's objective was to create a set of pressures that would induce Beijing to accommodate India's interests in Tibet. In other words, Nehru's turning a blind eye to U.S. covert activities was probably a way of persuading Beijing of the wisdom of securing Indian cooperation in upholding Chinese sovereignty.

It is clear that Nehru sought to persuade and pressure Beijing to grant Tibet a degree of genuine autonomy. It is also probably true that Nehru sought to limit the level of Chinese military presence in Tibet for the sake of India's own security. It is an insupportable leap from these elements of Indian policy to the conclusion that India sought to overthrow or undermine Chinese rule over Tibet. The proposition that because India recognized and acted on interests within Tibet, it was ipso facto attempting to undermine Chinese sovereignty is untenable, although this proposition certainly constitutes one element of the Chinese belief system.

Narrower elements of the Chinese belief system were also clearly inaccurate. The proposition that Nehru sympathized with Tibet's "serf-owning class" and wanted to maintain Tibet's traditional sociopolitical system unchanged is palpably wrong. Nehru deemed himself a socialist, a secularist, and, in religious terms, an agnostic. He had little sympathy for the reactionary, religion-based political system of Tibet. He was also deeply cognizant of the urgent need for reform of Tibet's traditional structures. Indeed, it was partially because of that recognition that he concluded circa 1950 that the CCP would be able to consolidate its rule over Tibet. To some degree, Nehru's conciliatory approach to Beijing's rule over Tibet in the mid 1950s was based on active sympathy with the CCP's mission of progressive reform in Tibet. In sum, the conclusion that Nehru desired to maintain Tibet's traditional system, to keep Tibet poor, or to prevent progress in Tibet was simply wrong.

China's leaders erred in attributing to Nehru a desire to seize Tibet from China, transforming it into an Indian protectorate or colony. Once "expansionist" motives were attributed to Nehru and judged to arise out of his "basic class character," "British influences," or "dark psychology," it followed that China would have to struggle against and punish Nehru and his ilk. A determination that Nehru sought a balanced compromise of Chinese and Indian interests regarding Tibet within the framework of Indian support for Chinese sovereignty, and for the sake of Sino-Indian global cooperation, would have led to a very different Chinese course of action.

This fundamental attribution error must be laid at Mao's door. It was he who first determined, at the central meeting on 23 April 1959, that "Indian expansionists" wanted to "seize Tibet." Mao completely dominated China's foreign policy decision-making process by 1959. Once Mao made that determination, China's other leaders were compelled to chime in. Indeed, even today, China's scholars are still compelled to affirm Mao's erroneous judgment.

The consequence of Mao's fundamental attribution error regarding Nehru was compounded by projection onto India of responsibility for Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule. Confronted with strong Tibetan resistance to Chinese policies in Tibet, Mao and his comrades responded by blaming that resistance on Indian "expansionist" machinations. This too was faulty thinking.

It is certainly true that demonstrations of Indian sympathy such as conveyed by Nehru's comments in March–April 1959 did, to some degree, encourage Tibetan resistance to the dictates of Beijing. Far more fundamental, however, were such factors as those analyzed by Tsering Shakya in his monumental study of Tibet's history: the introduction of large numbers of PLA soldiers and road construction crews into Tibet and the increased demand for foodstuffs and inflation that followed; the socialist reforms—especially collectivization of agriculture—introduced in ethnically Tibetan regions of western Sichuan and the flood of refugees into Lhasa those reforms produced; the civilizational clash between CCP atheism and Tibet's deep religiosity; and perhaps most important of all, the pervasive sense of unease Tibetans felt as they watched more and more Han Chinese pour into the Tibetans' ancestral land, where Han had previously been scarce.³⁸ These factors weighed far heavier than anything India may or may not have done.

Chinese leaders felt very strongly that road building, socialist reforms, suppression of religion, and other Chinese measures in Tibet were "correct" and "progressive." This very strong Chinese sense of self-righteousness prevented them from recognizing the responsibility of their own actions for producing the rebellion against Chinese rule. How could "correct" and "progressive" policies rouse rebellion against them—unless there were outside machinations? It was cognitively impossible for Mao and his

comrades to recognize that their own policies had produced a popular rebellion against them.

Chinese misperceptions of Indian motives in 1959 were linked to the border conflict of 1961–62 (discussed in the next section) in two ways. First, Mao's beliefs about Nehru's desire to "seize Tibet" structured the Chinese interpretation of Indian border policies—especially the forward policy. A more accurate understanding of Nehru's increasingly desperate effort to maintain his cooperative, friendly policies toward China might have produced a more conciliatory Chinese response to the forward policy. If the forward policy had not been seen—as Mao saw it—as part of an effort to "seize Tibet," but as arising from a desire on the part of Nehru to demonstrate toughness and resolve in the face of mounting domestic criticism, the Chinese rebuff of November 1962 might not have been deemed necessary.

The second link between Mao's misperceptions of 1959 and the border conflict of 1961–62 was that Beijing's strident polemics and diplomatic protests in 1959–60 helped propel Nehru toward a more forceful border policy. Beijing's strident denunciations of Nehru's policies in spring 1959 contrasted sharply with Nehru's equivocation during the same period. This discrepancy fueled the mounting chorus of criticism of Nehru's "weakness" and "naïveté" that drove him toward the forward policy. If Beijing had responded to Tibetan events in 1959 not by polemicizing against Nehru, but by lauding and courting him, by finding a few face-saving sops for him regarding Tibetan "autonomy" that Nehru could use in fending off his domestic critics, Nehru might not have felt compelled to prove his toughness on the border issue. Instead of adopting the forward policy, he might have stood by a still-not-discredited friendship policy.

China's Response to India's Forward Policy

If Chinese perceptions regarding India's Tibet actions and policies were deeply flawed, the same cannot be said about Chinese views of India's forward policy. Succinctly stated, the orthodox scholarly view in this regard, established by Maxwell and Whiting, is that, in deciding for war, China's leaders were responding to an Indian policy of establishing Indian military outposts in territory claimed by both India and China but already under effective Chinese military occupation, the purpose being to expel Chinese forces from territory claimed by India. Evidence from recently published Chinese and Indian histories substantiates this traditional view.

Because war is a continuation of policies, it is important to understand the evolution of Chinese policies toward the Indo-Tibetan border. The crucial background was Nehru's rejection of a Chinese proposal—subtly and

unofficially but nonetheless effectively raised by Zhou Enlai during his April 1960 visit to India—that China drop its claims in the eastern sector in exchange for India dropping its claims in the western sector. Such a swap would have given each side legal right to territory already in its possession and most important to each nation's security. Nehru rejected the swap proposal and insisted that China abandon its claim in the east *and* withdraw from Aksai Chin in the west. The grounds for Nehru's position was a belief that there already existed a legally based boundary between India and Tibet going back to the 1914 Simla conference. The question, for Nehru, was whether China would respect that legal and already existing boundary. Chinese leaders, on the other hand, saw the Simla agreement as without legal or moral basis. It had been rejected by China's central government in 1914 and had been implemented by British force majeure during China's century of national humiliation. China was nonetheless willing to accept the McMahon Line as the basis of a settlement, as was intimated by Zhou to Nehru during discussions in 1956 and 1957. By doing this, however, China believed it was making a substantial concession that reasonably required an Indian quid pro quo in Aksai Chin. In the words of the official Indian history, Nehru "did not agree to barter away the Aksai Chin area, under illegal occupation of China, in return for China giving up its unreasonable claim to Indian territory south of the McMahon Line."³⁹ From the Chinese point of view, the offer of an east-west swap was eminently fair and took into consideration the interests of both countries. Its rejection by Nehru was, China's leaders felt, entirely unreasonable.

Three rounds of border talks were held in 1960 following two visits by Zhou to India. Those talks soon deadlocked. Zhou's repeated visits to India were seen by Beijing as further tokens of Chinese sincerity. Then in February 1961, India published in full its final report on the talks, along with an English translation of the Chinese report to India. New Delhi hoped that publication of this voluminous documentary record would cause China to "adopt a reasonable attitude."⁴⁰ Beijing saw it as a further Indian effort to force China to accept an unreasonable and unfair settlement. When Indian representatives found no change in China's position, New Delhi became uninterested in further talks. This led Beijing to charge, in March 1962, that India "refused to hold negotiations." New Delhi replied that while it was prepared for negotiations, Chinese withdrawal from Aksai Chin was "an essential step for the creation of a favorable climate for negotiations . . . regarding the boundary."⁴¹

Unlike with Chinese perceptions of India's Tibetan policies in 1959, there is no basis for concluding that Chinese views of India's border policies were inaccurate. In part this is due to the difference between evaluating an empirical proposition (i.e., what motives lay behind Nehru's Tibetan

policies?) and a normative question (i.e., were Beijing's offers of a border settlement fair and reasonable?). Normative propositions are intrinsically subjective. It should perhaps be noted, however, that had Nehru accepted Zhou's 1960 offer of an east-west swap, he (Nehru) could very probably have carried Indian public opinion with him—and avoided war. Thus Nehru's rejection of Zhou's package-deal solution and his insistence on Chinese abandonment of Aksai Chin must be seen as crucial steps on the road to the 1962 war.

