The border dispute between India and China is the legacy of British colonial rule in India and British policy and actions changed from time to time according to the circumstances on which colonial interest were to be protected. This was so because the multiplicity of British interests in the far east shackled the policy makers in England, Consequently, they were unwilling to decide upon a set of policy priorities. The attitude of colonial masters created confusion rather than clarity.

Following the decolonisation of these two countries the psychological disposition of India and China has been explained by Nehru himself and in the foregoing discussion this disposition was also to a great extent what made the war of 1962 unavoidable. Nehru in 1951 said,

China, in her new found strength, has acted sometimes in a manner which I deeply regret. But we have to remember the background of China as of other Asian countries - the long period of struggle and frustration, the insolent treatment that they received from the imperialistic powers and the latter's refusal to deal with them in terms of equality. It is neither right nor practical to ignore the feelings of hundred millions of people. It is no longer safe to do. ¹

Similarly the political freedom of India was an opportunity to express India's special position and unique identity spirit which made Nehru remark:

At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed finds utterance. ²

². J. Nehru, India's Foreign Policy (Delhi, 1971), p. 13
India and China did not raise the border question in their earlier meetings because to the Chinese the "time was not ripe" and to the Indians taking up the border issue "at that time was not advantageous." Both India and China were consolidating their hold over respective areas of vital interest. To the Chinese the western sector and to the Indians the NEFA region in the eastern sector were important from the security point of view. This attitude was perfectly in order in the light of western theory of sovereignty which emphasizes on the fact that only de facto control is regarded as proof of legitimate authority. Legitimacy is but the assertion of an authority supreme by virtue of its power untempered by any mythological explanations of its mandate beyond which there could be no appeal. After all the boundaries of the states no less than their constitutional arrangements are not given by nature but represent human decisions. Thus in both western and eastern sector there was sufficient room for establishing claims and counter claims as the colonial masters did not have a policy based on clarity due to their multiplicity of interests in this region. India and China based their friendship and co-operation on the fond hope of fulfilling the expectations each had about the other. The failure to realize the expectation resulted in a thinking that no enemy is so bitterly hated as a former friend who is considered a betrayer.

As long as the boundary dispute did not become important factor, the relationship between two countries was smooth and China did not openly question the validity of the McMahon line. In the study of White Paper I published by the Government of India for the period 1954-1958 (July) we find that the protest notes exchanged between the two countries were concerned with small areas of dispute mainly mountain passes such as Bharaholi, Damzan, the Nilang area in Tehri Garwal and the Shipki pass in the Central sector. Even during the negotiations for 1954 agreement on Tibet, the boundary question was mainly

concerned with these passes. Despite the disagreement on the ownership of these passes, it was not discussed by Nehru and Chou En-lai during their meeting in 1956-57. If at all there was any discussion it was on the north eastern frontier. The western sector especially the boundary in the Kashmir region was not referred or touched upon by the two Prime Ministers. That the Indian Government was not sure about the exact boundary in this region is clear from Nehru’s note to the Foreign Secretary in February 1959 in which he had written:

I do not see how we can possibly protest about the alignment of the road without being much more sure than we are. What we might perhaps do is that in some communication with the Chinese Government in regard to the points in dispute which have to be decided we should mention the Aksai Chin area.

It was in November 1958 that the Chinese for the first time questioned the traditional alignments depicted on Indian maps and Nehru was really surprised by the Chinese attitude and he told the Chinese about the futility of conducting surveys as there was no dispute on these “well known and fixed boundaries.” The Chinese Prime - Minister made it clear that the boundary was not delimited in his reply of 23rd January 1958.

Nehru in his reply to the letter of 23rd January 1959 of Prime Minister Chou En-lai in March 1959 stated that he was surprised by the fact that the Chinese Government had not recognized the traditional frontier based on geographical principles. At the same time Nehru also accepted that this frontier has

4. T.N. Kaul, Diplomacy in Peace and War (Delhi, 1979), p. 102
5. K. Gupta, Spotlight on Sino-Indian Relations (Calcutta, 1981) p. 58
6. S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru A Biography (Delhi, 1984), Vol. 3, p. 79
8. Ibid, p. 52
not been demarcated on the ground in all sectors. In the same letter Nehru emphatically laid claim to the whole region of Ladakh on the basis of the treaty of 1842 between the Kashmir state and Emperor of China and the Lama Guru of Lhasa. He further states: “It was in the confidence that the general question of our common frontier was settled to the satisfaction of both sides that I declared publicly and in Parliament on several occasions that there is no room for doubt about our frontiers as shown in published maps. We thought that our position was clearly understood and accepted by your Government.” Thus Nehru had staked categorically public claim to both the McMahon line and the Aksai Chin and made the territory legally Indian in the eyes of the constitution and emotionally Indian in the public mind.

It was at this juncture that the flight of Dalai Lama to India took place adding strain to relationship between India and China. Nehru’s letter in March was not replied to for next six months. The reaction to the developments in Tibet by Nehru was in his peculiar way overlooking certain norms of bilateral relations. Nehru announced in Indian Parliament that on the issue of Tibet India had deep sympathy for the people of Tibet and advised China to deal with it by gentler methods than waging warfare. Further to enhance the Chinese suspicion he told the Parliament:

To say that a number of upperstrata reactionaries in Tibet were solely responsible for this appears to be an extraordinary simplification of a complicated situation. Even according to accounts received through Chinese sources the revolt in Tibet was of considerable magnitude and the basis of it must be a strong feeling of nationalism which affects not only upper class people but others also.

9. Ibid, pp. 56 - 57
10. Ibid
11. R.N. Lebow, Between Peace and War (Baltimore, 1981), p. 188
13. Ibid, p. 324
At a very critical point this reaction of India based on sentiments of sympathy and humanitarian reasons and to some extent based on kinship with Tibetan people was bound to invite sharp reaction from the Chinese. To the Chinese Tibet was not only a sensitive legal issue but also a symbol of past relations and prestige. Any interference in this area was not acceptable to the Chinese and this they had made it clear to India very early. Chinese viewed India’s plea for Tibetan autonomy and sympathy for the rebels as an attempt to keep Tibet weak and it was viewed by China that such an Indian attitude was inimical to the Chinese security. To make matters worse in this situation, the advise of Khrushchev to Chen Yi in September 1959 further made the Chinese upset. Chen Yi during his visit to Russia assailed Khrushchev for the Tass statement on Sino-Indian boundary dispute to which Khrushchev replied: “Tibet is right on India’s border, can you see that the Indians consider it of vital importance to have an independent neighbour. Tibet is a weak country and it can’t pose any threat to India on its own. A Chinese Tibet however does pose a threat to India.” 14 The Chinese therefore viewed that India was indirectly encouraging the Tibetans and this was corroborated by Chou En-lai in an interview to the English journalist many years later. 15

The Chinese viewed all this as an act of compelling China to accept the boundary as shown by India and that in the case of Dalai Lama instead of adopting a middle course, India was adopting “two faced tactics”. Chou En-lai in his letter to Nehru on 8th September 1959 in response to Nehru’s letter of March 22nd, 1959 stressed the complicated nature of the boundary, the historical background of the matter and wanted an overall settlement of the boundary question. 16 In this letter Chou En-lai also had specifically hinted that the

