

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE SINO-INDIAN WAR OF 1962

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### **Abstract:**

India and China. The two border nations share a remarkable history. A history of friendship followed by war, followed by diplomacy. There were many border disputes between India china in the late 1900's. The dispute may be backed politically by the Tibetan issue, but it was a war for the Indian land.

China despite of the peace treaty made in 1954 named 'The Panchsheel', has proclaimed Indian lands of the NEFA and the Aksai Chin. The rejection of the authenticity of the McMahon line, claims to accept the Mc Donald line as the official border between India and China, by China, were some of the border disputes which caused the outbreak of the war. India's grant of asylum to Dalailama, the forward policy of India in 1959 have fanned the blaze for the war.

This paper, analyses the causes of the war, gives a brief account of the course of the war and also concludes with the aftermath of the war. Due to difficulty in obtaining primary sources, this paper completely relies on the secondary sources.

**Keywords: India, China, Sino-Indian, PRC, War, NEFA, Aksai Chin.**

**Introduction:**

Republic of India, Peoples Republic of China, the two growing economies of Asia, and the most populated countries of the world, share a sour relations in the past. Though there was a very friendly relations in the ancient times, the relations were strained due to many border conflicts in the late 1900's. Though the smoke started in the early 1900's it took around fifty years for the fire to blaze. The grant of asylum to Dalailama by India was one of the main political reasons for the war. China's claim for the Aksai Chin, its claim that the McDonald line to be considered authentic were some of the border conflicts that caused the outbreak of the war.

**Geographical Outlook:**

India and China are the largest countries in the Asian continent. China and India are separated by the formidable geographical obstacles of the Himalayas. China and India share a common border of more than three thousand kilometres, where the specific number can't be assumed due to border disputes. The most common border of the two countries lies in the north-eastern part of the Indian province of Kashmir and South-western part of china, The Aksai Chin and the southern part of China and the eastern part of India in NEFA.

**Aksai Chin:**

Aksai chin lies in the western region of the Sino-Indian border, which originated in 1834, with the Sikh's conquest over ladakh. [4] These Sikh confederacy states, which ruled the greater slice of the northern part of India in those days signed a treaty with the existing neighbours of India. But when the British defeated the Sikhs in 1846, sovereignty over the parts of ladakh was transferred to the British. [3] The then British government poached the Chinese to negotiate the border. The border line at the Karakorum passes and Pangong Lake were well defined but the border line of Aksai chin was not defined. Sir. W.H. Johnson proposed a border line which placed the Aksai Chin in India. It wasn't accepted. Later a Chinese official, Hung Ta-Chen, proposed a border line and handed over the document to George McCartney, the then counsel general of Kashgar. It placed the northern part of the laktsang into China and the southern part in India. With this proposal Aksai chin was placed in China. This was accepted and sent to Chinese government in a note by Sir McDonald. [7] The chines had not responded to the file. Hence that was considered as acquiescence. Although no boundary was officially negotiated The

McCartney–MacDonald Line had been tacitly accepted by China as the boundary until Zhou confirmed the new Chinese claim line to Nehru in 1959.



Pic Courtesy: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China%E2%80%93India\\_relations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China%E2%80%93India_relations)

### Pre Sino-Indian war period:

The period after the independence of India (c. 15.08.1947), Formation of the people's republic of China (c. 01.09.1949), to the Sino-Indian war of 1962 is considered as the pre-war period. It is a crucial period of relation between the two countries of India and China. It was 30<sup>th</sup> Dec 1949 when India officially recognised the mainland of China as the PRC. India was the first socialist country to recognise China as an independent territory. India is the sixteenth country to start diplomatic relations with China by sending its diplomat Mr. K.M Panniker, as an ambassador to China. [4] In the earlier days of the after independence, relation between the two countries was quite well. India's then prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, advocating the China's membership in the United Nations on 6<sup>th</sup> of December 1950 was a good example for the same.

### Panchsheel: The five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence:

Jawaharlal Nehru, with his base vision of 'Resurgent Asia', put forth five principles for the peaceful Co-existence of both the countries. [6] It was a peace treaty put forth by Jawaharlal Nehru, to his counterpart Mr. Zhou Enlai. It was signed on They were enunciated in the preamble to the "Agreement (with exchange of notes) on trade and intercourse between Tibet Region of China and India", which was signed at Peking on 29 April 1954. The five principles were,

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
2. Mutual non-aggression.
3. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
4. Equality and cooperation for mutual benefit.
5. Peaceful co-existence.