Nehru's insistence on Chinese abandonment of Aksai Chin established a link in Chinese minds between the border issue and China's ability to control Tibet. The road built via that desolate but low snow-fall plateau was then very important to PLA logistic capabilities in Tibet.⁴² Chinese abandonment of that road would have significantly diminished PLA capabilities in Tibet, further increasing pressure on Beijing to compromise with India regarding Tibet. Whether this was, in fact, Nehru's intention we do not and probably never will know. There is, however, no evidence indicating that this was, in fact, India's objective. Steven Hoffman traced Nehru's concern with Aksai Chin to a vision of India's historic boundaries adversely compromised by British colonial bureaucrats.⁴³ The recently declassified official Indian history of the 1962 war also attributes the Indian fixation on Aksai Chin to "national sentiments" roused by "loss of national territory."⁴⁴ Very probably, the powerful but inaccurate Chinese belief about India's desire to "seize Tibet" led to an incorrect Chinese conclusion that Nehru's insistence on Aksai Chin was part of a grand plan to achieve that purpose.

The Militarization of the Border Conflict

The military forces of both sides began pushing into remote and previously mostly unoccupied mountainous frontier regions in 1958 and 1959. Beijing's greater public assertiveness in challenging the McMahon Line in 1958, combined with growing Indian awareness of China's road building in Aksai Chin, led India to begin pushing Indian forces into forward regions. As for China, following the Lhasa uprising in March 1959, the PLA launched an "all-out war" against the Tibetan rebels. The first objective of the operation was to seal the border between the Lokka region of Tibet southeast of Lhasa and India's North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) and Bhutan. By August, the PLA had sealed the border.⁴⁵ That brought Chinese forces into forward areas.

The first incident of bloodshed on the Sino-Indian border occurred at Longju on the Lokka-NEFA frontier on 25 August 1959. That clash apparently occurred, or at least escalated, at the initiative of the Chinese side, but

without the authorization of China's central authorities. Khrushchev discussed this incident with Mao and Zhou during his early October 1959 visit to Beijing. He was dismayed with the spiraling tension in Sino-Indian relations and wanted an explanation of the 25 August incident. Both Zhou Enlai and Mao assured him that the Chinese handling of that incident had been at the initiative of the local commander and without central authorization, and that China desired peaceful resolution of the border problem.⁴⁶

In September, just before Khrushchev's visit, Chinese leaders had met in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, to consider how to avoid further bloodshed on the border with India. Mao, Zhou, PRC President Liu Shaoqi, Beijing mayor and Politburo member Peng Zhen, Mao's secretary Hu Qiaomu, and General Lei Yingfu participated. The meeting began with a report by Lei on the border situation. Lei recounted repeated calls from frontline commanders for "rebuff" (*huanji*) of India's "blatant aggression" against China. Mao became somewhat exasperated at this and observed that conflict was inevitable as long as soldiers of the two sides were "nose to nose." He therefore proposed a mutual withdrawal of 20 kilometers. If India was unwilling to do this, Mao suggested, China should unilaterally withdraw. "Meeting participants unanimously supported Chairman Mao's suggestion," according to Lei Yingfu.⁴⁷ Thus, Chinese forces were ordered to withdraw 20 kilometers from what China felt was the line of actual control and to cease patrolling in that forward zone. Further Chinese measures to decrease tension on the border were adopted in January 1960 (prohibiting target practice, food gathering, exercising, etc., within the forward zone). Tension declined for twenty-three months.

It began to spiral up again in November 1961 when India started implementing its forward policy. According to the official Indian history, before 1961 a "wide corridor of empty area" separated Chinese forward outposts from Indian outposts. But Chinese forces were steadily pushing forward their posts "occupying more and more of the empty area." In an effort to prevent further Chinese advances by demonstrating "that the remaining area was not empty," Indian forces were ordered to "push forward." The assumption underlying this critical decision was that the Chinese were not likely to use force against Indian outposts "even if they were in a position to do so."⁴⁸ Under the new policy, Indian forces were ordered to "patrol as far forward as possible from our [India's] present position toward the International Border as recognized by us . . . [and] prevent the Chinese from advancing further and also to dominate any Chinese posts already established on our territory." As Whiting observed, this new policy "sowed the seeds of conflict."⁴⁹ When Indian forces initially began implementing the forward policy, Chinese forces withdrew when they encountered the newly advanced Indian outposts. This encouraged the Indian side and led to the

further acceleration of the forward policy. According to the official Indian history. "A large number of Indian posts were established quickly."⁵⁰

Shortly after Indian forces began implementing the forward policy, Mao Zedong convened a Central Military Commission (CMC) meeting in Beijing to consider China's response.⁵¹ Mao had earlier asked the Tibet and the Xinjiang military regions for proposals, and those were apparently on the table when the central meeting convened. Mao compared India's forward policy to a strategic advance in a game of Chinese chess in which one side pushes pawns across the centerline of the board, a line known as the Han-Chu boundary, in reference to the frontier between those two ancient Chinese states: "Their [India's] continually pushing forward is like crossing the Han-Chu boundary. What should we do? We can also set out a few pawns, on our side of the river. If they don't then cross over, that's great. If they do cross, we'll eat them up [a chess metaphor meaning take the opponent's pieces]. Of course, we cannot blindly eat them. Lack of forbearance in small matters upsets great plans. We must pay attention to the situation."⁵²

In line with Mao's comments, the CMC ordered China's border forces to resume patrols within the zone 20 kilometers north of the McMahon Line—patrols suspended since October 1959. Accelerated construction of roads to forward areas was also ordered. As the crisis built, Mao Zedong took personal charge of the "struggle with India." Mao stressed to PLA Chief of Staff Luo Ruiqing that the firing of the Chinese "first shot" must be personally approved by himself, Mao Zedong.⁵³

On 26 February 1962, Beijing delivered a lengthy and conciliatory-sounding note to India. The note called for negotiations to reach a peaceful settlement of the boundary problem. India's reply came on 13 March. It reiterated India's standard position that Chinese withdrawal from Aksai Chin was an essential precondition for negotiations.⁵⁴

A while later Mao met again with Lin Biao, then vice chair of the CMC and minister of defense, Zhou Enlai, and Luo Ruiqing. Again the topic was the situation being created by implementation of India's forward policy. Zhou Enlai first reported on India's rejection of China's many diplomatic proposals for negotiations. Lin Biao then reported that Indian forces continued to set up outposts next to Chinese outposts, continued to dispatch patrols into forward areas, and continued to fire on Chinese border defense personnel. Mao noted that it would be hard to make Nehru change course: "A person sleeping in a comfortable bed is not easily roused by someone else's snoring," he commented. After discussion, the CMC decided that the PLA absolutely should not retreat before Indian advances. When Indian forces established outposts encircling Chinese positions, Chinese forces should build even more outposts counter-encircling the new Indian positions. In this fashion, Chinese and Indian positions would develop in an

interlocking, zigzag fashion. But Chinese forces were also to seek to avoid bloodshed. They were absolutely not to fire without orders from above. In this fashion a situation of "armed coexistence" would develop. Mao's comment on this situation was: "Nehru wants to move forward and we won't let him. Originally, we tried to guard against this, but now it seems we cannot prevent it. If he wants to advance, we might as well adopt armed coexistence. You wave a gun, and I'll wave a gun. We'll stand face to face and each practice our courage."⁵⁵

Following this meeting, further orders went out to the Tibet and Xinjiang military regions accelerating construction of new PLA outposts and roads. All levels of the PLA and frontier forces were ordered to report developments immediately, and it was reiterated that lower levels absolutely could not decide matters on their own. At all costs, troops and units were to avoid actions that would cause a further worsening of the border situation. Chinese forces were also ordered to conduct propaganda work toward Indian soldiers, calling out to them on encounters to urge them to stop their aggression against China, extolling the traditional friendship between China and India, and recounting the efforts of the Chinese government to achieve a peaceful resolution of the border issue.⁵⁶

Chinese border forces also abandoned their initial policy of withdrawing when encountering new Indian posts. Chinese forces began standing their ground. According to the official Indian history, "When some Indian posts, for example in the Galwan valley [in Aksai Chin] were established outflanking the Chinese posts, the Chinese attitude changed and became more threatening." Rather than withdraw as previously, Chinese forces countered the Indian move by building positions surrounding the new Indian post and cutting off its supply routes to rear areas.⁵⁷

As Whiting and Maxwell maintained, Chinese leaders believed they were defending territory that they believed was legitimately Chinese and had already been under de facto Chinese occupation for some time when Indian forces arrived on the scene. To fail to contest India's forward policy would be to acquiesce to continual Indian "nibbling" of Chinese territory, resulting, finally, in unilateral Indian establishment of a new de facto line of control between Indian and Chinese territory.