15. S. Gopal, n. 6, p. 99
British proposal of 1899 could be the basis. Nehru understood this as a support to Indian claim and he wrote on September 26, 1959 to Chou En-lai, "The proposal made in 1899 by the British government referred... to the northern frontiers of Ladakh and Kashmir with Sinkiang. It was stated in that context that the northern boundary ran along the Kuenlun range to a point east of 80° longitude where it met the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This signified beyond doubt that the whole of Aksai Chin area lay in Indian territory." Prof. Huttenback has stated that Nehru wrongly interpreted the facts in this regard by misquoting it to imply the inclusion of whole Aksai Chin within India. According to Huttenback: "In referring to the letter in detail they (Indians) altered its provisions considerably. Instead of saying that it was the spur running south from the Kuenlun range which former British maps had shown as the eastern boundary of Ladakh—a situation which the proposals in the letter did not essentially change—they said it was the Kuenlun range itself which the British had described as being the northern frontier of Ladakh." It appears India was somehow trying to establish its claim even at the expense of alteration. This was perhaps bound to be there because Nehru was so thoroughly disgusted at the Chinese attitude that he told the Lok Sabha on 4th September that the two countries were not speaking the same language and China is not trying to understand Indian traditions and style of functioning. He also started feeling that the Chinese did not attach much importance to India's friendship which made him state:

In the final analysis, the Chinese have valued India's friendship only to a very small extent. But I repeat that we shall continue to work for their friendship. To imagine that India can push China about is silly. To imagine that China can push India about is equally silly. We must accept things

17. Ibid
18. Ibid, p. 34
20. Lok Sabha Debates 1959, Vol. 34, cols. 6536 - 40
as they are. In the message we send to the Chinese Government yesterday you will find that we have suggested to them that we must accept the status quo and discuss these individual points. It is one thing to accept or to adhere to the McMahon line but quite another to establish the exact alignment here and there. Of course it is fantastic to talk about war, etc. Nevertheless the matter is serious enough. It is serious because I just do not know how the Chinese mind works. I have been surprised at the recent developments.  

Nehru had started viewing the Chinese reactions as dissimulation and deviousness when the Kongka pass incident took place in which nine Indian policemen lost their lives. The Indian Government and the public took this as an act of Chinese arrogance and the Government of India came under tremendous pressure on the issue. The Government of India now began to insist that the Chinese should withdraw from this area and reserved the right to claim adequate compensation from the Chinese Government. The Kongka pass incident further sealed the prospects of a settlement as Nehru felt that the Chinese had only a single-track mind and were passing through a period of expansionism, “which occurred regularly in Chinese history whenever the country was strong and united and no country in the world seemed to care less for peace.” Nehru also stated publicly that “we cannot allow China to keep foot on our chest.” And thus Nehru showed very clearly that he had embarked on patriotic competitiveness. These stirring words further tied Nehru’s hands on the matter and he was trying to show that the Chinese had done wrong to India. He must have done this to protect himself politically but such a stand was courting a new danger, because the fact remains that the Kongka Pass incident was due to a step planned by the Intelligence Chief B.N. Mullick, that is to

23. Ibid, pp. 21 - 23  
24. S. Gopal, n. 6, p. 101  
25. The Hindu, 11th November 1959
establish forward posts in this region. This policy was opposed by both the Army and the External Affairs Ministry. The Army Chief General Thimayya and Foreign Secretary Subimal Dutt had opposed it on grounds that it was not strategically very important and logistically also it was not maintainable and to the Foreign Secretary this step would be unnecessary and provocative. \(^{26}\) Mullick himself further states that:

On October 23rd when the facts of the outrage came to be known, the Prime Minister held a meeting which was attended by the Defence Minister, the Chief of the Army staff and officers from the External Affairs, Home and Defence.... The Intelligence Bureau was made the common target by the Army Headquarters and the External Affairs Ministry and accused of expansionism and causing provocations on the frontier. ... The Army demanded no further movements of armed police should take place on the frontier without their clearance... The Prime Minister had to give in to the Army's demand. \(^{27}\)

The Home Secretary too was against this “bright idea” of the Intelligence Chief to “register our claim” on the territory. \(^{28}\) Intelligence Chief never realized that only mutually acceptable boundary can become the substance of sovereignty. \(^{29}\) The decision to establish border posts in the disputed areas was in violation of September 13 1959 directive issued by Nehru in which he had stated the Aksai Chin area was to be left as it was since it was practically of little access. \(^{30}\) The casual manner in which the Intelligence Bureau had flouted the above directive of Nehru indicates that this policy was implemented with the blessings of Home Minister, without whose support the Intelligence Chief would not have ventured into it and his continuance in the office after this incident is a proof of it. This can be further substantiated by the fact that the

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27. Ibid, pp. 243-44
then Home Minister in G.B. Pant was one of the strongest opponents of India's China policy and he was against any compromise with China. He stoutly opposed the idea of even leasing Aksai Chin region to China. 31

The Kongka Pass incident made Nehru declare once more publicly that he would not succumb to pressure tactics. The Chinese under their strongman Mao Tse Tung, conveyed to the Indian Government through the Secretary of Communist party of India, Ajay Ghosh, that while China had no territorial ambitions, she would not give up in principle what she considered to be her right.32 Thus following this incident the possibilities of political and diplomatic maneuverability appeared to have become remote to both China and India. Nehru himself viewed this incident as an attempt to settle the border problem in a forcible manner by the Chinese. On 7th November 1959 Chou En-lai wrote to Nehru for a friendly settlement of the matter. He suggested following measures “to create a favourable atmosphere, for a friendly settlement of the boundary question, The Chinese Government proposes that the armed forces of China and India each withdraw 20 kilometres at once from the so called McMahon line in the east, from the line upto to which each side exercises actual control in the west, and that the two sides undertake to refrain from again sending their armed personnel to be stationed in and patrol zones from which they have evacuated their armed forces, but still maintain civil administrative personnel and unarmed police there for the performance of administrative duties and maintenance of order. This proposal is in effect an extention of the Indian Government's proposal contained in its notes dated September 10 that neither side should send its harmed personnel to Longju, to the entire boarder between China and India, and moreover a proposal to seperate the troops of the two sides by as great a distance as 40 kilometres.”33 He further added that the

31. S. Gopal, n. 6, p. 103
32. Ibid, p. 100
Chinese Government would be ready to do its utmost to create the most peaceful and most secure border zones between our two countries so that our two countries will never again have apprehension or come to clash on account of border issues and concluded by saying: "I earnestly hope that for the sake of great, long standing friendship of more than one thousand million people of our two countries, the Chinese and Indian Governments will make joint efforts and reach a speedy agreement on the above said proposal." 34 One of Nehru's officers (T.N. Kaul) close to him on the matters related to China too had advised Nehru on similar lines in the year 1959 to defuse the whole situation. 35 Chou En-lai's statement reflected the confidence the Chinese had in reaching a compromise with India on the border dispute and on an earlier occasion the Chinese Ambassador to Indian Pan Tsu Li emphatically told Foreign Secretary Subimal Dutt that these problems could be bypassed without any difficulty. 36 The Chinese view was that the above stated compromise would effectively prevent any escalation of the border crisis.

