CHAPTER II

NONALIGNED RESPONSE TO SINO-INDIAN CONFLICT

... non-aligned nation must be non-aligned with the non-aligned ... that is why, when some people here say, 'why haven't the non-aligned people stood up and shouted against China', I tell them, 'they have their own policy, they have their own independence'.

- V.K. Krishna Menon (1964)

India ... found non-alignment deteriorating into isolation. Even the other nonaligned leaders, with the honourable exception of Nasser and Tito were guarded in their response to India's case.

- Sarvepalli Gopal (1984)

The Sino-Indian conflict erupting in October 1962 shattered the very bedrock of Afro-Asian solidarity and posed difficult policy options for the nonaligned countries which had formalized their movement only an year ago at Belgrade. Revealing the convergent and divergent patterns of the nonaligned reaction, this conflict affords a unique opportunity of highlighting the initial manifestations of individual and collective concerns of these countries as also the nature of nonaligned solidarity.

Indeed, it was an unprecedented situation for the nonaligned countries which had till then formulated
their common approach exclusively in the context of global issues such as bipolarity and colonialism etc., and had no previous experience of handling regional conflicts in their own arena. Expressing the dilemma of these countries, Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the then Prime Minister of Sri Lanka stated, "If the nonaligned states have endeavoured to play a positive role for the cause of preserving peace in respect of Cold War issues, what could be our duty when we face dispute among ourselves and between friendly nations"?1 Similar views were expressed by Ali Sabry, the then Chairman of the Executive Council of the United Arab Republic and many other statesmen of the nonaligned countries.2

In general, the conflict was seen as a testing ground for nonalignment; both in terms of India's commitment to its principles and in assessing the abilities of other nonaligned countries to apply their proclaimed principles to a situation involving one of their own premier spokesmen. It was thus considered as


"the greatest challenge which the nonalignment has had to face"\(^3\) and opinions went to the extent of regarding it as "a deliberate blow to the concept of nonalignment".\(^4\)

However, before analysing the patterns of the nonaligned responses in this crisis, it is necessary to refer to some of the relevant aspects of the conflict, especially the respective claims of disputants around which the nonaligned took their diplomatic position and which had bearing on the subsequent nonaligned mediation.

**The Conflict**

Although there were larger issues at stake, the antagonism between China and India which led to the thirty-three days war in October-November 1962 primarily revolved round the boundary dispute relating to the traditional borders of about 2,000 kilometres between the two countries. The boundary dispute that led to the Chinese incursion in India claimed territory within a few weeks of the signing of Panchsheel Agreement (Five Principles of peaceful coexistence) in April 1954, dates back to a long period of history and embodied complicated issues. These included the contemporary validity of historical treaties, the meaning on the

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The conflicting claims of India and China regarding the boundary issue became public in 1959 when Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made a statement before the Parliament about the Chinese encroachment on Indian territory in Aksai Chin. India considered it to be an infringement on its traditional boundaries and insisted on the Chinese withdrawal from the occupied territory. China on the contrary, openly questioned the legitimacy of India inheriting the political frontiers of British imperialism and claimed that the boundary has never been delimited. However, the Chinese demand of a fresh


6 See the letter of the Chinese Prime Minister to the Indian Prime Minister on 8 September 1959, Notes, Memoranda and Letters Exchanged and Agreements signed between the Governments of India and China, September-November 1959 (Government of India, 1959), pp. 27-28 (henceforth cited as White Papers).
delimitation of the frontiers was not acceptable to Nehru who categorically stated that "the McMahon line was the firm frontier—firm by treaty, by usage and by geography".  