It was widely accepted by both the nations and the stressing of these principles by the Chinese premier in his later visit to India in June 1954 stands as a proof for the same.

### **China's infringement of Panchsheel:**

In 1954, China, in its official map, included the northern frontier of India in its map. This was clearly opposed by India on 2<sup>nd</sup> march 1955. [11] Though there were several measures taking place for the friendly relations between the two nations, the border dispute between the two nations was worsening the relations. It was 4<sup>th</sup> of September when India officially objected the Chinese encroachment on Indian lands in Assam. [19] The later reaction was unexpected. China for the first time, officially claimed 40,000 sq. kms of Indian land both in Ladakh and the NEFA (north Eastern Frontier Agency). Though there were border skirmishes, the relation between the two nations was going on a good track. It was a well said slogan in Hindi during the 1950's that 'hindi-chini-bhaiBhai.' Which means Indians and Chinese are brothers, which was first initiated by the then prime minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru. India has also sent Mr. Beohar ram Manohar Sinha, a famous painter, who painted the original pages of the constitution of India to China, to establish cross cultural relations. In 1954, India published new maps, which considered the Aksai Chin, into Indian border, but the maps published during the independence didn't include the same in Indian borders. To which the then Chinese premier, Zhou Enlai strongly objected and wrote a letter to the counterpart Jawaharlal Nehru, rejecting to accept the legality of the McMahon line of the Shimla convention in 1914 which was defined the border of Indian and Tibet in the eastern section.

### **Socio- Political issues:**

After the Tibetan uprisings in 1959, the spiritual head of Tibet, the then Dalai lama's seek for a Dharmashala in the north-western part of India precisely in the Himachal Pradesh. In March of

1959 thousands of Tibetan refugees settled in Himachal Pradesh, to which India granted asylum. Chinese government in the other part, accused India for imperialism and the border dispute was once again raised. It claimed as huge as 102,000 sq. kms. Of Indian sovereign land to be in Chinese borders and called for a border rectification.[15] Zhou also claimed that China would relinquish its claim over most of the NEFA at the cost of Aksai chin for India. The Indian government with its domestic public opinion rejected the settlement. [3]

### **Sino-Indian war:**

Aksai chin was claimed by India to be a sovereign part of Kashmir, and was claimed by China to be a part of Xinjiang. China never showed its objection on the claims of India over Aksai chin after independence and Zhou stated that they had no claims over Indian Territory. But he later argued that Aksai chin was under the jurisdiction and that McCartney-McDonald line was the only border line that the British could accept but not the McMahon line. The progress in relations suffered a major setback when, in 1959, Nehru accommodated the Tibetan religious leader at the time, the 14th Dalai Lama, who fled Lhasa after a failed Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule. The Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong, was enraged and asked the Xinhua News Agency to produce reports on Indian expansionists operating in Tibet.

### **The Forward Policy:**

India in 1959 started a forward policy whose aim was to create outposts behind advancing Chinese troops to interdict their supplies, forcing them north of the disputed line. There were eventually 60 such outposts, including 43 north of the McMahon Line, to which India claimed sovereignty. China viewed this as further confirmation of Indian expansionist plans directed towards Tibet.[3] According to the Indian official history, implementation of the Forward Policy was intended to provide evidence of Indian occupation in the previously unoccupied region through which Chinese troops had been advancing. Kaul was confident, through contact with Indian Intelligence and CIA information that China would not react with force. Indeed, at first the PLA simply withdrew, but eventually Chinese forces began to counter-encircle the Indian positions which clearly encroached into the north of McMahon Line. This led to a tit-for-tat Indian reaction, with each force attempting to outmanoeuvre the other. However, despite the escalating nature of the dispute, the two forces withheld from engaging each other directly.