On 16th November 1959 Nehru explained the Indian stand to China by stating that in the eastern sector, the entire territory upto the traditional border the McMahon line had been under Indian control for a long time and no place to the south of the line except Longju was ever occupied by the Chinese forces. 37 Nehru further stated that the McMahon line ran over a terrain with a height of above 14,000 feet to 20,000 feet above the sea level and as it was difficult to cross over into each other's territory there was no need to conduct a mutual withdrawal in this area. Both sides need not reoccupy the Longju area. 38 On the western sector; "India counter proposed that "The Government

34. Ibid
35. T.N. Kaul, n. 4, p. 114
36. John Lali, n. 29, p. 261
38. Ibid, pp. 48 - 49
of India should withdraw all its personnel to the west of which the Chinese
Government have shown as the international boundary in their 1956 maps,
which so far as we are aware you latest maps. Similarly the Chinese Government
should withdrawn their personnel to the east of international boundary which
has been described by the Government of India in their earlier notes and cor-
respondence and shown in the official maps." Further the Indian Government
contended that: "Since the two lines were separated by long distances, there
should not be the slightest risk of border clashes between the forces on either
side. The area is almost entirely uninhabited. It is thus not necessary to main-
tain administrative personnel in this area bounded by the two lines on the east
and west." 39 Thus India wanted the whole of western sector under dispute to
be left as no-man's land until the matter was settled by negotiations. The
Chinese reaction to this Indian attitude was sharp and Chou En-lai on 17th
December 1959 replied to Nehru and accused India of being unfair as,

it proposes that in this sector (western) Chinese personnel with withdraw
to the east of the boundary as shown on Chinese maps. This proposal may
appear 'equitable' to those who are ignorant about the truth. But even the
most anti-Chinese part of the Indian press pointed out immediately that, un-
der this proposal, India's "concession" would only be theoretical, be-
cause, to begin with, the area concerned does not belong to India and
India has no personnel there to withdraw, while China would have to
withdraw from a territory of 33,000 square kilometres which has long
belonged to it, its military personnel guarding the frontiers and its civil
administrative personnel of the Hotien county, the Sinkiang Uighur Au-
tonomous region, and of Rudok Dzong in the Ari area of the Tibet Au-
tonomous Region respectively.

Chou En-lai also underlines the importance of this area to China as it is
the traffic artery linking up the vast areas of Sinkiang and western Tibet and
points out that the last eight or nine years so many activities were carried out
by the Chinese side in this area and yet the Indian side did not react or say
anything. Therefore it is an eloquent proof of Chinese jurisdiction over that

39. Ibid, pp. 52 - 53
area. Further the Chinese Government challenged that:

If the Indian Government after being acquainted with the above view points of the Chinese Government, should still insist that its demand in regard to this area is proper, then the Chinese Government would like to know whether the Government of India is prepared to apply the same principle equally to the eastern sector of the border that is to say, to require both the Chinese and Indian sides withdraw all their personnel from the area between the so-called McMahon line and the eastern section of sino-Indian boundary as shown on Chinese maps (and on Indian maps too during a long period of time). The Chinese Government has not upto now made any demand in regard to the area south of the so-called McMahon line as a pre-condition or interim measure and what I find difficult to understand is why the Indian Government should demand that the Chinese side withdraw from one sidedly from the western frontier areas. 40

As expected, India rejected the Chinese proposal, since India always regarded the McMahon line as the traditional boundary and a natural barrier between the two countries and it did not want to retreat even from the line already claimed by it. Thus the proposals and counter proposals regarding mutual withdrawals by India and China got reached nowhere. All that was being attempted was jockeying for positions in the disputed areas. The Indian side's claim to territory was on history and the Chinese Government was trying to base the case on existing facts. Since Indian side had based its case on history it becomes imperative to study these historical claims as these claims were an important factor in deciding the historical perspective to the problem.

The origin of the McMahon line can be traced to the Simla conference held in 1913-14 by the British in which both Tibet and China participated. The aim of this conference was to extend and formalize the de facto independence of Tibet, which was declared in 1912. 41 Tibet was thus to be made a buffer between India and China. Tibetans, whose independent position has been rela-

40. Ibid

41. K. Gupta, n. 5, p. 112
tive, were willing to co-operate with the British to any extent to achieve their independence. The British policy on Tibet was guided by the military which was urging a ratification of the boundary line in this sector from the foothills of the Himalayas to the crest line of Assam Himalayas since June 1912. The Simla conference was a total failure in so far as a principal aim of deciding the Sino-Tibetan boundary was concerned. Inspite of this failure the Foreign Secretary of the Government of India and British representative McMahon proceeded to sign with the Tibetans a secret declaration that the draft convention would be binding upon the two Governments. But an explicit instruction from London had forbidden McMahon from taking this step, that is not to sign the bipartite agreement with the Tibetans but this instruction got delayed in reaching him and McMahon had already signed it by the time he got this instruction. Subsequently London accepted it as fait accompli and gave retrospective approval to McMahon’s action. A detailed study of the documents available in London has now established that even though McMahon’s action was accepted as fait accompli, the British were not willing to recognize it as a boundary line permanently valid. In the mid thirties this line was resurrected by Olaf Caroe, the then Deputy Secretary in the Department of External Affairs, Government of India. He had even distorted the Aitchisons Treaties to establish the legitimacy of the McMahon line. The Simla conference failed to complete its business owing to the Chinese adamant attitude not to sign the agreement on

42. File No: 10R LPS/10/181, Note 4 Cited in K. Gupta, Spotlight on Sino-Indian Relations (Calcutta, 1981), p. 112
44. D. Woodman, n. 19, p. 176
45. K. Gupta, n. 5, p. 112
46. Ibid, pp. 112-114
47. Ibid, pp. 119-30
terms set by the British. At the same time: “The opportunity was also taken at Simla to negotiate the frontier to be established between Tibet and North east India ............. and it fortunately proved possible to establish boundary over 850 miles of difficult and dangerous country. We have thus gained a frontier standing back everywhere about a 100 miles from the plains of India.\(^{34}\) This statement of Charles Bell on the negotiation of McMahon line is not true and has been contradicted by the then foreign secretary who in his note to Charles Bell who was then Political Officer in Sikkim stated : “The fact is that the negotiations conducted last year in Simla broke down simply and solely because the Government of India attempted to secure for Tibet greater advantage than the Chinese were prepared to concede.” and he further stated, “that Charles Bell’s recitation of advantage that would accrue to Britain under the Simla convention, was purely academic since it has not been signed by the Chinese Government or accepted by the Russian Government and is therefore, for the present invalid.”\(^{49}\) This aspect of the conference was probably not taken note off by the officials of Ministry of External Affairs after India became independent, but Indian Ambassador to China Sardar K.M. Panikkar seems to have been aware of it and hence he had asked Nehru to stabilize the administration upto the McMahon line because of the strategic significance of the region to India.\(^{50}\) In this context it should be pointed out that the Survey of India maps published in free India during 1947-52 depicted the north eastern border of India eastward from Bhutan along the Himalayan high crest line as ‘undemarcated’ while the western sector and middle sector of the northern border beginning from the north western end of Kashmir to the trijunction of Nepal Tibet and India were shown by a colour wash with the world “Boundary