China's abandonment of the initial policy of withdrawal in the face of Indian advances, in favor of the tougher policy of armed coexistence, "clearly showed that the basic assumption behind the Forward Policy decision [that the Chinese would withdraw rather than use force] was no longer valid, and a serious reappraisal of the new situation should have been undertaken" by India. "This reappraisal, however, never took place and the situation was allowed to drift," according to the official Indian history.⁵⁸ Instead of reexamining the assumptions of the forward policy, Indian leaders made that

policy still more aggressive. Rather than merely seeking to preempt Chinese occupation of vacant land, "It was now decided to push back the Chinese posts they already occupied."⁵⁹

In April 1962, India accelerated implementation of the forward policy in the eastern sector, apparently because Nehru believed that the situation there favored India more.⁶⁰ More Indian posts were built on commanding heights near existing PLA outposts, and aerial and ground reconnaissance was increased. This produced a "strongest protest" from China's foreign ministry. "Should the Indian government refuse to withdraw its aggressive posts and continue to carry out provocation against the Chinese posts," the note said, "the Chinese frontiers will be forced to defend themselves."⁶¹ India pushed forward with implementation of the forward policy in spite of China's protests. On 5 May 1962, the first officially protested exchange of gunfire occurred. Another Chinese protest followed on 19 May: unless India "desists immediately" from intrusions into the Longju region, it said, "the Chinese Government will not stand idly by."⁶² By the end of June, the Indian Foreign Office reported that Indian forces had brought under Indian control over 2,000 square miles of territory since the beginning of the forward policy.⁶³ Moreover, in July 1962, Indian Army Headquarters "gave discretion to all post commanders to fire on the Chinese if their [Indian] posts were ever threatened."⁶⁴

Egregious Indian miscalculation regarding China's willingness to resort to military force underlay the increasingly assertive Indian policies that unfolded between November 1961 and October 1962. There was a virtual consensus among Indian leaders that China would not respond with military force to Indian advances, and that if it did, any military response would be extremely limited. A Chinese resort to large-scale military force was deemed impossible. This conclusion was established by Nehru and Defense Minister Krishna Menon, not challenged by Indian military leaders, and, in the judgment of the official Indian history, became unchallengeable political orthodoxy.⁶⁵ In spite of a clear Indian recognition of China's military superiority in the frontier regions, Indian leaders reached the conclusion that China's superiority was irrelevant. If India demonstrated firm intent, China would back down. In the words of the Indian chief of General Staff regarding the final order to Indian forces in September 1962 to drive Chinese forces from atop Thagla Ridge: "experience in Ladakh had shown that a few rounds fired at the Chinese would cause them to run away."⁶⁶

Since our concern is with China's decision-making process, we need not delve into the origins of this monumental Indian miscalculation. It is important to note, however, the twofold impact of this Indian assumption on China's thinking. First, it deeply offended Chinese nationalist pride. China had "stood up," as Mao said when proclaiming the establishment of

the People's Republic in October 1949. It would no longer be bullied by foreign powers. The PLA had fought the United States in Korea and performed creditably, at least in the judgment of China's leaders. Yet here was India acting as though the PLA would turn tail and run rather than fight to defend Chinese territory and honor. Apparently, India had not yet learned the lesson that the Americans had learned in Korea—to respect the power of the new China. The second implication of India's apparent disdain for Chinese power was that a very strong jolt would probably be necessary to cause Indian leaders to acquire a sober appreciation of Chinese power. The gradual hardening of China's response to India's forward policy—ceasing withdrawal when confronted by Indian advances and adoption of a policy of “armed coexistence,” acceleration of China's own advance, building positions surrounding, threatening, and cutting off Indian outposts, steady improvement of PLA logistic and other capabilities in the frontier region, increasingly strong and direct verbal warnings, and by September 1962, outright but small-scale PLA assaults on key Indian outposts—did not cause India to abandon its illusion of Chinese weakness. The final Chinese decision to inflict a big, painful defeat on Indian forces derived substantially from a sense that only such a blow would cause India to begin taking Chinese power seriously.

The Final Five Months

While India's forward policy was gathering steam in mid 1962, Beijing received indications that a war between China and India would not draw in other powers. First, Beijing secured indications from Washington that the United States would not support a Nationalist Chinese attack on mainland China. In late May 1962, Premier Zhou Enlai recalled Ambassador Wang Bingnan from vacation and ordered him to return to his post in Warsaw to ascertain U.S. intentions regarding the Nationalist Chinese invasion then being ostentatiously prepared on Taiwan. (Ambassadorial talks in Warsaw were then the main venue for U.S.-PRC interactions.) The crisis in Laos was still raging, and Zhou was concerned that Laos might serve as a corridor for a possible Nationalist attack. Were Washington to support a Nationalist invasion, a conflict between India and China might become linked to that invasion, possibly touching off a larger conflagration across China's entire southern border. Thus Wang was “extremely relieved” when he heard from his U.S. counterpart in Warsaw on 23 June that the United States did not desire war with China and would not, “under present circumstances” support a Nationalist Chinese invasion of the mainland. Wang later learned that this information played a “very big role” in China's decision-making process.⁶⁷

Next, the war raging in Laos between Laotian communists supported by Hanoi and Beijing and anti-communists supported by the United States was put on hold by a de facto partition of that country. On 23 July, exactly a month after the Warsaw ambassadorial meeting, the major powers signed an agreement at Geneva “neutralizing” Laos. The end of intense fighting in Laos, plus a U.S. pledge not to introduce its military force into Laos (part of the “neutralization” agreement) reduced the prospect that U.S. or U.S.-supported Nationalist Chinese forces might attack China via Laos. This development increased the prospect that a war between China and India would remain limited.

During the Geneva conference on Laos, Beijing also made another effort to halt the Indian advance via diplomatic means. Zhou Enlai directed China's representative, Foreign Minister General Chen Yi, to seek out India's representative, Defense Minister Krishna Menon, and urge him to find ways of preventing the border situation from further deteriorating. This would be advantageous not only to Sino-Indian relations but to the peace of the whole world, Zhou told Chen to tell Menon. Chen Yi was one of the PLA's most combat-experienced PLA generals, having had years of experience fighting Japanese and Nationalist forces with considerable success. One can imagine the meeting in Geneva between this hard-headed general and the idealistic Krishna Menon, who believed in the persuasiveness of moral opinion. On 23 July, the two men met. Chen asked Menon what ideas the “honorable Indian government” had about solving the Sino-Indian border problem. Menon replied that, in India's view, there was no border problem between China and India. The location of the boundary was very clearly displayed on Indian maps. Implicit in this was the notion that the way to a solution lay in Chinese withdrawal from all territory claimed by India. Moreover, this message was conveyed in an arrogant tone of voice, according to the Chinese account. Chen Yi then said that Indian forces were steadily advancing into Chinese territory, and could it be that the Indian representative did not know this? Menon replied that the movements of Indian troops were taking place on Indian territory. He did not wish to argue, Chen said, but the border problem was a “big one,” and the two sides should sit down and calmly discuss it. Chen proposed that he and Menon issue a joint communiqué announcing future talks on the “problem of preventing border conflict.” Menon declined this proposal but said he would report the matter to his government. The next day Chen flew back to Beijing to report to Zhou Enlai.⁶⁸

After hearing Chen Yi's report, Zhou commented, “It seems as though Nehru wants a war with us.” Yes, Chen replied. Menon had showed no sincerity regarding peaceful talks, but “merely intended to deal in a perfunctory way with China.” “At least we made the greatest effort for peace,”

Zhou reportedly replied. "Premier," Chen replied, "Nehru's forward policy is a knife. He wants to put it in our heart. We cannot close our eyes and await death." "We need to discuss the matter with the Chairman," Zhou concluded.⁶⁹

Around July 1962, Mao issued a "twenty-character directive" in response to India's "forward policy." The CMC later embodied Mao's directive in a decision that provided the "general direction" until several weeks before the October war. According to Mao's directive, the PLA should "absolutely not give ground, strive resolutely to avoid bloodshed, interlock [with Indian forces] in a zigzag pattern, and undertake a long period of armed coexistence."⁷⁰ To implement this new "general direction," Luo Ruiqing issued orders to the Xinjiang military region specifying twenty-two measures that PLA frontline troops were to follow. If Indian forces advanced on PLA positions, PLA forces would give warning and urge the Indian forces to withdraw. If the Indian forces did not heed these warnings, the warnings could be repeated two, three, or even more times. Only if Indian forces advanced to within fifty meters of PLA positions and Chinese forces "could not survive without self-defense," would PLA forces "prepare for self-defense." If the enemy then withdrew, PLA forces would not seek to block that withdrawal.