Meanwhile, the Chinese forces step by step occupied Indian territory in the western sector and by the end of 1959 established effective control over a large area. Once this was done Zhou Enlai, the Chinese Prime Minister, through his oft-quoted proposal of November 1959 offered a mutual withdrawal of armed forces upto twenty kilometres from the McMahon Line and from the line upto which each side exercised actual control. What China was offering was in fact a 'reciprocal acceptance of the present actualities' in western and eastern sector of the boundary, and in effect meant a status quo based on the situation obtaining on 7 November 1959. This was obviously not acceptable to Nehru who in his reply of 16 November 1959 put forth certain counter proposals indicating India's conditions for the settlement of the boundary dispute. According to these proposals, Indian troops were to withdraw west of the international boundary in the

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8 Letter from the Chinese Prime Minister, 7 November 1959, White Paper III, p. 34.
Ladakh region as shown in the Chinese maps of 1956, while the Chinese troops were to move east of international boundaries as per India's official maps.  

Zhou Enlai's visit to India amidst worsening border situation in April 1960 could not resolve the stalemate. "The Summit" according to Nehru "failed on the rock of entirely different set of facts".  

While India was not willing to consider any major compromise on the border issue, China wanted to negotiate with India on the basis of quid pro quo based on realities. In other words, it was willing to accept Indian claims on the NEFA, if India agreed to the Chinese position in Aksai Chin which China had obtained by 7 November 1959. Looking back, this was perhaps the last opportunity of negotiated settlement of the boundary.  

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10 Cited in Maxwell, n.5, p. 174.

11 Indian official view was that China after retaining north-east Ladakh would bargain with India on the remaining border, including the middle sector and the NEFA, see Karki Hussain, *Sino-Indian Conflict and International Politics in the Indian Subcontinent*, 1962-66 (Faridabad, 1977), p. 16.

12 For a detailed account see, B.N. Mallick, *The Chinese Betrayal*, (New Delhi, 1971) and Gopal, n.7, pp. 208-31. Both these authors were personally involved in the making of India's China policy in this period.
diplomatic efforts from both sides only proved self-
stultifying and the dispute gradually grew into an armed conflict.

Meanwhile, the Indian patrols were dispatched to Aksai Chin to assert its territorial claims by proceeding as far forward as possible towards the international border to forstall China from advancing further or from dominating from any posts already established. 13

Thus, by the Summer of 1962 India had established quite a few posts by penetrating in between the Chinese posts in the western sector. "These posts", according to Indian sources, "were intended to affirm India's sovereignty over their areas rather than to withstand Chinese attack; it being well known that the Chinese presence and strength in that area were far greater; but it was not expected that China would resort to aggressive tactics. 14 In fact, as late as on 12 October Nehru least expecting large scale hostilities had reaffirmed India's commitment to evict intruding Chinese forces from within the Indian territory. 15

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13 Some scholars have described the Indian counter offensive as the Forward Policy. See, especially, Maxwell, n.5, pp.171-273.

14 Gopal, n.7, p.211. Indian expectation's were that while patrol-level clashes and other skirmishes might take place on the bleak Himalayan border, nothing "big" could happen.

15 See ibid; p.220.
However, Nehru had misjudged the precise intentions of the Chinese. It was proved when the Chinese forces mounted a fierce offensive on 20 October 1962 in both western and eastern sectors with heavy mortars, explosives, mountain artillery and even tanks, overrunning Indian positions in major battles.

Amidst continuing forward movement of Chinese forces, Zhou Enlai on 24 October 1962 offered India a three-point proposal which once again emphasized the Chinese condition of the withdrawal of forces to the actual line of control on 7 November 1962. Eventually the Chinese declared a unilateral cease-fire on 21 November 1962, after thirty-three days of fighting, and announced to withdraw its troops to positions, 20 kilometres behind the line of actual control on 7 November 1959. 16

However, the Chinese three-point proposal and the cease-fire proposal were not acceptable to India. It was felt in Indian circles that the acceptance of 7 November 1959 as the line of actual control would give China the territorial gains of its last aggression. Nehru reiterated the Indian pre-condition of restoration of the positions on 8 September 1962 as according to him, "between 8th

16 For details see Hussain, n. 9, pp. 22-24.
September 1962 line (India), and 7th November 1959 line (China), there was a difference of about 2,500 square miles of territory. 17

Thus, despite the unilateral implementation of provisions of the cease-fire declaration by the Chinese, the frontiers remained quite tense and further recrudescence of hostilities could not be ruled out.