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48. Ibid, p. 79
49. 10R Political, 46.4/PS/10/344 No. 44 SEB Simla September 3, 1915 cited in K. Gupta, n.5, p. 181
50. K.M. Panikkar, *Geographical Factors in Indian History* (Bombay, 1959), pp. 65 - 70
undefined” imprinted thrice along the stretch. Even though the McMahon line had a negative origin, from the geographical point of view this line could be regarded as a natural border between India and China. By 1951 this area was brought under Indian control though Chinese maps at that time showed the boundary in the region at the foot-hills of Assam. The whole region was taken over at a time when China was involved in a grim battle with the Americans in Korea. According to another scholar the McMahon line was hardly in conflict with the Tibetan interests. The strategic importance of this Tawang region was realized by the British also when Captain Neville had stated “should China gain control of Tibet, Tawang country is adapted for a secret and early entrance into India.” Free India was thus compelled to act on the matter by extending administration to Tawang as Nehru’s advisor and Ambassador and master historian Sardar K.M. Panikkar had concluded, “the British policy (which we were supposed to have inherited) of looking upon Tibet as an area in which we had special interests could not be maintained.” We have already discussed in a previous chapter why Panikkar was against any discussion or negotiation with the Chinese on this aspect. The Chinese Government on their part had more or less accepted the McMahon line as a fait accompli. But in Chou En-lai’s letter dated 8th September 1959 he questions the validity of McMahon line and wants an overall settlement of the boundary and delimitation of it and also assured that China would not unilaterally alter it. In this letter Chou En-lai states:

At the conference were discussed the so called boundary between outer and inner Tibet and that between Tibet and rest of China. Contrary to what was said in your letter, the so-called McMahon line was never dis-

51. K. Gupta, n. 5, p. 39
52. Ibid
54. Parshotam Mehra, McMahon Line and After (Delhi, 1974), p. 21
cussed at the Simla conference, but was determined by the British representative and the representatives of the local authorities behind the back of the representatives of Chinese Central Government through an exchange of secret notes at Delhi on March 24, 1914, that is, prior to the signing of Simla treaty. This line was later marked on the map attached to Simla Treaty as part of the boundary between Tibet and rest of China.  

Indeed Chou En-lai's letter of 8th September 1959 was in contrast to the earlier stand of Chinese of accepting McMahon line. The change in the Chinese attitude towards McMahon line appears to be more out of anguish at the Indian refusal to negotiate the border with China. A detailed study of records associated with the Simla conference in 1913-14 clearly brings out the fallacy of the Simla conference and the lack of legitimacy of the McMahon line. Nehru viewed this letter as an act of deviousness on the part of China. But it is really surprising why Nehru should think so, because way back in 1950 on 8th February he had told the Indian Parliament in a reply to H.V.Kamath that,

In the early years of this century a convention was held between the representatives of the then Government of India and Tibet and of China .......... the decisions were about the boundary called the McMahon line .......... But later the then Government of China did not accept this agreement and therefore did not sign it. In fact although this agreement has been acted upon in India and Tibet, there has been no formal signature to it by the Chinese Government.

Nehru probably refuted the contention of Chou En-lai because it would go against his declared stand on the boundary. In another scholarly study by Prof. Lamb it is argued that "so long as Mr. Nehru and his advisers cling to the validity of the proceedings at Simla and Delhi between October 1913 and July 1914, a settlement of this kind continues to be out of question between independent India and China." That is the Chinese would not recognize any

57. For details see K. Gupta n.5, pp. 111 - 146
58. Cited from K. Gupta, n. 5, p. 40
convention or conference which could even remotely recognize the legitimacy of independence of Tibet. Dalai Lama after coming to India in 1959, did try to link the McMahon line with the independence of Tibet. Professor Lamb further poses another question in this regard: "There is certain irony in the way which independent Indian Government has clung to the illusory gains of the period on 1912-14, apparently unaware that in them the roots of the present dilemma lies. Why Mr. Nehru, while declaring himself committed to a policy of friendship, of peaceful co-existence, with communist China, should have adhered with such tenacity to those symbols, at least in Chinese eyes of British imperialism, the Simla convention and the McMahon line notes, is one of the mysteries of the 20th century." 60 The answer to this question could be given by going through Nehru's statement in the Parliament of 9th December, 1959: "In Sino-Indian agreement of 29th April 1954, while India was merely accepting the reality of the Chinese occupation of Tibet .......... which she (India) was not in a position to alter the raising of the claim to the McMahon line border across the table would have led to a demand for a quid pro quo by Communist China." 61 Thus there was a duality in the Indian attitude on the whole issue. On Tibet, he was ready to give up the extra territorial rights which were not tenable at any cost but the northern frontier was to be McMahon line, because a live frontier had to be kept at a distance from the plains. The McMahon line may not have been fully acceptable to the Chinese still they would have reluctantly accepted it for friendship with India. If it was not so they would have immediately objected to it as they had done in the case of Tibet in the early 1950s. The Indian attitude towards the Aksai Chin and as already discussed the developments in Tibet in 1959 further aggravated the problem and made it really difficult.

60. Ibid, p. 590
61. J. Nehru, n.2, p. 349
Nehru had firmly declared that McMahon line was to be the boundary between China and India, but this line did not extend to western sector. On the western sector he had stated “that the boundary between Ladakh and Nepal was” defined chiefly by long usage and custom.” He had also further stated that parts of Indi-Tibetan boundary had not been recognized and did not make clear which part of the boundary had not been recognized or accepted. That the western sector did not seem to have got much attention even in the late fifties is very clear from the letter of Nehru’s to Chou En-lai on 14th December 1958 in which the emphasis was on McMahon line and there was no reference as such to the Aksai Chin region. Prior to this letter in a note on October 18, 1958 India had sought information on Indian soldiers who had strayed into the Chinese territory and an informal protest on the Aksai Chin road was made. In November 1950, a committee under the Chairmanship of Major-General Himmat Singhji Deputy Minister of Defence, with representatives of Defence, Communication, Home and External affairs, was constituted to study the problems created by the invasion of Tibet by Communist China. The committee submitted its report in 1953 and it recommendations were “the reorganization and expansion of the Assam Rifles, the extension of the administration in NEFA, development of intelligence network along the border, developments of civilian armed police development of checkposts and communications.” Thus the emphasis was on the NEFA region and western sector was not even considered and the letter written by the former Secretary-General of Ministry of External Affairs Sir Girija Shankar Bajpai to Nehru or the problem of boundary emphasized on the McMahon line and Aksai Chin was not at all mentioned.

62. N. Jetly, India - China Relations, 1947 - 77 (Delhi, 1979), p. 19
63. Ibid
64. White paper, Vol. 1, pp. 41 - 42
65. V. Longer, India’s Foreign and Defence Policy (Delhi, 1988), p. 47
66. Ibid
In the Ministry of External Affairs, the Historical Division Director Mr. K. Zakaria had informed the North and North Eastern Boundary Committee headed by Himmat Singhji (1951 - 53) that there was no well-defined boundary along the north and north eastern frontier of Kashmir. As stated earlier, the boundary in this region was marked as undefined till 1952 but after the signing of the agreement in 1954 with China on trade in Tibet, the Survey of India issued a map showing the Aksai Chin as Indian territory. A memorandum was also issued by Nehru to the External Affairs, Defence Ministry and the Home Ministry in July 1954, a few weeks after the visit of Chou En-lai in June 1954, in which it was stated that the "agreement was a new starting point of our relations with China and Tibet and affirmed that both as flowing from our policy and as consequence of our agreement with China, the northern frontier should be considered a firm and definite one, which was not open to discussion with anybody. A system of checkpoints should be spread along this entire frontier. More especially we should have check posts in such places as might be considered disputed areas." This region was incorporated into India despite Nehru being not very sure about this area and he told the Parliament on 28th August 1959 that,

there are parts regarding which it is rather difficult to say where the immediate border is ............... But it is very difficult even in a map to indicate it ............ Then there are parts still where there has been no demarcation in the past. Nobody was interested in that area. 