It is not clear whether Luo's twenty-two measures authorized Chinese soldiers to fire on Indian forces closing in a threatening fashion within fifty meters of Chinese forces. Reading between the lines, Xu Yan's account implies that it did. But that is only implicit. It may be that PLA forces were ordered to prepare to fire but not authorized actually to open fire unless first fired upon by Indian forces. In any case, firefights intensified. On 9 July, following deployments the previous day by an Indian platoon cutting off a PLA position in the Galwan valley of the western sector, a *Renmin Ribao* editorial delivered another warning: "The Indian Government should rein in at the brink of the precipice."⁷¹ According to Xu Yan, some Indian forces interpreted PLA restraint under the July CMC guidelines as weakness. The result, according to Xu, was repeated provocations against PLA outposts. In one such "provocation" on 21 July, Indian forces opened fire first on Chinese forces manning a "newly constructed" outpost. Chinese forces returned fire. After a twenty-minute firefight, the Chinese had suppressed Indian fire. The PLA then ceased fire and allowed the Indian forces to withdraw.⁷² The same day, 21 July, *Renmin Ribao* further intensified China's warnings to India: China would wage a "tit-for-tat" struggle with India in the eastern sector, the article said. It also indirectly raised the possibility of a PLA advance south of the McMahon Line and even the eviction of Indian forces from India's entire NEFA.⁷³

These Chinese warnings did not cause Nehru to halt the forward policy or agree to unconditional talks on the border dispute. Beijing noted a speech

by Nehru to the Lok Sabha (House of the People), the popular body of the Indian parliament, on 13 August in which he reiterated that the precondition for negotiations was China's complete withdrawal from all Indian territory it had "unilaterally occupied," that is, Aksai Chin. An Indian note of 22 August formally presented the same demands. From Beijing's perspective, this "closed the door to negotiations."⁷⁴

Chinese leaders spent considerable time in mid 1962 analyzing Nehru's objectives in attacking China. Three main reasons were identified. First, Nehru wished to direct outward internal contradictions within India. Second, he hoped to win international, and especially U.S., support. Third, he hoped to "attack China's prestige in the Third World." Pursuit of these objectives by attacking China was based on the belief, Mao concluded, that China would not hit back.⁷⁵ Notably absent from this Chinese understanding of Nehru's motives was the proposition that Nehru believed that through the forward policy, India was recovering legitimately Indian territory arbitrarily and illegally occupied by China. Again Chinese leaders simply failed to understand Nehru's motives and attributed far-fetched motives to him deriving from his evil class nature.

In August, Lei Yingfu received CMC orders to inspect and report on the situation in the western sector of the Sino-Indian border. Lei's report concluded that PLA forces "without firing could no longer prevent Indian forces from advancing further."⁷⁶ When considering Lei's report, the CMC also noted among Indian public opinion and political personages a rising chorus for the "expulsion of Chinese aggressors from Indian territory."

The situation in the rugged terrain in the Tawang tract east of the Tibet-Bhutan-NEFA tri-border juncture was growing increasingly tense. There the massive Thagla Ridge dominated the local terrain at the forward line of actual control. Indian forces had established an Indian outpost at Dhola at the southern base of Thagla in June 1962 as part of the forward policy and as part of a plan to push Chinese forces from atop Thagla Ridge.⁷⁷ Chinese forces responded by entrenching themselves atop that ridge in August, according to the official Indian history.⁷⁸

By early September, Beijing was warning New Delhi that if India "played with fire," it would be "consumed by fire."⁷⁹ On 8 September, a force of 800 Chinese soldiers descended from the Thagla heights to surround the Indian post at Dhola. Neither side opened fire for twelve days, but this display of overwhelming Chinese power was a clear warning that China would resist the Indian advance. As Whiting demonstrated, there was careful calibration of Chinese verbiage conveying warnings, plus implementation of corresponding moves on the ground designed to give substance to the verbal warnings. Within India, the Chinese military demonstration before Dhola "gave rise to strong public clamor to throw the Chinese out from

Thagla Ridge," in the words of the official Indian history. The Indian government "in its fond belief did not expect serious retaliation from the Chinese and it assumed that whatever mild reaction came from the Chinese; the Indian Army would be capable of neutralizing it." Thus "the Government of India ordered the Army to rid the Thagla Ridge of the Chinese as early as it was [prepared to do it and the Army] accepted the task—both having based their decision on the unmilitary assumption that the enemy would not react strongly and that mere starting of military activity by India would make the Chinese vacate the Thagla Ridge."⁸⁰ On 18 September, an Indian government spokesman announced the government's intention of driving Chinese forces from the Dhola area at the base of Thagla.⁸¹ Indian Army efforts to achieve that objective led to clashes at Dhola on 20 and 24 September.

The increasingly tense armed confrontation at Thagla Ridge forced Mao and other Chinese leaders to reconsider the earlier policy of armed coexistence in late September. The policy had not halted the Indian advance. Mao and other Chinese leaders now began considering administering a large-scale and "painful" military rebuff to Indian forces. Nehru had mistaken China's policy of restraint for weakness, they believed. A number of factors had apparently contributed to an Indian judgment that China would not counterattack, Mao and his comrades concluded. Chinese security concerns were centered on the Pacific coast and regarded the United States and Chiang Kai-shek, while China also faced internal economic difficulties, and Chinese-Soviet relations had soured. China had relatively few troops in Tibet, having withdrawn most of its forces after the successful repression of the Tibetan rebellion circa 1960. On these grounds, China's leaders surmised, Nehru had concluded that China would not counterattack in response to India's forward policy, but would merely issue protests.⁸² In these circumstances, a sharp, major blow was necessary to disabuse Nehru and force him to stop his aggression against China.

Nehru's insistence on pushing the forward policy rendered ineffective China's previous policy of very limited use of force. Confronted with continual Indian attacks, the previous policy of defending Chinese positions with "little blows" no longer worked. Even if Chinese "little blows" in one place forced Indian forces there to retreat, Indian attacks elsewhere would continue. This might cause the entire border region to become unstable. A large and punishing blow was thus necessary. The PLA should strive for a "big blow," for a "war of extermination" (*jianmie zhan*). In Xu Yan's characterization of the thinking of China's leaders: "If we strike, we must strike in a big fashion, moreover wage a war of extermination, resolutely hit the wolf and make it hurt. Only in this way can we completely destroy his aggression and cause the aggressors to receive their proper punishment.

Moreover, we can guarantee that for a long time to come [the aggressors] will not dare to come again to conduct aggression against China's borders."⁸³

In early October (probably on the 6th), China's leaders met to review the escalating conflict with India. Deputy CMC Chair Lin Biao led with a briefing on the situation. Reports from both the Tibet and the Xinjiang military regions indicated continual Indian advance and firings on Chinese outposts in both the eastern and western sectors. Ten Chinese personnel had been killed or wounded, Lin reported. Yet Chinese forces had strictly followed the principle of not firing the first shot, and "have throughout not fired." Even more serious, India was concentrating military forces in both sectors and had deployed artillery to positions threatening Chinese outposts and camps. The situation was rapidly worsening, according to Lin. Reports by PLA intelligence units indicated that Indian forces might undertake an attack on Thagla Ridge on 10 October.⁸⁴ After hearing Lin's report, Mao commented: "It seems like armed coexistence won't work. It's just as we expected. Nehru really wants to use force. This isn't strange. He has always wanted to seize Aksai Chin and Thagla Ridge. He thinks he can get everything he desires."⁸⁵ Then Mao declared himself for war:

We fought a war with old Chiang [Kai-shek]. We fought a war with Japan, and with America. With none of these did we fear. And in each case we won. Now the Indians want to fight a war with us. Naturally, we don't have fear. We cannot give ground, once we give ground it would be tantamount to letting them seize a big piece of land equivalent to Fujian province. . . . Since Nehru sticks his head out and insists on us fighting him, for us not to fight with him would not be friendly enough. Courtesy emphasizes reciprocity.

Zhou signaled his concurrence: "We don't wish for a war with India. We have always striven in this direction [of avoiding war]. We wanted India to be like Nepal, Burma, or Mongolia, and solve border problems with us in a friendly fashion. But Nehru has closed all roads. This leaves us only with war. As I see it, to fight a bit would have advantages. It would cause some people to understand things more clearly."⁸⁶ Mao concurred: "Right! If someone does not attack me, I won't attack him. If someone attacks me, I shall certainly attack him."

Apparently following this consensus among Mao, Zhou, and Lin, a larger meeting of military leaders was convened in the western outskirts of Beijing. Participants included Mao, Zhou Enlai, Chen Yi, Lin Biao, Marshals Ye Jianying and Liu Bocheng, Chief of Staff General Luo Ruiqing, Vice Chief of Staff General Yang Chengwu, head of the PLA General Political Department General Shao Hua, head of the General Logistic Department General Qiu Huizuo, the commander of the Tibet military region, Lieutenant

General Zhang Guohua, and the commander of the Xinjiang military region, Major General He Jiachan.⁸⁷ Mao opened by indicating that war had already been decided upon, and that the purpose of the meeting was to consider problems associated with it. Mao explained: "Our border conflict with India has gone on for many years. We do not want war and originally sought to solve it through peaceful negotiations. But Nehru is not willing to talk and has deployed considerable forces, insistently demanding a fight with us. Now it seems not to fight is not possible. If we fight, what should be our method? What should the war look like? Please everyone contribute your thoughts on these policy issues."⁸⁸

Mao then asked Chen Yi to brief the group on the "diplomatic struggle." Chen traced the problem to 1954, when India had published an official map showing the McMahon Line as a definitive national boundary. At present, Chen said, India "occupies or claims" 1,250,000 square kilometers of Chinese territory. Forty-seven Chinese personnel had been killed or wounded in attacks by Indian forces on the border. China had devoted considerable diplomatic effort to achieving a negotiated settlement, Chen said, but "Nehru is not willing to sit down and talk, and moreover has adopted a provocative forward policy. . . . It seems we can only meet him [Nehru] on the battlefield."⁸⁹