Amidst these developments, India was compelled to seek external help both in material and moral terms. In a letter addressed on 26/27 October 1962 to the Heads of various Government (including all the nonaligned statesmen), Prime Minister Nehru highlighted the facts of aggression by China which according to him represented an instance of 'expanding imperialism'. He wrote that:

In this hour of crisis, when we are engaged in resisting this aggression, we are confident that we shall have your sympathy and support...not only because of friendly relations with us but also because our struggle is in the interest of world peace..." 18

Apart from Nehru's appeal, many Indian delegations were sent to various nonaligned countries to obtain their

17 See White Papers, VIII, p.30. Also see The Chinese Threat, India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Publication Division, (Faridabad, 1964), pp.3-5.
18 Nehru Writes to Heads of States, India, External Publicity Division, (New Delhi, 1962), pp.1-4. Also see China Disregards the Colombo Proposals, India, Publication Division, (New Delhi, 1963), p.6.
diplomatic and moral support.19

China was quick to counter India's allegation and presented its case quite convincingly before the larger Afro-Asian nonaligned World. In a lengthy and well-argued letter addressed to the leaders of Asian and African countries on 15 November 1962, Zhou Enlai pointed out that such boundary questions between Afro-Asian countries were a legacy of history and not the same as issues between Afro-Asian countries and the imperialist powers. While blaming India for inheriting and nurturing Britain's covetous desires towards the Chinese territories, he pointed out how India had on many occasions stultified the Chinese proposals for an amicable settlement of the dispute. He further stated: "Casting off the cloak of 'Non-alignment' the Indian Government has openly begged for military aid from the United States of America and is

19 While A.K. Sen, India's Law Minister, and R.K. Nehru, Secretary General of External Affairs Ministry, led Indian mission to Africa, Laxmi Menon, Minister for State for External Affairs, and S. Gopal, Director of Historical Division, along with some senior officials were sent to Rangoon, Phnom Penh, Djakarta and Colombo to elicit diplomatic support for the Indian stand. See India: Lok Sabha, Debates, series 3, vol. 10, col. 3332 and also Asian Recorder, vol. 7, no. 51, 17-23, December 1962. Later President Radhakrishnan also visited a number of nonaligned countries to seek their favourable mandate.
receiving a continuous supply of U.S. arms".20

Response and Reaction

India's resolve to seek international mandate against the Chinese aggression put a severe diplomatic strain on the nonaligned countries. Most of them were not familiar with the intricacies of the issues involved due to "... Nehru's extraordinary reluctance to bring the (boundary) dispute out into open".21 Prior to the outbreak of the conflict, barring a few desolate mediation efforts,22 the nonaligned had generally kept themselves aloof from the dispute.

Thus, the nonaligned countries were caught unawares when the fierce conflict broke out between India and China. So apparent was the sense of confusion in the nonaligned circles that some of them did not even take cognizance of it in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. For most of these states, it took quite some time before they


22 The Burmese Prime Minister U Nu was one of the few statesmen who provided his good offices during his visit to the two countries, see Gopal, n. 7, pp. 209-10. Similarly, the Afghan Foreign Minister, during his visit to Beijing in September 1959, had urged China and India to open direct top level negotiations to solve their border dispute. New York Times, 16 September 1959.
responded to this unprecedented situation. This was in total contrast to the international polarization that ensued as soon as the United States, the United Kingdom and other western countries decided to respond positively to Nehru's appeal of help.