It was in accordance with this pliant attitude that Nehru on September 13 issued a directive against encroaching in this area. The AICC resolution in September 1959 at Chandigarh referred only to the north eastern frontier without any reference to Ladakh but it was subsequently amended, which means

67. K. Gupta, n. 5, p. 83
69. Jawaharlal Nehru, n. 2, p. 330
that even the Congress Party was not sure on Indian claim to Aksai Chin. Earlier, on 4th September 1959 Nehru had told the Parliament that the position in Ladakh was somewhat that different, and: "The McMahon line does not go there \ldots\ldots\ldots\. There was the treaty of 1842 between this ruler of Kashmir and the ruler of Lhasa and the representative of the Emperor of China on the other resulting in Ladakh being recognized as part of Kashmir state. Nobody has challenged that. Nobody challenges it now. But the actual boundary of Ladakh with Tibet was not very carefully defined. It was defined to some extent by British officers who went there. But I rather doubt if they did any careful survey. They marked the line. As people do not live there by and large, it did not make any difference." Thus Nehru's statement clearly corroborates what Dr. Zakaria had told the north and north eastern committee (1951 - 53) regarding the undefined nature of the boundary in this region. A recent study has firmly established how the British administrators were against including the region beyond Karkorum as part of India. The reason was that the Chinese would not allow them to take control of this region. Though the British declared that the boundary of the Maharajah of Kashmir was undefined they never ventured beyond Karkorum nor did they allow Maharajah's officer to do so. The English maps in those days showed that all the water on one side of Karkorum mountains went to India and all on the other side to the Chinese therefore all the northern side of the Karkorum range belonged to China. The Britishers never took interest in this region because it was no use to go further and the area between Karkorum and Kuenlun range was of no use and in-

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70. The Hindu, 28th September 1959
71. Jawaharlal Nehru, n. 2, p. 345
72. J. Lal, n. 29, p. 182
73. Ibid
74. Ibid, p. 60
75. Ibid, p. 64
accessible. The inhospitable nature of the region has been explained by explorers and this region could become natural buffer between Ladakh and Tibet. 76

Hence the Viceroy’s office in 1890 wrote to Secretary of State for India that:

We are inclined to think that the wisest course will be to leave them in possession (of the Chinese) for, while on the one hand we would gain little by extending our responsibilities to the further side of a great natural barrier like the Karkorom mountains, it is on the other hand evidently to our advantage that the track of country intervening between Karkorom and Kuenlun mountains should be definitely held by a friendly power like China.” 77

The collapse of Manchu dynasty in 1911 once again revived the interest in the boundary beyond Karkorom or as it is called the John Ardash line of 1897. But the proposal was not accepted by the British home Government and thus the boundary in the north was not defined by any agreement. 78 Thus there was sufficient scope for claims and counter claims by both China and India. It was for this reason that the colleague of Olaf Caroe and independent India’s first Foreign Secretary said that “I deliberately say disputed (Aksai Chin), because maps, treaties, agreements and other documents on which both sides rely cannot be said to place the boundary as conceived by either party, beyond the region of doubt or the need for negotiation. The water shed principle on which we have heavily relied in other sectors of the frontier, is in the Aksai Chin area not in our favour. Moreover it cannot be forgotten that Aksai Chin is of no importance to India whereas to China it is of utmost importance, because it is the link between two historically troublesome regions, Tibet and Sinkiang.” 79 Hence the formula for the settlement of Sino - Indian dispute could be what Chou En-lai offered in April 1960 during his visit to India that is “the

77. J.Lall, n. 29, p. 73
78. D. Woodman, n. 19, p. 267
79. K. Gupta, n. 5, p. 72
Chinese Government would recognize the McMahon line once and for all in return for some recognition on our part of Chinese claims in the disputed Aksai Chin area."\(^{80}\) India failed to realize that in the absence of agreements on boundaries a final boundary could be obtained only by methods of diplomacy. By September 1959 Nehru’s attitude towards the boundary also began to change considerably and in his reply to Chou En-lai he had told him that whole of Aksai Chin belonged to India. This sea change in Nehru was very much influenced by Dr. S. Gopal who was then the Director of Historical Division of Ministry of External Affairs. He had gone to London to go through materials on Indian borders in India Office Records and Foreign office Archives to make an objective appraisal of historical evidence.\(^{81}\) Dr. Gopal subsequently in the biographical work on Nehru justified Indian claim to Aksai Chin and based his argument on the ground that India had been controlling this areas from tenth century onwards and the officials and traders and hunting parties from Kashmir regularly visited these areas frequently and freely.\(^{82}\) This argument appears to be untenable because given the desolate nature of the place, the same could be said about the Chinese too; they too would have moved in this region as freely as Indians did. Secondly Dr. Gopal argues that during the 1954 Sino-Indian agreement on Tibet, the official map of India was shown to the Chinese with traditional boundary marked on it and the Chinese had not objected and as per the Panchsheel the Chinese had agreed to respect India’s territorial integrity.\(^{83}\)

In this regard the euphoria created by Panchsheel, made India go beyond the actual understanding of border issue, because Chou En-lai had already told India in the early 1950s that stabilization of borders would take place only after

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81. M. Maxwell, n. 30, p. 119

82. S. Gopal, n. 6, p. 303 (For details refer Appendix - 2)

83. Ibid, p. 304
due consultation among the three countries namely China India and Nepal. Arguing on the same grounds as Dr. Gopal has done, as per the Intelligence chief, the information on Chinese movement in the Aksai Chin region was available to India from 1951 onwards but India chose to remain silent to which no official explanation is available to this day. This fact has been corroborated by the former Defence Secretary in his book. It was only after signing of the 1954 agreement that Nehru had directed that “check posts should be established in such places as might be considered disputed areas.” The other basis for claiming Aksai Chin region, according to Dr. Gopal is, “the important points on the present alignment were recognized as the traditional limits of the Ladakh on the one hand and the Tibet on the other.” He further states: “The whole area of Aksai Chin plateau and Lingsi Tung plains was administered by the Government of Ladakh and Kashmir and utilized for grazing by the people of Ladakh.” If it was so the Ladakh Chronicles should have mentioned about it nor is it mentioned in any of the treaties. Probably, this region being a desolated area, no importance was attached to it by any administration. The herdsmen came and went at will moving freely from one pasture to another. In those days there were only open frontiers with a single official crossing point.

The concept of linear boundaries was not there in those days and therefore the then rulers were indifferent to the headache of exact delimitation. Frontier

84. S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography Vol. 2, pp. 177 - 78
85. B.N. Mullick, n. 26, p. 199
86. S.S. Khera, India’s Defence Problem (Delhi 1968) P 155.
87. Mankekar, n. 68, p. 183
88. S. Gopal, n. 6, p. 303
89. Ibid
90. J. Lall, n. 29, p. 148
91. Ibid, p. 119
violations were therefore not easily discovered, especially in regions like Aksai Chin as it would have been impossible in those days because of the region's inaccessibility. Therefore the single “official” crossing point served the purpose of the time. The 1842 treaty is very brief on the subject of frontier stating only that the official boundary point was fixed at the Lahari stream at Demchock. It was the operative boundary point at which caravans from Ladakh and Tibet crossed into each other’s territory. Thus the notion of a defined boundary line was not present in the thinking of the traditional societies. That is why they said it very clearly that, “we shall neither at present not in the future have anything to do or interfere at all with the boundaries of Ladakh and its surroundings as on fixed from ancient times.” 92 The 1846 Treaty of Lahore too was in no way different as it was about the boundary. This treaty was signed between British and Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu on March 9 1846 and according to this treaty while the boundary eastwards of the river Indus was one for determination by the two signatories the treaty was silent about the international boundary to the north and further east of river Indus. In other words where precisely did Maharaja’s territories end and territories of Chinese Turkistan and Chinese Tibet take over is not clear. 93 The frontiers to the Himalayan Societies of Ladakh and Tibet were of secondary nature. The absence of international boundaries is very clear from the treaty of Lahore signed in 1846 between the English and the Maharajah of Kashmir, which was silent about the international boundary to the north and further east of Indus. 94 The British rulers did constitute two boundary commissions to delimit the boundary but it was not able to achieve anything in the absence of response from the Chinese.95