**Early incidents leading to war:**

There were many border issues and military conflicts during the first half of 1962, the summer and autumn of 1962. In June of 1962 many skirmishes occurred between India and China and caused the death of dozens of Chinese troops. And the intelligence bureau received information that there were symptoms of war. On 10 July 1962, 350 Chinese troops surrounded an Indian occupied post in Chushul (north of the McMahon Line) but withdrew after a heated argument via loudspeaker.[3] On 22 July, the Forward Policy was extended to allow Indian troops to push back Chinese troops already established in disputed territory. Whereas Indian troops were previously ordered to fire only in self-defence, all post commanders were now given discretion to open fire upon Chinese forces if threatened. In August, the Chinese military improved its combat readiness along the McMahon Line and began stockpiling ammunition, weapons and gasoline. On 8 September, a 60-strong PLA unit descended to the south side of the ridge and occupied positions that dominated one of the Indian posts at Dhola. [1] Fire was not exchanged, but Nehru said to the media that the Indian Army had instructions to free the Indian Territory and the troops had been given discretion to use force. On 11 September, all the forward posts and patrols were given permission to fire on any armed Chinese who entered Indian Territory.[3] On the other hand, the Chinese in August were more ready for a combat. They started piling up ammunition and weapons. In August India, planned to occupy the Thang la ridge by setting an outpost at Dhola, in the southern part of the Thang la ridge. Where India interpreted that the McMahon line ran. The Indian army was given full permission to open fire at the Chinese army, if they tried to enter the Indian borders. However this operation was futile. Many Indian officials and some Majors in the Indian army were unsure of the authenticity of the claim of the Thang la ridge. On Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>, just about a week before the war, the Chinese premier, Zhou Enlai, visited New Delhi, and promised Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Indian prime Minister of India that there would be no war. On October 10<sup>th</sup>, the Indian patrol troops numbered around fifty, on their patrol to Yumtso Lawere met by an emplaced Chinese position of some 1,000 soldiers.[17] The Indian troops were not ready for an open fire at that moment, as the Yumtso La region was at a high altitude and there was no back up arm support for the Indian army. But the Chinese troops opened fire as they assumed that the Indian soldiers were north of the McMahon line. However with high casualties, the Indian troops, held off the first Chinese assault. At this point, the Indian troops were in a position to push the Chinese back with mortar and machine gun fire. However,



Brigadier Dalvi opted not to fire, as it would mean decimating the Rajput who were still in the area of the Chinese regrouping.[3] They helplessly watched the Chinese ready themselves for a second assault. In the second Chinese assault, the Indians began to retreat, realising the situation was hopeless. The casualties were around 25 for the Indians and 33 for the Chinese. The Chinese troops held their fire as the Indians retreated, and then buried the Indian dead with military honours, as witnessed by the retreating soldiers. This was the first occurrence of heavy fighting in the war. This attack had a severe impact for India and also Jawaharlal Nehru tried to solve the dispute. But the latter half of October, 1962 it was clear that Chinese were preparing for a war. A long line of mules and porters had also been observed supporting the build-up and reinforcement of positions south of the Thang La Ridge.

### **The War:**

Indian army was well assured that there would be no war in the near future. A brigadier of Indian Army, Brigadier D. K. Palit claimed that a war with China in the near future could be ruled out.[22] On 6 October 1962, the Chinese leadership convened by Lin Biao reported that PLA intelligence units reported that the Indians may attack the Chinese in the Thang La in Operation Leghorn on October 10. The Chinese leadership and also the Central Military Council set upon war to launch a large-scale attack to punish perceived military aggression from India. In Beijing, a bigger meeting of Chinese military was convened so as to set up for the approaching conflict. Mao and also the Chinese leadership issued a directive laying out the objectives for the war. Their strategy was that a main assault would be launched in the eastern sector, which would be coordinated with a smaller assault in the western sector. All Indian troops inside China's claimed territories within the eastern sector would be expelled, and the war would be terminated with a unilateral Chinese ceasefire and withdrawal to pre-war positions, followed by a return to the negotiating table.[3] India led the Non-Aligned Movement, Jawaharlal Nehru enjoyed international prestige, and China, with a bigger military, would be depicted as an aggressor. However, Zhou, felt that a well-fought war will assure peace between the nations for a long period, and determined the advantages to offset the costs. On 8 October, additional veteran and elite divisions were ordered to prepare to move into Tibet from the Chengdu and Lanzhou military regions.[19] On 12 October, Nehru declared that he had ordered the Indian army to clear Indian Territory in the NEFA of Chinese invaders and personally

met with Kaul, issuing instructions to him. On 14 October, an editorial on *People's Daily* issued China's final warning to India it stated that: *"So it seems that Mr. Nehru has made up his mind to attack the Chinese frontier guards on an even bigger scale....It is high time to shout to Mr. Nehru that the heroic Chinese troops, with the glorious tradition of resisting foreign aggression, can never be cleared by anyone from their own territory... If there are still some maniacs who are reckless enough to ignore our well-intentioned advice and insist on having another try, well, let them do so. History will pronounce its inexorable verdict... At this critical moment...we still want to appeal once more to Mr. Nehru: better rein in at the edge of the precipice and do not use the lives of Indian troops as stakes in your gamble."* [21] It was marshal liubo Cheng who headed the group to make a decision on the strategy for the war. He decided that the troops that were opposing were of India's best and to triumph over them would require deploying concentrated force. On 16 October, this war set up was approved, and on the 18th, the ultimate approval was given by the committee for a self-defensive counter-attack, scheduled for 20 October. [3]