However, with the passing of time the nonaligned countries recovered from their initial predicament and did take positions on this issue. A closer scrutiny of nonaligned behaviour vis-à-vis Sino-Indian conflict reveals a wide spectrum of responses ranging from a complete silence, to an outright support to one of the disputants and from subdued and cautious appeals for peace, to a full-fledged involvement as 'peace-makers' in the conflict. There are marked regional convergences and divergences that can be discerned at once. At the same time, there are complex factors and relationships which require deeper insights into the geostrategic considerations and bilateral dimensions of the nonaligned behaviour.

23 For most of the nonaligned, it took about a fortnight to react to this crisis. See Jansen, n.20, pp. 326-27.

24 According to Indian official estimate, by 7 November 1962, forty countries had expressed their sympathy and support to India, of which only three were from the nonaligned group. See Asian Recorder vol.8, no.48,1962, p.4916.
In the present chapter, the focus is on those twenty-four countries (apart from India) which were recognized as nonaligned by the sponsors of the Belgrade Summit held in 1961. Of these, eleven were from Africa, ten from Asia, two from Europe and one from Latin America.\textsuperscript{25}

**Nonaligned Africa**

In the African continent, the Sino-Indian conflict evoked a wide variety of responses. While Ethiopia was the only one to have openly supported India, the UAR, Ghana and Guinea offered mediation proposals, and the remaining seven nonaligned either remained silent or made formal appeals to the two disputants.

\textsuperscript{25} Nonaligned countries from the African continent were: Algeria, Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, and the UAR. The Asian nonaligned (excluding India) were: Afghanistan, Burma, Indonesia, Iraq, Cambodia, Lebanon, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Ceylon and Yemen Arab Republic. From Europe; Cyprus and Yugoslavia.

... Latin America was represented by Cuba. 

Two Decades of Non-Alignment Documents of the Gatherings of the Non-Aligned Countries 1961-1982, India, Ministry of External Affairs (New Delhi, 1983), p.5. Also see The Non-Aligned Countries, Orbis Press Agency (London, 1982), pp.797-99. Bolivia, Brazil and Ecuador were the three countries which held an observers status at Belgrade and are not included in the present study.
To begin with, Algeria, Congo, Morocco, Somalia and Tunisia completely ignored this Asian conflict. Algeria and Morocco did not even care to reply to President Nasser's letter inviting them to attend a Ten Nation Conference to provide mediation. 26 Even at a later stage, these countries preferred total silence when an attempt was made by Zhou Enlai during December 1963 to elicit their response. 27

Mali and Sudan also maintained a low profile vis-a-vis Sino-Indian dispute but at least they did send their formal appeal to the two disputants for a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the dispute within the first week of the outbreak of hostilities. 28

26 See Jansen, n.21, p.332.


28 President Modiba Keita of Mali sent a message to Premier Zhou on 24 October; while President Ibrahim Abboud of Sudan sent a telegram to Liu Shao on 23 October. See Survey of China Mainland Press (SCMP) (Hongkong), no.2850, October 1962, pp.38-39.
However, later Mali responded favourably to the Chinese stand on its "just struggle in defence of her sovereignty and territorial integrity". On the other hand, Sudan came nearer to India's position in condemning the use of force in settling the boundary dispute and that the fruits of aggression must be deprived to the aggressor. But for these ambivalent statements, the two African states remained more or less unconcerned with the Sino-Indian struggle in Afro-Asia.

Ethiopia was the only African nonaligned which responded positively to Nehru's appeal and described China as an aggressor and offered India "active support in fighting the Chinese". The Ethiopian support, though inconsequential in actual terms, helped India in its diplomatic position in Africa.

The three African nonaligned which took special interest in the happenings in the Himalayas and offered concrete mediation proposals were Guinea, Ghana and the UAR. However, their level of involvement and

29 Afro-Asian Solidarity Against Imperialism, n. 36, p. 187.
30 Indian Foreign Policy, Text of Documents, Lok Sabha Secretariat, (New Delhi, 1966), p. 443.
predispositions were quite varied.