The Chinese lack of response to the boundary commissions constituted by the

92. 1842 Treaty. (refer the Text in Appendix - 3)
93. J. Lall, n. 29, p. 118
94. Ibid, p. 121
95. Ibid
British was to avoid any kind of pressure on the matter by the British as the Chinese then were not in a position to resist it. Thus the Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-lai was taking into account this history when he said that there was no traditional agreement on Sino-Indian boundary. Having got a wrong historical perspective of the boundary problem, India began to view the Chinese Prime Minister’s letter of 23rd January 1959 as an act of deviousness and betrayal. The developments in Tibet further spoiled the chances of any restoration of mutual faith between the two countries with a history of friendship of more than two thousand years. The Chinese also wanted to cover up their failure in Tibet for which the asylum of Dalai Lama in India and the sympathy and moral support of India to the Tibetans became handy. India probably, wanted to take advantage of the situation in Tibet to consolidate its hold over the disputed areas in the western sector, because to India negotiation with China might not be advantageous. Such a thinking on the part of India cannot be ruled out because in the early 1950, the take over of Tawang and extension of administration was done at a time when China was involved in a grim battle with the Americans in Korea and at that time China was also trying to establish itself firmly in Tibet. To some extent Nehru’s statement to an American Television supports the above argument because Nehru stated on 15th December 1959 that revolt in Tibet “rather brought a certain speed in the events on our borders because the revolt in Tibet was being crushed by the Chinese forces and they naturally came to our borders.......... and a somewhat new situation arose for us in the last few months................” 96 Professor Lamb too underlines the developments in Tibet and its relevance in the Sino-Indian conflict by stating, “Had it not been for the dramatic circumstances of the Tibetan revolt, this conflict of opinion (between India ‘ China) would probably have given rise to little more than a continued exchange of notes.” 97

96. K. Gupta, n. 5, p. 77
It was in this back ground that Chou En-lai came to Delhi in April 1960 to meet Nehru on a long tour of this country and the Chinese Prime Minister was in India for a week. Nehru even before Chou En-lai had landed in Delhi had decided not to accept any compromise on the matter and what was in his mind in this regard was made clear to the Nepalese Prime Minister on 13th April, 1960: “I think that our case is a strong one and I see no reason why we should weaken in it at any point.” 98 Chou En-lai in fact had come with the idea of having a compromise based on the principle of give and take. 99 He therefore wanted both the leaders to arrive at certain principles to achieve a break through in the impasse. 100 Both sides, thus went into talks, viewing the facts differently and sticking to their positions vigorously, hence no meeting ground could be found. Realising the gravity of the situation in the early 1960s several senior Ministry of External Affairs officials who favoured a political solution to the Sino-Indian border problem, rather than one based on historical evidence, were making their views felt either in Delhi or from abroad. 101 Political solution was impossible in that atmosphere of ill will and as the Chinese approach to the boundary question became clear Indian frustration burgeoned into outright suspicion and soon became resentful hostility. Nehru now rejected publicly any call to barter and horse trading and favoured only the historical approach to the border delimitation. 102 Nehru had already taken such a firm stand on the issue that he rebuked his own close confident and Defence Minister Krishna Menon for suggesting that the problem with China was more political than military. 103 A compromise was possibly ruled out because it

98. S. Gopal, n. 6, p. 134
99. K.P.S. Menon, n. 80, p. 260
100. S. Gopal, n. 6, p. 136
101. S. Hoffman, India - China Crisis (Delhi, 1990), p. 86
102. Prime Minister on Sino-Indian Relations, (Parliament), Vol. 1, pp. 333 - 34
103. S. Gopal, n. 6, p. 132
would legitimize the Chinese claims in the western sector for which India was not prepared. 104 This would also destroy the historical authenticity of India’s claim. Moreover Nehru had developed fear and insecurity that if he compromised he would have to give up his position as Prime Minister of India and he is said to stated: “If I give them that I shall no longer he the Prime Minister. I will not do it.” 105

During his talks with Nehru in April 1960 Chou En-lai had suggested, in accordance with method followed by China with Burma and Nepal, that a joint border commission should be constituted to study the matter. 106 Nehru had agreed to it but after Chou En-lai returned after meeting the other Ministers as desired by Nehru, he was told by Nehru that it was not possible to have a joint boundary commission. 107 Nehru now reverted to the earlier stand that India China border was delimited and wanted the Chinese and Indian officials to meet to examine the documentary evidence; 108 Chou En-lai agreed to this suggestion of meeting of officials of both countries to study all historical documents, records, maps and other relevant material on the boundary question and draw up a report for the benefit of the two Governments. Meanwhile every attempt was to be made by the two nations to avoid friction and clashes in border areas. 109 The decision to hold official talks was a moral victory to India over the Chinese but it was of little consequence as they were going to examine the historical data that each country had in its possession. Nehru was fully aware

104. B.N. Mullick, n. 26, p. 164
105. N. Maxwell, n. 30, p. 164
106. S. Hoffman, n. 97, p. 88
108. Lok Sabha Debates 1960, Vol. 43, cols. 1379 - 80
of the fact that as facts differed the inferences and arguments are going to differ and he told the Parliament on 26th April 1960.

It is obvious that the officials who might do it have no authority or competence to deal with the political aspect of the problem in the sense of suggesting a solution or recommending anything. That is not their function. All they can do is to examine facts ........... I do not imagine that this process will clarify the situation and make it easy for solution.  

The officials, thus, were bound to collate material to suit the arguments of political leadership. Nehru had also informed the Parliament on the same day that his discussions with Chou En-lai “came up against a rock of entirely different set of data ........... and there is no meeting ground at all.” The Chinese reacted to this statement sharply through their official media and accused Nehru of seeking unilateral concession “under the influence of imperialists.” The April 1960 meeting was to be the last meeting between Nehru and Chou En-lai, two persons “with so much in common, intelligence, finesse, sensitivity to wider issues, easily at that time, the world’s two most intellectual Prime Ministers.” But in this crisis both were seeking a solution that must be in accordance with the dignity and self-respect each had set for themselves, which only denied the expectation each had about the other. The 1960 meeting between the two Prime Ministers was the last chance to solve the crisis and the failure of the 1960 talks only increased the tendency of both sides to make charges and counter charges at a time when the documents were being discussed by the officials for both countries. Nehru began to allege that China could become a potential threat to world peace and accused China of strengthening its military position in Tibet. Nehru accused them of trying to bully

110. J. Nehru, n.2, p. 387
111. Ibid
112. S. Gopal. n. 6, p. 107
113. Ibid
114. National Herald, 3rd May and 25th June 1960
the nations and having no regard for "frontiers and the line." 115 To assure the nation he publicly stated that India was strong enough to counter the Chinese aggression and it was childish to consider India as weak. 116 Such an attitude on the part of Nehru reflected that he was a man with great self confidence but little security. This confidence was a source of strength enabling him to project a powerful image of himself as a capable leader but the lack of security was a source of weakness that made Nehru project his image even when it was inappropriate. 117 Further such a confidence helped him to create a world or vision of reality that could inspire others, but the lack of security prevented him from analyzing the worlds of other men and to understand the disagreement. 118