It was October 20 1962 when China officially started its war. The Chinese liberation army (PLA) of China, started its attack in two places, a thousand kilometres apart. Within the western theatre, the PLA sought to expel Indian forces from the Chip Chap valley in Aksai Chin whereas within the eastern theatre, the PLA sought to capture all the banks of the Namka Chu River. There were skirmishes that occurred in the Nathula Pass, in the state of Sikkim (A sovereign part of Indian Territory). Ghurkha rifles moving north were targeted by Chinese cannon fire. At 5:14 Am the Chinese troops started the cannon fire within the eastern theatre. At around 6:30 am, the Chinese infantry launched an onset from the rear and made the Indians to depart their trenches. Chinese troops though were able to occupy the overall regions of the Thang la ridges, now started moving towards the NEFA. After four days of fierce fighting, the three regiments of Chinese troops succeeded in securing a considerable portion of the controversial territory. On the morning 23 October, the Indians discovered a Chinese force gathered in an incommensurate pass and opened fire with mortars, cannons and machine guns, resulting in heavy fighting. About two hundred Chinese troopers were killed and wounded during this action. Nine Indian troopers were also killed. On the opposite region, within the western theatre of the Sino-Indian boundary, the Chinese were able to get total control over the Aksai Chin region by 22 October. The chip chap valley was occupied on 20 October. The firings were ceased temporarily



on October 24 when Zhou Enlai ordered not to move further into the Indian territory and that he wanted to have a bilateral talk with Jawaharlal Nehru and wrote a letter proposing for a negotiated boundary, On October 24th, four days after the outbreak of significant fighting in NEFA and Aksai Chin, Zhou sent a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, proposing: 1) a negotiated settlement of the boundary, 2) that either side disengage and withdraw twenty kilometres from present lines of actual control, 3) a Chinese withdrawal north in NEFA, and 4) that China and India not cross lines of present control in Aksai Chin.[17] Nehru's reply of October 27th appeared eager to restore peace and friendly relations, however questioned a mutual twenty kilometre withdrawal after "40 or sixty kilometres of blatant military aggression." Jawaharlal Nehru proposed, instead, a return to the "boundary prior to 8 September 1962" before any Chinese attacks occurred; only then would India have an interest in talks. Zhou's reply came on November 4th, and processed his in-tent of 'line of actual control.' Zhou's 'line' the same that he had repeatedly offered since 1959 was merely the Indian-claimed McMahon Line in NEFA and also the traditionally claimed MacDonald Line in Aksai Chin. The political activities continued. On November 8th, the Indian Parliament announced a state of national emergency and adopted a resolution to push back the enemies out of the great Indian Territory. Through the primary period of November, China had kept away from any further assaults; Peking clearly needed a diplomatic resolution. On November 14th, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote another letter to Zhou, again rejecting Zhou's proposal of 24<sup>th</sup> October and again repudiating the Chinese claims on Indian border. However the exchanges between the two countries and the external military support to India had made no movement toward settlement or compromise. On November 14th, the fighting resumed once again. The Eleventh Brigade of the Second Division took over the Walong sector on October 31st; the Eleventh was the third unit in ten days to be assigned responsibility for Walong (as there were many changes in the commanding authority.). The Walong detachment of three infantry battalions wasn't, however, making ready for a defence. Even though Chinese strength at Rima was calculated at a Division, the Walong force was planning to attack the Chinese on November 14th, Nehru's birth- day. General Kaul had planned a first major success against the enemy as a birthday gift to Jawaharlal Nehru.[3] Chinese reconnaissance patrols were visible east of Chushul in mid-November, however no fire was exchanged. On November 17th, a powerful Chinese force stirred westward toward Chushul. And within the early hours of November 18th, opened fire on Indian outposts.[17] Mortars and