Guinea, though less active than Ghana and the UAR, did offer a four-point proposal to defuse the Sino-Indian border tension. These proposals, made public by the New China News Agency (NCNA) on 19 November 1962 were:

(i) An immediate cease-fire;
(ii) Withdrawal to twenty kilometres from natural boundaries by the forces of both sides;
(iii) An immediate meeting of the two governments with a view to setting of the dispute by peaceful means;
(iv) An outright condemnation of all foreign intervention. 33

These proposals had a definite pro-Chinese slant. While the reference to the natural borders provided China a justification of decrying the so-called imperial borders which India was trying to legitimize, the condemnation of all foreign intervention indirectly

33 See SCMP, no. 2865, 23 November 1962, p. 27.
vindicated Ghana's reservations about western arms aid to India. It is no surprise, therefore, that China hailed these proposals as "reasonable, constructive and conducive to peaceful settlement". India, on the other hand, found them too vague to be taken seriously. According to Indian sources, "these proposals were framed without much understanding of the issues involved, as they did not elaborate what was meant by the natural boundaries nor was any clarification to be found in the summary of Chinese letter accompanying them". In the wake of India's refusal to consider these proposals, Guinea lost interest in them and never mentioned them again.

Amongst the African nonaligned states, Ghana's attitude was perhaps the queerest. The initial response of President Nkrumah, who was one of the founder-member of the nonaligned movement, was almost hostile to India. Taking strong objections to the British decision of according favourably to the Indian request for military aid, President Nkrumah wrote on 28 October 1962 to the

34 See Zhou's Cable to President Sekou Toure of Guinea on 13 November 1962, ibid; p. 28.


36 Britain profoundly deplored the attack by China against a fellow-member of the Commonwealth. Responding favourably to India's appeal for help the British Premier had declared, "what they ask us to do to help them, we will do" See Watt, n. 32, p. 427-28.
British Prime Minister that he was "gravely distressed and saddened to learn that the United Kingdom would give India every support in her fight against China". He almost advised the British Prime Minister that he should "refrain from any action that may aggravate the unfortunate situation, no matter what the rights and wrongs of the present struggle between India and China may be". In the same letter, he termed the British decision as "dangerously prejudging the issue" and pleaded for "judging each issue on its merit".37

Ghana's hostility regarding foreign aid to India seems to have emanated from certain misconceptions it had about the Sino-Indian war, as also from a rather too simplistic understanding of the concept of nonalignment. The rivalry between the Casablanca group to which it belonged and the Monrovia group to which Nigeria belonged might also have had something to do about its initial reluctance to appreciate India's stakes in the conflict, especially as Nigeria had extended categoric support to India. Yet another consideration that might have prompted Ghana to take an anti-Indian stand was its flourishing diplomatic ties with China. China had

37 Ghana Today (London), vol. 6, no. 18, 7 November 1962, p. 3.
then given an assurance of a substantial interest free loan and an offer of economic and technical co-operation on liberal terms. 38

However, with the passing of time, Ghana's hostility towards India declined. It was President Nkrumah who advocated certain proposals which came very near the Indian demand of return to the 8 September 1962 position on the border. 39 These proposals which came in the wake of similar proposals made by President Nasser were rejected by the Chinese, while India welcomed them. During the Colombo mediation, as we shall see later, Ghana's attitude was moderately in favour of India. In fact, at Delhi Ofori Otta, the Minister of Justice, went along with the UAR to offer certain favourable clarifications to India.

**Arab Response**

The UAR was the first nonaligned to respond to the outbreak of Sino-Indian conflict on 20 October 1962. Within hours of the eruption of large scale hostilities, President Nasser sent a common message to two disputants indicating "his readiness to work together with other Asian and African countries to help China and India in a way acceptable to both sides in seeking a means of settling the

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Sino-Indian boundary question peacefully". He also informed them that he had already got in touch with the governments of Afghanistan, Indonesia, Algeria, Sudan, Mali, Morocco, Ceylon, Ghana, Guinea and Cambodia for consultation over this matter in what he described as "a joint venture of Casablanca Charter countries and the nonaligned countries." 40