In February 1961 the officials report was submitted to the respective Governments. India made this document public immediately and it convinced Nehru further that his decision to hold on to the historical validity of the boundary stood vindicated. On the other hand the Chinese had rejected India's basic assumption that the Sino-Indian boundary was officially delimited and sacrosanct. The Chinese report stated : "Boundaries which have not been explicitly defined in treaty form are not formally delimited." 119 It further stated, "It can only be said that the whole length of the Sino-Indian boundary has not been formally delimited, that the boundary has no basis at all in international treaty. But in order to maintain amity along the border and eliminate boundary disputes, it is most necessary for the two countries to accomplish an overall formal delimitation through consultations and conclusion of a treaty." 120 India

115. S. Gopal, n. 6, p. 138
116. Ibid
117. Joseph De Revera, Psychological Dimensions of Foreign Policy (Ohio, 1968), pp. 247-257
118. Ibid
120. Ibid, p. 157
The Chinese Claim Lines of 1956 & 1960 in the Western Sector
rejected the above argument by stating, "Formal delimitation is optional and not essential in establishing the validity of traditional boundaries. The fact is that formal delimitation of the Sino-Indian boundary cannot resolve the issue because, unlike the northern boundaries of Nepal and Burma, the Indian and Chinese alignments are separated in long distances by large belts of territory." To make matters worse the Chinese also argued that they did not think it important that every detail of the line be known. During the official talks the Chinese extended their claim beyond what they had claimed in 1956. (See the map) The new claims were not acceptable to India and it was pointed out by the Government of India that while the 1960 map showed an alignment running due east from Karkorun pass in 1956 map the boundary ran south east from the common point. Similarly the map of 1960 cut across Pangong lake while that of 1956 left the entire western half in India. The major part of Spanggur lake was shown in India in the 1956 map but the 1960 map showed the whole of it in China. There were other anomalies as well, including a failure on the part of Chinese to point out a known watershed. The Chinese did stress on watershed principle frequently but the 1960 line was in violation of this principle as the actual line of control they established had crossed the rivers west of watershed. Indeed this was an act of deviousness on the part of the Chinese probably aimed at putting pressure on India to negotiate which was the fundamental objective since India had declared that there was nothing to discuss on the border issue. The Chinese had made clear in the Bandung conference that the boundaries with neighbours would have to be settled only by negotiations. Till an agreement was reached the Chinese wanted both the sides to maintain the status quo and desist from using force and the Chinese

122. Ibid, (China), p. 58
123. White Paper, Vol. 6, p. 10
124. Sino-Indian Officials Report on the Boundary (India) p. 18
promised that they would not do so but neither would China ever allow the use of force against itself. Based on the Bandung statement they told India, “If the Indian side is willing to understand correctly the above treaty and agreement (that is with Burma and Nepal) and not misinterpret their spirit and substance, and to approach the Sino-Indian boundary question in the same spirit, a settlement of the Sino-Indian boundary question could be found.” 125 India on the other hand wanted to hold on to its views firmly to put pressure on China to concede the demand in the matter. As Nehru states: “The main thing is that we must firmly hold on to our position, our opinions, our views and try to get them realized. May be it will take sometime, but that is better than going into any adventurist action now.” 126 China on December 3 1961 suggested renewal of 1954 agreement based on fresh negotiation on trade and intercourse in Tibet. 127 But the Indian response to this proposal was negative and was in accordance with the existing deadlock in Sino-Indian relations. Therefore the note of Indian government on 15th December 1961 stated that in consonance with the letter and spirit of Panchsheel, China should give its aggressive policies of last few years and only after that India could think about fresh negotiations for the renewal of 1954 agreement. 128 India in this regard made a mistake by not engaging China with new proposals on the trade agreement on Tibet. If India had done so it would have to some extent prevented the drift towards disaster. The renewal of this agreement would have at least kept up the trickle of trade which had been going on between the two countries. India’s refusal of Chinese proposal thus snapped the last connection that India had with China. 129 With the aggravation of Sino-Indian crisis India had withdrawn its

125. Ibid, (China), p. 189
126. Lok Sabha Debates, 1961 Vol. 56, cols. 2425 - 27
127. White Paper, Vol. 6, p. 188
128. Ibid, pp. 189 - 190
129. K.P.S. Menon, n. 80, p. 260
ambassador from Peking two years ago (1960) and had left the Indian embassy under the charge of a junior officer. This step was not appreciated by India's first Foreign Secretary Shri K.P.S Menon and in 1961 he volunteered to go to China as ambassador to explore the possibilities of defusing the crisis. Prime Minister Nehru agreed with K.P.S. Menon's suggestion and described it as a positive step. But Nehru was reluctant to take these positive steps without Chinese making a friendly gesture to India on the border issue. Thus Nehru appears to be personally disposed to positive attitude but due to lack of firmness, which statesman should normally have, he would not implement what he considered as right and buckled under pressure of criticism. Thus by the middle of 1962 all the possibilities of a settlement based on compromise had disappeared and the two governments were becoming more and more vehement in accusing each other. Both China and India were resorting to bargaining from a position of strength. The Chinese plan was to extend their claim before negotiating and the Indian plan was not to negotiate to pre-empt any argument on the occupied and disputed territory.

Ironically the boundary problem started in the regions of western sector only towards the end of 1950s but it was the eastern sector which became very live as the Sino-Indian crisis was reaching its flash point. Skirmishes between the two states started in this region by August 1959. On 11th August 1959 the Indian government charged that the Chinese troops on 7th August 1959 pushed back Indian soldiers after trespassing in Khinzenmane to the bridge at Dorkung Sambha. The Indian government ascertained that the McMahon line was the boundary between Indian and China and Khinzenmane was south of this line, therefore in Indian territory. The Chinese government insisted that the

130. K.P.S. Menon, Many Worlds (Bombay, 1971), p. 301
Khizemanne was within Chinese territory and demanded that Indian government withdraw its patrol from the area. Such a confusion arose because the boundary marking on the map by McMahon did not follow exactly the watershed principle. From Khizemanne to Namkachu the boundary dipped southwards making it difficult to determine the actual crest in this area. In 1912 the British explorer Bailey found that the range on the east bank of Nyamjancu which is joined by Namkachu ran from north to south. The river he observed flows in a narrow deep gorge as it breaks through the Himalayas though it becomes difficult to say what becomes the main range in this neighbourhood. This probably explains the reason why McMahon line left the highest crest and dipped southwards from Khizemanne to the trijunction. But India appeared to have gone beyond what was depicted on the map when they set up their posts in the summer of 1959. Technically certain areas were put on the Chinese side which were earlier on the Indian side based on watershed principle. McMahon had only depicted the line on the map without going into the geographical features of the terrain thereby proving harmful to the Indian point of view in the years of crisis. This was out of the poor knowledge of the place. At many places the McMahon line did not adhere to the highest watershed line of ridges. It was in such circumstances, that the 'forward policy' was conceived with a view to block the advancement of the Chinese on the frontier line. This policy was conceived as a response to public pressure. The Defence Minister Krishna Menon denied this as "forward policy" because he said later, "no country can follow such a policy in its own territory." By the end of the year 1961 India