Mao then placed the projected war in a broad historical context. "A war between China and India is truly a most unfortunate event," Mao said. He had recently been reading books on Indian history and was struck by the friendly, beneficial interactions between China and India from the seventh to ninth centuries. After some discussion of those interactions, Mao turned to the history of China-India wars, of which there had been "one and a half." The first war, Mao said, had been in A.D. 648, when a Tang dynasty emperor had dispatched troops to assist the legal claimant to a throne to a subcontinental kingdom—after the other claimant had killed thirty members of a Tang diplomatic mission. A Tang-strengthened force defeated the usurper, who was captured and sent to the Tang capital Chang'an, where he lived out his life. The "half war" came in 1398, said Mao, when Timurlane captured Delhi. This was a great victory, but was followed by the slaughter of over 100,000 prisoners and looting of all precious metals and gems across the land. This was a "half war" because Timurlane and his army were Mongols from both Inner and Outer Mongolia. Mongolia was then part of China, making this attack "half" Chinese. Two key points followed from this history, according to Mao. First, the PLA had to secure victory and "knock Nehru to the negotiating table." Second, Chinese forces had to be restrained and principled.⁹⁰

After Yang Chengwu reported on the military situation in the border regions, Mao called on Ye Jianying to tell the meeting about his impressions

of the Indian Army commander, General B. M. Kaul. Ye had met Kaul during a 1957 visit to India. Even though Kaul had apparently served in the Burma Theater during World War II, Ye said, the Indian commander had no actual combat experience. He also seemed to be a very rigid, if impressive-looking, soldier. Still, he was one of India's most outstanding commanders. "Fine," Mao interjected, "he'll have another opportunity to shine." Mao concluded the meeting by warning that China would find itself internationally isolated during the coming war, but that this would not be the decisive factor. The United States and the Soviet Union would, of course, oppose China's action. So too would many other "uninformed countries." Chiang Kai-shek might "adopt measures." But China needn't fear this isolation, Mao said. As long as the frontline troops fought well, "We shall be in an advantageous position. . . . It's better to die standing, than to die kneeling." If China fought successfully and in an awe-inspiring way, this "will guarantee at least thirty years of peace" with India.⁹¹

On 6 October, New Delhi rejected a Chinese proposal of 3 October to start peaceful negotiations to settle the border issue. Xu Yan terms this a "final effort to secure peace" and asserts that its rejection by India, together with Nehru's declared intent to continue the forward policy, led Mao and the CMC to begin "final consideration" of a large-scale counterattack against India.⁹²

On 6 October, Mao and the CMC decided in principle for a large-scale attack to severely punish India.⁹³ The same day, PLA Chief of Staff Luo Ruiqing received a directive from the CCP center and Chairman Mao authorizing a "fierce and painful" attack on Indian forces. "If Indian forces attack us, you should hit back fiercely . . . [you should] not only repel them, but hit them fiercely and make them hurt."⁹⁴ The 6 October directive also laid out the broad directions of the projected offensive. The main assault was to be in the eastern sector, but Chinese forces in the western sector would "coordinate" with the eastern assault.

The CMC staff was then directed to draw up detailed operational plans for a campaign to expel Indian troops from the area north of the traditional, customary boundary (that is, China's claim line at the southern foothills of the Himalayas) in the eastern sector. It was in the process of this staff work that the idea of terminating the war by a unilateral Chinese halt, cease-fire, and withdrawal was developed. In view of "practical difficulties associated with China's domestic situation," the operational plan developed by the CMC staff proposed that after achieving military objectives, Chinese forces would disengage and end the fighting as quickly as possible.⁹⁵

Chinese leaders began finding other reasons for war with India. They observed an increasingly "hegemonist attitude" by India toward its smaller neighbors, Nepal and Pakistan. In this way, India's relations with these countries "became connected to" the border conflict. On 29 September, for

example, Indian "armed personnel" provoked an incident on the border with Nepal. When the Nepali government expressed anger over the incident, the Chinese government issued a statement of "firm support" for Nepal's "protection of national sovereignty." Beijing noted that some Indians went so far as to suggest that India act to prevent Nepal from becoming a "Chinese satellite." Toward Pakistan, too, Beijing detected a more aggressive Indian policy. In early October, an armed conflict erupted on the East Pakistan-Indian border, which continued with artillery and automatic weapons fire for twelve days.⁹⁶ It seemed to Mao and his comrades that Indian hegemonism was increasingly running amok. In spite of sympathy for Nepal and Pakistan, however, punishing Indian "hegemonism" toward its small neighbors was probably not a major motive for the 1962 war. Rather, this was an example of the common tendency of people facing a difficult decision to seek out and "pile up" reasons substantiating their preferred solution. Doing this mitigates somewhat, at least cognitively, the recognized negative costs of the favored solution.

In deciding for war with India, Mao recognized many difficulties and dangers. Nehru enjoyed great international status, and India was a leader of the nonaligned movement and a prestigious advocate of nonviolence. Both the United States and the Soviet Union were courting India and Nehru. India saw itself as the leader of the "third force" in the world. India's military inferiority to China would play into Indian efforts to depict China as the aggressor. (Indian military forces were about one-sixth of China's, according to China's calculations.) Even among "some Afro-Asian countries," there would be some "misunderstanding." These costs were more than offset, however, by the long-term gains of inflicting a severe if limited defeat on India.

On 8 October, the CMC ordered several additional divisions in the Chengdu and Lanzhou military regions to move into Tibet. All these forces were veteran, high-quality units. Most had previously participated in anti-rebel operations in Tibet and were therefore acclimated to combat operations at high altitudes. The PLA judged Indian forces inferior to the Chinese in combat and war-fighting capability. But uncertainty about Indian military strength led the CMC to concentrate larger forces than might otherwise have been necessary.⁹⁷

Even as the PLA moved toward war with India, Mao continued to mull over vexing problems. Should China permit Indian forces to advance a bit farther into Chinese territory under the forward policy, thereby making clearer to international opinion that China was acting in self-defense? What should be the focus of PLA attack? The major piece of territory in dispute between China and India was Aksai Chin in the west. This suggested focusing the Chinese offensive there. But geographic circumstances for China

were worst in the west. Roads to that region "were not convenient" for the PLA. India's geographic situation in the west was also difficult, making it hard for India to concentrate large forces there. The Chinese objective of inflicting a big, painful defeat on India that would cause it to sober up meant that a "big battle" was required.⁹⁸ A powerful Chinese offensive that met only thin Indian forces would not fulfill that political objective. The east, where India could more readily rush in large reinforcements, better served Chinese objectives in this regard. It was also in the eastern sector that Nehru insisted that the McMahon Line was an "established fact." Focusing the Chinese offensive there would hit at Nehru's "hegemonist attitude" and compel India to accept the fact that negotiation with China was the only way to achieve a complete settlement of the territorial issue.⁹⁹

A "strategy small group" set up in the CMC staff paid considerable attention to problems of conduct of the war. Marshal Liu Bocheng headed that group. On 10 October, Liu laid out four "opinions" regarding the upcoming war. Liu was one of China's leading military strategists and one of China's foremost exponents of mobile warfare.¹⁰⁰ The crux of success in the coming war, Liu argued, was "concentration of local superiority to achieve a swift war and swift decision." It was absolutely vital to concentrate superior matériel, weapons, and forces in one locality to wage a quick battle and achieve a quick decision. The PLA must also absolutely fight well. Victory in the war was a matter directly connected to the prestige of the Chinese army and nation, Liu warned.¹⁰¹ It was thus essential to deploy crack troops. The upcoming fight would not be against border police, but against India's best regular forces, which had participated in World War II. The PLA could not be arrogant in this situation. Nor could it rely on such "mechanistic" tactics as infiltration, isolation, and encirclement. Such measures would not produce victory. The correct approach was to "kill, wound, and capture the enemy" by "gnawing the flesh off their bones," that is by attacking fiercely.¹⁰²

On 9 October, the anticipated Indian offensive to evict Chinese forces from atop Thagla Ridge began. The Chinese positions were deemed too powerful for direct assault, so Indian forces moved to outflank them by seizing a previously unoccupied peak to the west of and outflanking Thagla.¹⁰³ According to Xu Yan, on the evening of 9 October, over a hundred Indian soldiers crossed the stream flowing along the base of Thagla, and closed on a Chinese outpost. The next morning Indian forces opened fire on the Chinese. In response a full PLA battalion (about a thousand men) assaulted the Indian advance force. Eleven Chinese soldiers were killed and twenty-two wounded in the firefight.¹⁰⁴ The intensity of the Chinese response led Indian leaders to delay further offensive operations in the Thagla region, although not to alter the fixed policy of eventually driving Chinese forces

from the ridge. On 12 October, Nehru told the press that Indian forces were still under orders to "free our country" from Chinese occupation—a comment embroidered on considerably by Indian newspapers.¹⁰⁵ Indian forces continued "aggressive patrolling" and "harassing fire."¹⁰⁶

In Xu Yan's view, this Indian attack signaled the beginning of relatively large-scale fighting in the eastern sector.¹⁰⁷ The fact that the Indian side had shot first created a advantageous political situation for China. Chinese leaders also noted that Nehru had made public comments on 12 October (just prior to a trip to Ceylon) about ordering Indian forces to clear Chinese forces from all "Indian territory." This too made clear Nehru's "stubborn and war-mongering attitude," according to Xu.¹⁰⁸

Shortly after the start of the Indian move to outflank Thagla, Zhou Enlai appointed Lei Yingfu and Luo Ruiqing to research and report on the reason for India's "expanded offensive" against China. On 16 October, Lei reported to Mao. Lei laid out five key reasons for India's new offensive posture. The first was a desire to turn Tibet into "a colony or a protectorate" of India—the core Chinese belief discussed earlier. Other reasons adduced were a desire to gain increased U.S. and Soviet military assistance by becoming a part of their anti-China campaign; a desire to "achieve hegemony in Asia" by using anti-China activities to increase India's status with poor and small countries of the Third World; and a desire to divert class and national contradictions within India. The final and probably most important reason adduced by Lei's group was a belief that China was "bluffing." Lei returned repeatedly to the notion that Nehru believed that China "was weak and could be taken advantage of" and "barks but does not bite." Because of U.S.-Soviet-Indian "encirclement" of China, compounded by China's "economic difficulties," Nehru believed "that no matter how they attack us, we shall not hit back." Mao agreed with Lei's analysis: "It seems like it is indeed that sort of a situation. In this case, we cannot but fight a war. Well, since Nehru says we only 'bark but don't bite,' we absolutely must fight. We have no other choice. We might as well go along with him [in fighting a war]."¹⁰⁹

On 16 October, the same day Lei Yingfu reported to Mao, the CMC formally decided to "annihilate" (*jianmie*) Indian forces that had aggressed against Chinese territory in the east.¹¹⁰ This decision apparently involved approval of the war plan drafted by the CMC staff.