While India readily accepted the mediation offer 41 proposed by Nasser, China in its reply on 24 October referred to its own three-point proposals as the only possible basis of mediation. 42 However, ignoring the Chinese precondition Nasser informally proposed on 26 October that both India and China should revert to the situation prior to 20 October and cease fighting forthwith; a no-man's zone be established between the two sides and then enter into peace talks. 43 As expected China declined to accept Nasser's formula as it felt that "neither the restoration of the state of boundaries as before September 8, nor restoration of the state boundaries as before October 20 when the clashes began constitute a reasonable basis for a peaceful settlement". 44 Clearly, Nasser was determined to hold mediation talks as per India's terms.

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40 SCMP no.2850, 26 October 1962. Nasser was also in touch with Yugoslavia on this issue. See Watt, n.32, P.433.
41 See Jansen, n.21, p.331.
42 It is sometimes suggested that the Chinese three-point proposal of 24 October was a direct outcome of the mediatory initiative taken by President Nasser. See The Eastern Economist, 26 October 1962.
43 SCMP, no.2865, 23 November 1962, p.28.
44 Ibid., p.29.
This was further evidenced when notwithstanding China's reservations regarding Nasser's informal proposals, the Presidential Council of the UAR issued a statement on 31 October 1962, publishing the 4-point proposals and thereby officially confirming the earlier position of President Nasser. In fact, the 4-point proposals were an improvement on the earlier informal proposals from the Indian perspective in as much as they clarified the withdrawal line of 20 October as the one that existed on 8 September 1962.

The UAR proposal was greatly welcomed by those in India who understood its ramifications. Bestowing high praise for Nasser for grasping the real facts of the disputes, Nehru stated before the Lok Sabha:

I must pay my tribute to President Nasser... he did not make a vague proposal in the air... People talking to us to be good boys and make it up has no particular meaning unless they come in grips with particular issues involved. Now President Nasser took the trouble to understand them. Their proposals ... were largely in conformity with our own proposals.

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45 The text of 4-point proposal was released by the UAR Embassy in India on 4 November 1962, Indian Affairs Record, vol. 8, no. 2, November 1962. Also see Al Ahram (Cairo), 31 October 1962.


Indeed, if Nasser's proposal was not really framed by India, as is sometimes suggested, it was at least inspired by Nehru's move to put pressure on China. This was indirectly acknowledged by Nehru at a later stage when he admitted before the Lok Sabha:

> We decided a long ago, two or three months ago, to suggest this 8th September (1959) line, if accepted by the Chinese government it shows that all that has happened since then has been an aggression.49

Nasser's four-point proposal and his efforts to rally round nine other Afro-Asian nonaligned countries around these proposals were meant to generate diplomatic support in favour of Indian position. The proposed 10-nations conference, however, could not be held.50 But surely if it were held, it would have been closer to the Indian position.

Even after the failure of the proposed 4-point proposals the UAR kept on pursuing its diplomatic efforts to strike a bargain with China on behalf of India. It was on India's insistence that the Egyptian delegation sounded the Chinese mission at Colombo in December 1962 whether they would be prepared to accept the demilitarized zone as proposed by Egypt earlier, but on the Western sector of front only. And if this could be extended to 8 September 1959 line, India was prepared to discuss


50 Only Cambodia and Afghanistan responded favourably to Nasser's request of convening a ten-nations Conference to discuss his 4-point proposal. See Watt, n. 32, p. 433.
whether control in this area should be through civilian or military posts. \(^{51}\) Back home in Cairo, President Nasser, who had decided not to go to Colombo, was also trying to negotiate with the Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Hwang Chen on the basis of briefings he had received from the special Indian mission which had visited Cairo earlier. \(^{52}\) Although the UAR's efforts in this direction did not fructify, the fact remained that India was fully able to utilize its mediatory role.