133. Ibid, p. 1
134. S. Hoffman, n. 101, p. 69
135. J. Lall, n. 29, p. 277
136. Ibid
137. N. Maxwell, n. 30, pp. 103 - 106
had set up about six new posts. On November 28, Nehru informed the Lok Sabha that the forward policy was paying off and promised that “we shall continue to take steps to build up these things so that ultimately we may be in a position to take action to recover such territory as is in their possession.” 139 After a few months that is by the spring of 1962 Krishna Menon with the concurrence of Nehru authorized even more provocative policy in Ladakh that is to cut off the Chinese lines of communication by establishing forward posts. Nehru himself informed the Parliament that he regarded it as the only sound and thorough way of strengthening of India’s position. 140 General B.M. Kaul who was then the Chief of the General Staff of Army also encouraged both the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister to pursue such a policy. 141 The pressure on the Defence Minister was so high that he did not openly oppose a policy aimed at reclaiming lost Indian territory. 142 On June 29, Nehru informed the Lok Sabha that India now had the military initiative and was in the process of the outflanking the offending Chinese posts. 143 The Chinese did react to these moves by putting up more of their own posts in disputed areas and warned India that the Chinese guards would be “compelled to defend themselves” unless India withdraw its forward posts. Earlier in April and May 1962, also Peking declared that it would resume its patrols in the western sector and would not hesitate to patrol the entire Sino-Indian frontier unless India refrained from occupying the Chinese areas. 144 The Chinese media also warned through its editorial on July 9 that India was on “on the brink of precipice”.

139. Lok Sabha Debates, 1961 (Second Series) Vol. 59, pp. 1846 - 61
140. Rajya Sabha Debates, 1961, Vol. 36, pp. 358 - 64
143. N. Maxwell, n. 27, pp. 242 - 45
144. White Paper, Vol. 6, pp. 37 - 46
In spite of this warning to India, the incidents at the Chipchap valley and Galwan valley in the western sector convinced Nehru that his brinkmanship was paying off. The Chinese had encircled Indian forward posts in these two places who were attempting to cut off Chinese communications but the Chinese soldiers withdrew after some time without attacking the Indian soldiers. In May India suggested that both sides withdraw from the disputed areas but China rejected it outrightly. In August 1962 China made it clear that discussions should not be with any pre-conditions. The Indian reaction to the Chinese proposal was that China was trying to bully India into submission and he told the Lok Sabha that, "we do not accept any of their lines and we stand by the international frontier which is shown in our maps and about which so much evidence has been produced by us," But at the same time Nehru also wanted steps to be taken to remove the tensions and create conducive climate for further discussions. While these notes were being exchanged the eastern sector was getting transformed into an area of showdown. As stated earlier McMahon's depiction of the line was not based on actual ground conditions and geographical features of the region. India at this juncture, when tensions were running high and suspicion at each other's action had crept in, unilaterally rectified the McMahon line. This rectification was not confined to one place alone but to even places like Thagla Ridge, a place which as per the British map on which McMahon had drawn the line, was north of the line and to reach Thagla region it was six days march from the Indian road head at Tawang. Tawang was under Indian administration but the Thagla Ridge was not included under Indian administration. But in view of the crisis in the Sino-Indian

145. S. Gopal, n. 6, p. 211, Also N. Maxwell, n. 30, pp. 247 - 50
147. Lok Sabha Debates, 1962, Vol. 6, cols. 1483 - 84
149. J. Lall, n. 26, p. 276
relations, the Thagla Ridge was considered to be important to prevent the entry of the Chinese into Tawang. According to an officer of the Indian army the field map which the army had till then showed the McMahon line boundary running westwards from the Chautango along the Namkachu stream to Dhola and on the trijunction with Bhutan. This map was withdrawn and replaced by another showing the line from Khinzimanne to Thagla Karpola and trijunction. Therefore it should be concluded that the Chinese who must have had the copies of the original map depicting McMahon line would have seen this unilateral alteration on the part of Indians as an act of incursion to put pressure on them because India was going beyond the line which they had declared as their firm boundary. On 13th September, China repeated its proposal for the withdrawal of the armed forces, 20 kilometers along the entire border and formally proposed 15th October 1962 as date for discussions between India and China on the basis of officials report without setting any pre-conditions.

The Indian government on 19th September agreed to hold discussions for restoring the "status quo in the western sector and to remove the current tensions in the area" at the same time charging China for creating tension in the peaceful eastern sector and attempting to alter the status quo there unilaterally by force. Thus Nehru could never go to the negotiating table without preconditions because he was hamstrung by the Parliament. Meanwhile on September 20 1962 in Thagla region fighting broke out between Indian and Chinese forces and it went to till the 29 September. Following this skirmish, on 6 October 1962 Indian government accused China of intruding into Indian territory and rejected the Chinese suggestion for discussing the eastern sector and also made it clear that under duress no talks could take place. Barely a week after this letter

150. N. Prasad, Fall of Tawang (Calcutta, 1981) p. 46
152. Ibid, pp. 74 - 78
153. Ibid, pp. 100 - 2
was sent to China Nehru told the Press at the airport on 12th October 1962, before leaving for Colombo that, “our instructions are to free our territory .......... I cannot fix the date, that is entirely for the army.” 154 This statement was more out of frustration at the Chinese refusal to accept the boundary as desired by India and does not appear to be war mongering. The statement was followed by another one in Colombo according to which Nehru said emphatically: “I do not think they have the slightest claim, historically, politically or anything.” 155 This statement must have convinced the Chinese that India would not negotiate on the boundary issue and they (Chinese) were convinced that force would have to be used and “sometimes it is necessary to do a little fighting to unblock people's mind.” 156 On October 20, 1962 the Chinese launched a massive attack all along the region from NEFA to Ladakh.

The war destroyed the “two thousand year old friendship” between the two countries and the general feeling of goodwill towards China which had reached its zenith in the mid fifties soon became a thing of the past resulting in hostility and distrust. Thus the tragedy of Sino-Indian relations has been inability to strike a balance between what is ideal and what is feasible in bilateral relations.

Resume

In the last Chapter it has been analysed how Nehru was forced to adopt a rigid attitude on Sino-Indian border problem following harsh criticism of his China Policy by the press and the Parliament. Thus having placed himself in a position from where he was not able to decide the extent to which he must

154. The Statesman, 13th October 1962
155. The National herald, 15th October 1962
156. Hansuin, My House Has Two Doors (London, 1980), pp. 267 - 68
compromise, added to Nehru's insecurity. This insecurity coupled with the pressure put on him by the Parliament and the press prevented Nehru from taking a proper perspective of the problem. The proper perspective was not taken note off, and Nehru tried to use the past for justifying his present position. The past should have been used to inform the present, unfortunately the Sino-Indian border dispute is a fine case of how past was able to bury the present and future. Whenever past fails to inform the present then one runs the danger of doing something which may not be suitable or appropriate to the existing situation. This danger is often courted by politicians and sometimes by bureaucrats because it becomes an effective way to justify their decisions. The 1962 war between India and China is a good example of this and in the above discussion it has been shown how the boundary imbroglio was legacy of the past and if it was properly dissected, the problem could have been solved. Unfortunately, this legacy of British colonialism was courted by the policy makers to rationalise their stands. The adamant stand on the border dispute based on historical claims and counter claims by both India and China caused anguish. The result of this anguish was that India out of frustration began to use force to consolidate its hold over disputed areas. The Chinese too were equally frustrated at not being able to force India into a negotiation on the border dispute reacted to Indian move by launching a full-fledged war on India in 1962.