When China's leaders made their second crucial 16 October decision for war, they had in hand indications of Soviet support. On 8 October, Beijing had formally notified Moscow that India might launch an attack on China, forcing China to respond. On 14 October, China's ambassador in Moscow, Liu Xiao, had secured guarantees from Khrushchev that if there were a Sino-Indian war, the USSR would "stand together with China." A neutral

attitude on the Sino-Indian border conflict was impossible, the Soviet leader said. If China were attacked, it would be an act of betrayal to declare neutrality.¹¹¹ Chinese leaders attributed this Soviet support, and the stark reversal of earlier Soviet policy of neutrality in the Sino-Indian dispute it entailed, to a Soviet desire for Chinese support in the event of war with the United States over Cuba.¹¹² The Cuban missile crisis would not erupt until 22 October, when President Kennedy announced the U.S. discovery of Soviet missiles in Cuba and the U.S. naval blockade of the island. It seems, however, that Moscow had earlier given Beijing some glimpse of the plan to deploy missiles to Cuba. According to Moscow's timetable, the new deployment of missiles to Cuba was not to be made public, and the anticipated crisis to erupt, until mid November, after the U.S. midterm elections.¹¹³ Thus Chinese leaders may have anticipated a Soviet-U.S. confrontation in late November, coinciding with the second, expanded stage of the projected punitive war against India, unleashed, in fact, on 18 November.

Approaching winter also forced China's decision. The best time for military operations in the Himalayas was July–September. By October, the weather was already becoming cold, and heavy snowfalls were possible. The Tibet military district reported that once such snowfalls began, the PLA would encounter "great difficulties" in moving supplies and reinforcements across the high passes to frontline Chinese forces.¹¹⁴ Major PLA action would have to come soon or be deferred to mid 1963. On the other hand, PLA intelligence made it apparent that the military balance in the front regions currently weighed heavily in China's favor. In terms of number of troops, heavy weapons, and communications, the PLA held a distinct advantage. Indian forces were short even of winter clothing and food.¹¹⁵ Were China to postpone the attack by six months, however, the Indian forces might become better prepared.

On 17 October, the CMC cabled the appropriate orders to the Tibet military district. PLA forces were ordered to "exterminate the Indian aggressor forces."¹¹⁶ On 18 October, the CMC met yet again to give formal approval to the decision for a "self-defensive counterattack war" (*yi chang ziwei fanji zuozhan*).¹¹⁷ Participants in the meeting included Mao, Zhou, Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Luo Ruiqing, and Marshals Liu Bocheng, He Long, and Xu Xiangqian.¹¹⁸

On 18 October, the decision for war was approved by an expanded Politburo meeting. In attendance were Mao, Zhou, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yi, He Long, Luo Ruiqing, Yang Shangkun (then Deng Xiaoping's assistant and in charge of organizational matters for the Central Committee), Tibet MR Commander Zhang Guohua, General Wang Shangrong (a professional soldier and Long March participant, then head of the Operations Department of the PLA), the diplomats Zhang Hanfu and

Qiao Guanhua, and General Lei Yingfu.¹¹⁹ The meeting opened with a statement by Zhou that from many different aspects, it was apparent that China could not but launch a "self-defensive counterattack" against India as quickly as possible. Mao seconded Zhou's "opinion," but warned of the need not to underestimate India's military forces. General Zhang Guohua, designated to command the upcoming attack, reassured Mao in this regard. Finally, the PLA's war plan was approved. The attack was set for 20 October.¹²⁰

The PLA offensive launched on that day in the Tawang region continued for only four days, culminating in the seizure of strategically located Tawang on 23 October. In the western sector, the offensive continued until 27 October. Chinese forces then halted, and a three-week lull followed. Allen Whiting was probably correct in his surmise that this hiatus was intended to provide an opportunity for Indian leaders to rethink their approach and abandon their forward policy. The weeklong PLA offensive that began on 20 October, followed by a pause, was in line with the gradual escalation of Chinese moves under way since early 1962. The 20 October offensive was a step considerably more forceful than the encirclement and then attack on the Dholu outpost in September, but a measure considerably more limited than the massive assault that came in November. Yet there is nothing in the new Chinese sources that directly substantiates the hypothesis that the three-week lull was intended by the Chinese as opportunity for an Indian drawback. Currently available Chinese sources do not indicate another decision for war after the 6 and 16 October decisions. It seems that those decisions were for a multistage war. Indian forces would first be given a sharp and bloody warning, after which Chinese forces would halt and reorganize for their next offensive. If India did not change its frontier policy after this warning, and if there were no indications of U.S. intervention, the next stage, a massive assault on the southern fringe of the Himalayas, would follow.

Roderick MacFarquhar raises the important point that Nehru could and should have used the early November lull to reorient Indian policy.¹²¹ By then it was abundantly clear that the key assumption underlying the forward policy—that China would not go to war over the border—was wrong. The realities of the military balance, that is, the PLA's clear superiority over Indian forces in the frontier region, should also have been clear. Given this, it was unfortunate that Nehru did not order suspension of Indian offensive operations and find a way of starting boundary negotiations, as Zhou Enlai proposed on 24 October, the day after the first phase of the Chinese offensive ended. Had Nehru reoriented Indian policy in early November, the next phase of the war very probably could have been avoided.

In fact, Indian offensive operations to oust the Chinese from both the Tawang and Walong areas of the NEFA resumed on 14 November.¹²² Chinese forces responded by launching a massive, preplanned offensive on 18 November, and Indian defenses in the east rapidly crumbled. PLA forces would not halt until Chinese soldiers looked out from the Himalayan foothills to the broad valley of the Brahmaputra River.

Internal Mobilization and International Confrontation

It is now pretty well established that Mao's domestic mobilization concerns occasionally helped inspire his preference for confrontational international policies. Thomas Christensen has demonstrated this in the cases of Mao's 1950 decision for war with the United States in Korea and his 1958 decision to bombard the offshore islands.¹²³ A similar dynamic may have been operating in 1959 and again in 1962. In early 1959, when he decided to launch a polemical struggle against Nehru, Mao was struggling to push the agricultural collectivization movement to a new high. In fall 1962, as Mao was guiding his comrades toward war with India, he was also striving to revive "class struggle" in agricultural policy as part of a broader effort to reverse the post-Great Leap retreat from collectivized agriculture.¹²⁴ On the other hand, there is a danger of overdetermining an event, and the border conflict, viewed on the Chinese side through the prism of Tibet, certainly seems adequate to explain the 1962 war. In any case, both the highly selective Chinese sources on the 1962 war available thus far and constraints of space associated with a single book chapter do not allow testing of the internal mobilization hypothesis here.

Conclusions

There was an underlying reason why China's leaders decided for war in 1962: a belief that India's leaders did not appreciate the fact that the People's Republic of China was a "new China," that had "stood up" and, unlike pre-1949 "old China," could no longer be "bullied" and "humiliated" by foreign powers. Indian leaders believed that China would not strike back, but would back down before Indian provocations, or so China's leaders concluded. Indian leaders did not respect the new China but arrogantly believed they could impose their will on it, just as Britain, India's imperial mentor, had done repeatedly in the nineteenth century. Indian leaders were unaware of the power and determination of the new China.

This image of India was linked, I believe, to a fundamental asymmetry of Chinese and Indian worldviews regarding the role of military power in

world affairs, an asymmetry symbolized perhaps by the meeting of Chen Yi and Krishna Menon at the 1962 Geneva conference. China's leaders saw military power as playing a central role in politics, both domestic and international. When and how to use military power were a matter of pragmatic calculation for them. (This is exemplified by the prominent role of combat veterans such as Liu Bocheng, Lin Biao, Chen Yi, and even Mao, Deng, and Zhou, in China's decision-making.) Nehru and Menon, on the other hand, believed that war among major powers was an obsolete phenomenon. World moral opinion would constrain potential aggressor states. And certainly among the African and Asian states that had shared the common experience of national oppression, resort to war was unthinkable. Thinking along these lines led India to disregard the realities of power in the Himalayas and to conclude that China would not resort to war against India. China's hardheaded leaders took India's disregard for China's power as disdain. They took the Indian belief that China would not fight as a belief that China was weak and would back down before assertive policies.

