The emergence of India as an independent nation in 1947 and the establishment of People’s Republic of China in 1949 were the two major developments in the post Second World War era. The emergence of India and China does count a lot in the present international system as these two countries occupy an important position in the world politics. Today China is one of the major powers and India is one of the leading member of the non-aligned group.

In foreign policy postures the two countries differ widely. India adopted the Parliamentary form of Government whereas China embraced communism. From the beginning the Chinese foreign policy has been dominated by two basic aspects a) the sources of greatest threat to China’s security and b) the urge of China’s drive to modernise itself. India for its own reasons chose to become a leading exponent of non-alignment to attain self-reliance. It is in this background that Sino-Indian relations developed in the 1950s.

The relations between India and China were not only good in the 1950’s but the two countries seemed to be really close. However, since 1959, the friendly relationship between India and China started going from bad to worse culminating in the 1962 war. Following this war the diplomatic interactions between the two countries became stagnant. In 1976 the late Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi reactivated it by sending an Ambassador to China. From 1981 onwards a series of official level talks between India and China on border issue have taken place. These official level talks culminated in an agreement being signed between Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao and his Chinese counterpart Li Peng in September 1993. According to this agreement both the sides agreed to maintain peace and tranquility on the border. But no substantial progress has been made on the actual border dispute as such. The September 1993 agreement between India and China may indicate an upswing
in the relationship between the two countries, but there were grey patches in the relationship devoid of hostility. Therefore a negotiated settlement of the border problem between India and China is a must, especially in view of the fact that the Chinese have an increasing defence collaboration with Pakistan and it is a serious threat to India's security and strategic interests. It is time to realise that a solution to the Sino-Indian border problem is important to national interest of India and if this aspect is not kept in mind then the country's foreign policy could be deemed as a failure.

A solution to the border problem between India and China has not been found to this day and reasons for such an impasse on the border should not be examined in the developments of post 1962-period but in the events prior to 1962. The literature on Sino-Indian crisis of 1962 can be broadly classified into three types a) those books which show India as a victim of Chinese aggression b) those which justify Chinese actions and c) the books which have attempted to understand the whole crisis from the point of view of misperception and try to show that the behaviour of policy makers in such a situation is quite natural due to stress. Some of the studies by military officers associated with 1962 war have clearly shown that India was not in a position to take on China militarily but still Nehru resorted to aggressiveness on the border issue. Hence this study tries to analyse the crisis of 1962 from a totally different angle to understand why Nehru resorted to aggressiveness.

India's foreign policy till the death of Nehru was based on his "intuition" and was a one man show. Nehru's writings have clearly shown that in the early 1950's he had formulated his policy towards China on practical grounds. For example Nehru was fully conscious of the fact that India was no match militarily for China and even at the height of tension at that time he was advocating restraint and wanted patience in dealing with the matter. Nehru was even conscious of the fact that one day or the other the clash between India and China could take place and such an eventuality should be averted at any cost and he
must strive for that. Further Nehru's clear understanding of the situation is evident in his letter to Sardar Patel in November 1950 in which he very clearly underlines the basis of his China policy by stating, "the present day China is going to be our close neighbour for a long time to come. We are going to have a tremendously long common frontier. It is unlikely and it would be unwise to expect that the present Chinese Government will collapse, giving place to another. Therefore it is important to pursue a policy which will be in keeping with this long term view." He further stated that bad relations with China would be exploited by Pakistan hence it would be detrimental to India. He further explained the good relationship between India and China was not liked by super powers including Russia. * Inspite of such a correct reading of the situation by the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his emphasis on good relations with China, hostility between India and China developed and culminated in 1962 war. This study therefore tries to analyse the Sino-India crisis by trying to answer the following questions which are very pertinent if a negotiable settlement with China should take place on the border issue. **

A) Why did Nehru fail in his effort to avoid the war which he wanted to avoid at all cost?

B) Why did Nehru take a stand of unilaterally declaring that the boundary with China was not negotiable?

C) Was Nehru's China policy a prisoner of circumstances?

D) Was there a confusion between large and long term interests and self-righteousness?

* For details see Nehru's letter dated 18th November 1950 in Appendix - I

** The study is not aimed at debunking the Indian Policy Makers but it is an attempt to discover the situation in which they are placed during crisis.
These four questions become very important even today when India and China are trying to normalise their relationship. Complete normalisation is not possible without a solution to the border problem and the border problem seems to be nowhere near solution as the Indian official release in September 1993 states that “References to the Line of Actual Control do not prejudice the respective position of the two countries on the boundary.”

The study is thematic in nature and is divided into seven Chapters. The framework of the study is set in historical and analytical modes.