rockets additionally softened the Indian entrenchments. In serious fighting, the Chinese rear and flank attacks were fortunate. The casualties were serious for the Indians. Some blocking forces were sent go in early November: an organization to Phutang and a platoon sent up the Bailey trail to Poshing La. As November advanced, more attention was given to Bailey trail. Three additional platoons now making a company were sent to Poshing La. On November 15th, the Chinese probably a battalion attacked the company at Poshing La. Radio reports indicated that the Chinese had worn out the Indian force. However Headquarters couldn't believe that the Chinese could bring a full battalion down the mountain trail, and a second company from Bomdi La was sent up Bailey trail. A third company was brought from Bomdi La to DirangDzong. By November 16th, the three battalions stationed at Bomdi La was cut to half strength. With the disintegration of forty eight Brigade at 3 a.m. on November 20th, no organized Indian military force was left in NEFA (nor in Aksai Chin). Militarily, the Chinese triumph was complete, and the Indian defeat was absolute. Late on the evening of November 20th, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made an urgent and open appeal to the U.S.A. for armed intervention against the Chinese; he asked for bomber and fighter squadrons to start air strikes on Chinese troops in Indian territory if they continued to advance and canopy for Indian cities "in case the Chinese air force tried to raid them." [17]anAmerican carrier was sent toward the Bay of Bengal; however the aircraft carrier was ordered back on November 21st. The victorious Chinese had ordered a ceasefire effective midnight, November 21, 1962.

### **Cease-fire:**

On November 20, 1962, India and also the world speculated regarding the nature and aims of the Chinese attack. It announced that, the pre-McMahon line on the foot of the hills. Zhou had merely restated the compromise that he had been offering for over three years: India could keep the controversial territory north to the McMahon Line in NEFA, however China would keep the controversial territory in Aksai Chin. Of the 47,000 sq. miles of controversial border land, Zhou's ceasefire gave a full sixty eight (the 32,000 sq. miles of NEFA) to India, and unbroken only 32nd (the 15,000 miles of Aksai Chin) for China. Instead of the "victor keeping the spoils," Beijing kept solely what was strategically vital. The area close her vital military road in Aksai Chin. Zhou's ceasefire statement made it clear that the Indians would keep their troops twenty kilo- meters back from the ceasefire line, and that China "reserved the right to strike back" if

India failed to do so. [17] The sick and wounded were returned during December, 1962. Other prisoners of war were returned over subsequent six months. At one point, Jawaharlal Nehru had declared that 6,277 Indian troopers were captured or missing. India's casualties for the Border War were finally reported as follows:

Killed--1,383

Captured—3,968

Missing--1,696.

India and china released no official count on the wounded but India mentioned that the casualties were high.

### **Conclusion:**

The Border War and therefore the ceasefire brought several changes and many implications to both India and the world. The political and military climate in southern Asia was dramatically changed in the last three months of 1962. India recognized several of the weaknesses in her Army; and lots of lessons still relevant today emerged from the 1962 Border War.

India had long been concerned regarding maintaining a buffer zone between her and her powerful neighbours. China felt that legally Aksai Chin belongs to her, mainly as there was very scarce Indian presence in that area. China was also very strong because of the important military route that bisected the Aksai Chin area. There may well have been space for compromise over these problems, however stubbornness and India's aggressive forward policy resulted in armed conflict. World leaders should heed different nations' stated important strategic objectives. Ignoring the recommendation of senior, intimate army officers was fatal for India. Several officers had warned Jawaharlal Nehru that India was poorly ready for war with China, they were eased or replaced, their recommendation unheeded. Leaders could believe what they require to believe, however unwisely rejecting the counsel's suggestion may cause a disaster.

China had simply won a military triumph on the ground. However Beijing could have lost in terms of its international image. Western nations, particularly the U.S.A., were already suspicious of Chinese attitudes, motives and actions; after all, People's Republic leader Mao had

declared that "The way to world conquest lies through Havana, Accra, and Calcutta." [17] These western nations, as well as a suspicious U.S.A., seemed to minimize, or not totally known, the Sino-Indian dispute background that China believed that Aksai Chin had been lawfully Chinese since 1899 or before, that no official boundary had been agreed upon between the two nations, and that Nehru's forward policy had trusted troops even beyond India's claim line into Tibetan territory. These same nations viewed China to be an aggressor in the Border War of 1962 and considered its goals to be hugely on world conquest. These war implications are relevant to us for decades and centuries. It is in fact correct to blame a single nation on the border issue. The McMahon Line claimed by India, which was signed in the Shimla treaty of 1914 and the McDonald line claimed by the Chinese was also a unilateral line. Though the Panchsheel promised peace and mutual co-ordination between the Asian giants, the first clause which states "Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty." Was violated which in turn caused the violation of the remaining principles. If the Tibetan Issue have not arouse between the nations there might not have been a war. The issue lies with both the nations, it is very important to create a bilateral line for the better and mutual co-ordination.

It is true that there are some unstable factors affecting the relations between the Asian giants due to the border conflict being unresolved. Therefore it is important that the mutual trust and understanding should be developed, for a better co-operation and mutual benefit.

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