Was China's resort to war in 1962 prudent? Did it achieve its policy objectives at an acceptable cost? The official PLA history of the 1962 war stresses that "quickly achieving peaceful, stable borders in the west" (*baxibu bianjiang diqu xunsu wending xialai*) was the objective of the 1962 war. This goal was to be achieved by inflicting a painful defeat on India, thus demonstrating the futility and danger of aggressing against borders defended by the PLA and forcing India to abandon the forward policy. Sharp military defeat would also "compel India to again [*sic*] sit down at the negotiating table and solve the Sino-Indian border problem." This too would "achieve peaceful stability along the western borders."¹²⁵

The harsh defeat inflicted on India in 1962 did, in fact, cause Indian leaders to look much more soberly and respectfully at Chinese power. India did in fact swiftly abandon the earlier policy of using military force to challenge Chinese control of disputed territory. After 1962, Indian leaders were, in fact, much more cautious in dealing with China and more respectful of China's power. The reality of Chinese power also ultimately led New Delhi to resume border negotiations with China still in possession of Aksai Chin—although it would take twenty-seven years for this to happen.

These Chinese gains were secured at great cost. The PLA's drive to the southern foothills of the Himalayas had a profound effect on Indian opinion. China became an Indian nemesis second only to Pakistan. Even forty-some years after the war, this sentiment remains significant in India. The experience of 1962 made India deeply skeptical of Chinese professions of friendship and more wary of the expansion of Chinese security ties with neighboring South Asian countries. What Indians view as China's "betrayal" of India's desire for friendship in the 1950s has made India far less responsive

to Chinese diplomatic friendship offensives and more determined to keep China out of places like Nepal and Bangladesh. Fear of the Chinese rooted in 1962 was a major factor impelling India to keep open its nuclear weapons options and then, in 1998, openly to acquire nuclear weapons. There also exists in Indian military culture a desire for payback against China to erase the humiliation of 1962. The trauma of 1962 impelled New Delhi into close strategic alignment with the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s, a development "encircling" China with Soviet power. Even in the 2000s, when India began developing a military partnership with the United States, the defeat of 1962 was a remote but distinct factor in India's deliberations. India also began serious military modernization after the 1962 defeat, and this would eventually change the equation of military power between the two countries. One component of the new military capabilities developed by India was a highly trained, professionally led, and militarily very potent Tibetan armed force of roughly 10,000 men, the Special Frontier Force.¹²⁶ Given the decisive impact of the 1962 war on increasing Indian hostility to China, it is quite plausible that had China not opted for war with India, or had perhaps opted for a far less powerful and traumatic assault, China and "China's Tibet" would today face far less of a threat from India.

Notes

1. Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (New York: Random House, 1972); Allen S. Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Indochina* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975).

2. P. B. Sinha, A. A. Athale, with S. N. Prasad, chief eds., *History of the Conflict with China, 1962* (New Delhi: History Division, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 1992), published online by the *Times of India*, December 2002, www.bharat-rakshank.com (accessed 21 December 2002).

3. There was a third set of factors underlying China's road to the 1962 war—a perception of U.S.-Indian-Soviet collaboration against and encirclement of China. Considerations of space require limitation to consideration of the first two factors, which were, I believe, rather more important than the third.

4. Whiting, *Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 36, 34.

5. See *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, ed. Edgar Borgatta and Rhonda J. V. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan, 2000), 1: 194; 4: 2751.

6. *Zhong Yin bianjiang ziwei fanji zuozhanshi* [History of the Sino-India border self-defensive war] (Beijing: Junshi Kexue Chubanshe, 1994), 37-40. This official PLA history of the 1962 war labors at considerable length to demonstrate that India's aggressive intentions and actions precipitated the 1962 confrontation and provides copious details of PLA military operations. Yet it gives very short shrift to the actual process through which China's leaders decided to resort to war. Only 4 out of 567 pages deal with China's decision-making process. Still, these few pages

provide important information when pieced together with other equally fragmentary accounts.

7. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang* [True history of the Sino-Indian border war] (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1993), 28, 29–30, 50, 53. This is the most important Chinese work thus far on the 1962 war. It is significant that Xu's work was published in Hong Kong rather than in the PRC. The work deals at considerable length with China's actual decision-making process. Xu apparently had access to primary documents, although he does not reference those sources.

8. Wang Hongwei, "Zhong Yin bianjie wenti de lishi beijing yu 1962 nian Zhong Yin bianjie zhanzheng" [Historical background of the Sino-Indian border problem and the 1962 Sino-Indian border war], *Ya Tai Ziliao* [Asia-Pacific materials], no. 1 (18 March 1989): 1–13.

9. Zhao Weiwen, *Yin Zhong guanxi fengyun lu (1949–1999)* [Record of the vicissitudes of India-China relations (1949–1999)] (Beijing: Shi Shi Chubanshe, 2000), 103. Zhao is one of China's authoritative India hands. From 1950 until the mid 1990s, she worked for the analytical branch of China's Ministry of State Security, the China Institute for Contemporary International Studies and its organizational predecessors.

10. Zhao Weiwen, *Yin Zhong guanxi fengyun lu*, 110.

11. *Ibid.*, 129.

12. Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947* (London: Pimlico, 1999), 13, 26.

13. Regarding India's Tibet policies, see *ibid.* and Claude Arpi, *The Fate of Tibet: When Big Insects Eat Small Insects* (New Delhi: Har-Anand, 1999).

14. Arpi, *Fate of Tibet*, 338–43.

15. Shakya, *Dragon in Land of Snows*, 21–23.

16. John K. Knaus, *Orphans of the Cold War: America and the Tibetan Struggle for Survival* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999), 155. See also Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison, *The CIA's Secret War in Tibet* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002).

17. Zhao Weiwen, *Yin Zhong guanxi fengyun lu*, 124–29. These Indian transgressions are also enumerated in Yang Gongsu, *Xin Zhongguo duiwai zhengce* [New China's foreign policies] (MS), 68–69. Yang was foreign affairs assistant to the PLA in Tibet in the 1950s. He was later China's ambassador to Nepal. Yang charges the Indian consul general in Lhasa with encouraging Tibetan demonstrators to draft a statement of demands that eventually became a Tibetan declaration of independence, and with promising to convey such a statement of demands to the Indian government. In testimony to the Indian parliament, Nehru denied this and said that the consul had merely talked with Tibetans who had pushed their way into the consulate building, had explained that he could not render any assistance, and had declined to become involved in their protests in any concrete way. See Institute of National Affairs, Delhi, *Dalai Lama and India: Indian Public and Prime Minister on Tibetan Crisis* (New Delhi: Hind Book House, 1959), 75. This volume contains Nehru's various comments to parliament about Tibetan developments in 1959.

18. Wu Lengxi, *Shi nian lunzhan, 1956–1966: Zhong Su guanxi huiyilu* [Ten-

year polemical war, 1956–1966: a memoir of Sino-Soviet relations] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1999), 1: 195. Wu Lengxi was the head of the Xinhua News Agency as well as general editor of *Renmin Ribao* at the time. He was also the Politburo's record keeper for relations with the Soviet Union. His two-volume memoir is an extremely rich source for scholars. See my review in *China Quarterly*, no. 173 (March 2003): 197–213.

19. Wu Lengxi, *Shi nian lunzhan*, 197.

20. *Ibid.*, 198.

21. *Ibid.*, 198–99.

22. Editorial department of *Renmin Ribao*, "The Revolution in Tibet and Nehru's Philosophy," 6 May 1959, in *Peking Review*, 12 May 1959, 6–15.

23. *Zhou Enlai waijiao wenxuan* [Selected diplomatic documents of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1990), 268–76.

24. "Memorandum of Conversation of N. S. Khrushchev with Mao Zedong, Beijing, 2 October 1959," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* [Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.], no. 12–13 (Fall–Winter 2001), 266.

25. Lei Yingfu, as told to Chen Xianyi, *Zai zuigao zongshuaibu dang sanmo—Lei Yingfu jiangjun huiyilu* [Serving on the staff of the high command: memoir of General Lei Yingfu] (Nanchang: Baihuazhou Wenyi Chubanshe, 1997), 207.

26. "Mao Zedong sixiang wansui" [Long live Mao Zedong thought], in *Miscellany of Mao Tse-tung Thought (1949–1968)*, 2. Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS), no. 61269 (20 February 1974), 573.

27. Arpi, *Fate of Tibet*, 320–47, 392–98; Shakya, *Dragon in Land of Snows*, 52–184.

28. Shakya, *Dragon in Land of Snows*, 215, 219, 232, 233.

29. Nehru returned repeatedly during his parliamentary testimony in 1959 to this theme of a two-part agreement. See Nehru's statements to parliament, 30 March 1959, 27 April 1959, and press conference on 5 April 1959, all in Institute of National Affairs, Delhi, *Dalai Lama and India*, 80, 103, 105, 120–21.