The study begins with a chapter on the theoretical aspects of why a war sometimes becomes unavoidable. The chapter tries to analyse why sometimes war becomes absolutely unavoidable, even when policy makers are conscious of the fact that their chances of achieving success are very remote. In this chapter, an attempt is made to analyse the expectations of policy makers and how these expectations often force policy makers to commit themselves publicly to certain policies. After this, the policy maker finds it very difficult to withdraw. When these commitments are questioned by the opponent or the adversary the policy maker tries to justify his commitment. While justifying the commitment, the nation’s self-image plays an important role and when the adversary puts pressure, the policy maker is forced to resort to brinkmanship which often results in war.

The second chapter goes into a detailed historical study on Tibet, because integration of Tibet with China in the post-1949 period inadvertently precipitated the crisis between India and China. Therefore it becomes important to analyse the position of Tibet vis-a-vis China and India from the early days to understand the extent to which India was justified in taking up the cause of the Tibetan’s autonomy with the Chinese. Tibet had thus become an harsh reality adversely affecting Sino-Indian relations as the Chinese viewed Indian support
to Tibet as an attempt to destabilize China.

The third chapter examines India’s China policy in the beginning and the role India’s first Ambassador to People’s Republic of China Sardar K.M. Panikkar played in the Sino-Indian relations. This aspect is examined because very often the Sino-Indian crisis of 1962 is explained in terms of the appeasement policy that India adopted towards China in the beginning of 1950’s and Sardar K.M. Panikkar is described as the main person who “sowed the seeds of bedevilment between India and China”. The chapter analyses Panikkar’s advise to Nehru and in the given circumstances the extent to which that advise appears to have been appropriate.

The fourth chapter discusses the source of expectations India had about China and how these expectations were influenced by the existing reality, especially the important role which India was playing in international relations at that time. The expectations regarding China were born not immediately after People’s Republic of China came into existence but had started long before. The chapter explains how Nehru wanted strong friendship with China from the day Indian National Congress formulated its foreign policy ideas at Brussels conference in 1927.

Based on these expectations Nehru had made certain commitments to the Indian public and when the Chinese reacted to these commitments contrary to Nehru’s expectations, he was forced to justify his stand and tried to bring the Chinese to his point of view. His inability to bring the Chinese to the position which was acceptable to India forced him to adopt a tough stand on the border issue.

The fifth chapter deals with the internal compulsions, especially how the Indian Parliament reacted to India’s China policy. Following strong reactions
in the Parliament on the matter Nehru was forced to pursue an aggressive policy to retain his Parliamentary support in the matter. By such a policy Nehru had aroused the Indian public and he was forced to live up to their expectations. The anti-Nehru faction used India's China policy under the guise of patriotism to criticise him and corner him. In this chapter it is analysed how Nehru too used the same patriotic zeal to counter this crisis forcing him to adopt a rigid stand on the issue.

Having adopted a rigid stand on the issue, it became difficult for Nehru to retreat. Therefore in the sixth chapter, an attempt is made to show how India tried to justify its claim on the border based on historical explanations and on the principle of natural frontiers. This justification was followed by acts of brinkmanship. The policy of brinkmanship was adopted by India in order to impress China that it will not back down from its demand. The brinkmanship finally pushed the crisis into a full-fledged war. Thus the war became inevitable between India and China.

In the concluding chapter the findings and analysis of the study are recorded. In this chapter it has been also pointed out that the border issue is not a question which should be kept in abeyance but one of deciding on a compromise which would be in the best interests of the state. Such a study will help in understanding that the outraged sentiments should not be allowed to cloud the rational thinking. Mutual accommodation on the border issue was justified then and even now because of the compulsions of history and geography. Moreover the resolution of the border dispute has become imperative for India in view of the dramatic changes that are taking place in Asia and India. Finally a Post-Script has been added giving up-to-date developments in the post 1962 period on Sino-Indian relations.

An extensive bibliography and appendices have also been provided. The
data for this work as can be seen from the bibliography have been collected from primary as well as secondary sources. The primary sources include Constituent Assembly debates, Parliamentary debates, publications of Governments of India and China. Memoirs and accounts of individuals involved in policy making. The secondary sources used in this study consist of books, articles from journals and newspapers.

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In the course of this research work I have consulted materials available in the libraries of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi; Sapru House Library of Indian Council of Cultural Relations, New Delhi; Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi; Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis Library, New Delhi; The National Archives, New Delhi; United Nations Library, New Delhi; Kerala University Library, Trivandrum and School of International Relations Library, Mahatma Gandhi University and Mahatma Gandhi University Library, Kottayam. My sincere thanks to the staff and Librarians concerned for giving me all help in data collection.

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Venugopal. B. Menon