30. Correspondence between Nehru and Patel over Tibet is in R. K. Jain, *China and South Asian Relations, 1947–1980* (Brighton, Eng.: Harvester Press, 1981), 1:41–47.

31. Institute of National Affairs, Delhi, *Dalai Lama and India*, 127.

32. B. N. Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1971), 221.

33. *Ibid.*, 70, 180, 182.

34. Steven A. Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 38.

35. Shakya, *Dragon in Land of Snows*, 215, 282.

36. Knaus, *Orphans*, 159.

37. Conboy and Morrison, *Secret War*, 95–96, 155–56.

38. Shakya, *Dragon in Land of Snows*.

39. Sinha et al., eds., *History of the Conflict with China, 1962*, 56.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, 72.

42. See John Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 79–86.
43. Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis*, 23–30.
44. Sinha et al., eds., *History of the Conflict with China*, 1962, 412.
45. *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun liushimian dashiji (1927–1987)* [Record of sixty years of major events of the PLA, 1927–1987] (Beijing: Junshi Kexue Chubanshe, 1988), 579–80.
46. “Memorandum of Conversation of N. S. Khrushchev with Mao Zedong” (cited n. 24 above), 266, 268.
47. Lei Yingfu, *Zai zuigao zongshuaibu dang sanmo*, 202.
48. Sinha et al., eds., *History of the Conflict with China*, 1962, xx.
49. Whiting, *Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 46.
50. Sinha et al., eds., *History of the Conflict with China*, 1962, xx.
51. Chinese accounts of the 1962 war are almost entirely devoid of specific dates for specific decision-making events. With several exceptions, reference to meetings is by very general terms like “later” or “in mid 1962.” I have therefore tried to order reported meetings by the context of other events discussed by the book at the time of the reported meeting, or by matters discussed in the meeting themselves.
52. *Zhong Yin da zhan jishi* [Record of events in the big China-India war], ed. Shi Bo (Beijing: Da Di Chubanshe, 1993), 182.
53. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang*, 110.
54. Whiting, *Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 51.
55. *Zhong Yin da zhan jishi*, ed. Shi Bo, 183–84.
56. *Ibid.*, 184.
57. Sinha et al., eds., *History of the Conflict with China*, 1962, xx.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*, 415–16.
61. Whiting, *Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 55.
62. *Ibid.*, 58.
63. D. K. Palit, *War in High Himalaya: The Indian Army in Crisis*, 1962 (New Delhi: Lancer, 1991), 177–78.
64. Sinha et al., eds., *History of the Conflict with China*, 1962, xx.
65. *Ibid.*, xx, 415–17. Also 428–29n9.
66. *Ibid.*, 430n13.
67. Wang Bingnan, *Zhong Mei huitan jiu nian huigu* [Recollections of nine years of Sino-American talks] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1985), 85–90.
68. *Zhong Yin da zhan jishi*, ed. Shi Bo, 185–86.
69. *Ibid.*, 187–88.
70. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang*, 87.
71. Whiting, *Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 78.
72. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang*, 88.
73. Whiting, *Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 82.
74. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang*, 91. This corresponds to Whiting’s judgment in *Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 92.
75. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang*, 113.

76. *Ibid.*, 91–92.
77. Sinha et al., eds., *History of the Conflict with China*, 1962, 415. A map of this region is available in Palit, *War in High Himalaya*, 239.
78. Sinha et al., eds., *History of the Conflict with China*, 1962, 94.
79. Whiting, *Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 95–96.
80. Sinha et al., eds., *History of the Conflict with China*, 1962, 415, 417.
81. *Ibid.*, 95.
82. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang*, 103–4.
83. *Ibid.*, 110.
84. *Zhong Yin da zhan jishi*, ed. Shi Bo, 188.
85. *Ibid.*, 189.
86. *Ibid.*
87. Sun Shao and Chen Zhibin, *Ximalaya shan de xue: Zhong Yin zhanzheng shilu* [Snows of the Himalaya mountains: the true record of the China-India war] (Taiyuan: Bei Yue Wenyi Chubanshe, 1991), 95. As far as I can ascertain, this was China’s first book-length study of the 1962 war. Although it is not a scholarly book—it lacks reference notes and is written in an often-breezy style—it was authored by two longtime PLA soldiers and to date provides the fullest, most direct account of Mao Zedong’s thinking about the road to war with India. The book was banned shortly after its appearance. CASS’s Wang Hongwei gives an account of a CMC meeting in “mid October” with some quotations using the exact same language as Sun Shao and Chen Zhibin, but omitting not only quotation marks and precise dates but also the more offhand comments by Mao quoted in the Sun-Chen book. Omitted too in Wang’s account are the negative comments by Ye Jianying about Kaul. Wang Hongwei, *Ximalaya shan qingjie: Zhong Yin guanxi yanjiu* [The Himalayas sentiment: a study of Sino-Indian relations] (Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue Chubanshe, 1998), 228–30. It may well have been Sun and Chen’s too full and direct quotations of Mao, plus reportage of Ye Jianying’s negative evaluation of Kaul’s abilities, that were deemed inappropriate for open publication and led to the volume’s ban.
88. Sun Shao and Chen Zhibin, *Ximalaya shan*, 96.
89. *Ibid.*, 97.
90. *Ibid.*, 97–98.
91. *Ibid.*, 99–100.
92. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang*, 104.
93. *Ibid.*
94. *Zhong Yin bianjiang ziwei fanji zuozhanshi*, 179.
95. *Zhong Yin da zhan jishi*, ed. Shi Bo, 189.
96. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang*, 106.
97. *Ibid.*, 109.
98. *Ibid.*, 111.
99. *Ibid.*
100. Howard L. Boorman and Richard C. Howard, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 1: 404–5.
101. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang*, 111–12.
102. *Zhong Yin bianjiang ziwei fanji zuozhanshi*, 180–81.

103. Sinha et al., eds., *History of the Conflict with China*, 1962, 98–100.
104. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang*, 112.
105. Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution: The Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961–1966* (Oxford: Oxford University Press; New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 3, 308, attributes major significance to Nehru's comments to the press. Nehru's comments certainly confirmed established Chinese suspicions about Nehru, but I suspect that the aggressive Indian actions over the previous week weighed more heavily in Chinese evaluations.
106. Sinha et al., eds., *History of the Conflict with China*, 1962, 102.
107. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang*, 112.
108. Ibid.
109. Lei Yingfu, *Zai zuigao zongshuaibu dang sanmo*, 209.
110. *Zhong Yin bianjiang ziwei fanji zuozhanshi*, 179.
111. Liu Xiao, *Chu shi Sulian ba nian* [Eight years as ambassador to the Soviet Union] (Beijing: Zhonggong Dangshi Ziliao Chubanshe, 1986), 121.
112. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang*, 114.
113. MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 3, 314–18.
114. Xu Yan, *Zhong Yin bianjie zhi zhan lishi zhenxiang*, 104.
115. Ibid., 107.
116. Ibid., 114.
117. Ibid.; *Zhong Yin bianjiang ziwei fanji zuozhanshi*, 179.
118. *Zhong Yin bianjiang ziwei fanji zuozhanshi*, 180.
119. Biographic information is from Donald W. Klein and Anne B. Clark, *Biographic Dictionary of Chinese Communism, 1921–1965*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).
120. Lei Yingfu, *Zai zuigao zongshuaibu dang sanmo*, 209–10.
121. MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 3, 309.
122. Sinha et al., eds., *History of the Conflict with China*, 1962, 171–74, 242–47.
123. Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1996).
124. MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 3, 261–318.
125. *Zhong Yin bianjiang ziwei fanji zuozhanshi*, 178.
126. Conboy and Morrison offer a good account of the evolution of this force in *Secret War*.

5 Across the Yalu

CHINA'S INTERESTS AND THE KOREAN PENINSULA IN A CHANGING WORLD

Avery Goldstein

Half a century after military conflict in Korea decisively inaugurated the Cold War, and forty years since Allen Whiting's seminal work about China's intervention in Korea introduced an analytical approach for interpreting Beijing's security policy, much has changed.¹ The Cold War has ended, and the regime in the People's Republic of China (PRC) today is dramatically different from the one that charted the country's foreign policy under Mao Zedong. Yet despite these significant changes, in at least two key respects, there is continuity: the Cold War persists on the Korean peninsula in the form of a divided nation led by two regimes, each armed against the threat they believe the other poses; and, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) retains the reins of power in Beijing. Given this mixture of change and continuity, can Whiting's analysis of China's decision to cross the Yalu in the fall of 1950, and his subsequent generalizations about Beijing's practice of signaling and coercive diplomacy in the Maoist era still illuminate the Korea policies of a quite different Chinese leadership, operating in dramatically different international circumstances?² The answer suggested below is that, with substantial modification to account for historical change, Whiting's work indeed remains helpful, insofar as it identifies strategic beliefs that continue to shape thinking among the CCP's top leaders, focuses on the way such beliefs shape perceptions of events in Korea, and suggests the sorts of signals about China's interests in Korea that one might anticipate.³

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section briefly identifies important differences between the early Cold War era and the contemporary period. The second section more closely examines several key considerations shaping China's Korea policy after the Cold War. The third section suggests four highly stylized scenarios depicting different futures for the Korean peninsula and their implications for China's foreign policy, especially its most important bilateral relationship with the United States. The fourth section