The UAR also shared India's concern on the eve of the Colombo Conference. Before the conference was convened, Nasser, reportedly on India's behest, wanted to ascertain if China would fully implement its unilateral offer to withdraw troops from NEFA and secondly, he wanted Beijing to indicate on a map its claims to the "actual line" of control and the positions Chinese troops would take after the proposed withdrawal up to 20 kilometres back from this line. The UAR was also keen to have some kind of a consensus with other members on these issues before meeting at Colombo. \(^{53}\)

The UAR appreciated India's initial premonitions about the final outcome of the Colombo Conference and finally decided

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51 See Jansen, n.21, p.335.

52 *The Statesman*, (Delhi), 8 December 1962.

to participate only when Ceylon virtually threatened to go without it. It was evident in the manner Ali Sabry spoke to a correspondent: "Since so many Governments are participating in the Colombo Conference it was considered desirable for the UAR as well to do so".\textsuperscript{54} It is also suggested that the UAR was responsible for the delaying of the conference to allow India to make up its mind on the basis of alignment of boundaries after the Chinese withdrawal.\textsuperscript{55}

In the course of deliberations that ensued in the Colombo Conference, the Egyptian delegation was generally disposed to India's position. It not only succeeded in incorporating, much to the satisfaction of India, the principle of "no gain through aggression", but more significantly the principle in the final document that while establishing stable cease-fire either side should be requested to withdraw from the territory which is admittedly theirs or from territory over which they exercised civilian administration.\textsuperscript{56} Both these principles suited the Indian position vis-a-vis China and gave sufficient diplomatic leverage to India.

\textsuperscript{54} The Statesman, 10 December 1962.

\textsuperscript{55} By requests for clarification, it managed to delay the opening from 1 December until 10 December. See Rahman, n.46, p.221.

\textsuperscript{56} See The Statesman, 11 December 1962 and Rahman, n.46, p.223.
Referring to the UAR's effort to help India in Colombo an official Cairo publication stated:

Though Mr Sabry could not get (his) proposals fully adopted by the Colombo Conference, he succeeded to a very large extent in giving the Colombo proposals a realistic content. These proposals do not give India all she wants; but essentially they call for ... a return of Chinese forces beyond the pre-invasion line. 57

Another official comment on the Colombo Conference mentioned the UAR's solitary efforts to back India:

Why, among non-aligned countries, has the United Arab Republic alone stood firmly behind India in her gallant fight against Chinese aggression? Why at the Colombo Conference did the UAR alone come out with clear-cut proposals for the vacation of Chinese aggression.58

In summing up the role of the UAR vis-a-vis the Sino-Indian conflict, it may be said that the UAR tried to play a mediatory role in accordance with what it considered to be the correct position. If Nasser did not declare China an aggressor, this was because he wanted to be moderate towards China and perhaps Nehru also had so desired.59 Nehru seemed to have used the UAR's position for bargaining an amicable

57 Jansen, n.21, p.342.
59 According to Jansen, "Indian officials actually suggested to the United Arab Republic that it should not take a firm denunciatory line against China, lest this jeopardise its role as a future mediator". See Jansen, n.21, p.331.
settlement with China on Indian terms and also to mobilize support for India in the larger Afro-Asian nonaligned world. The UAR obliged India on both these counts.

In India not many quarters appreciated the quality of help that came spontaneously from the UAR. Passions generated in the wake of humiliation suffered from China never allowed a correct appraisal of the UAR's efforts. Members of Parliament and important segments of public opinion were not keen to follow the intricate diplomatic activities that were going on in the larger Afro-Asian world and the vital diplomatic role that the UAR was playing. Instead, they wanted stronger words from Nasser against China and criticized him for not doing so. 60

The Yemen Arab Republic which was involved in a violent civil war against the fundamentalists who were supported by Saudi Arabia and Jordan, however, expressed its support to India on the issue of Sino-Indian conflict. 61 Obviously, it was due to the influence of President Nasser who had extended full support to this young Republic to resist outside intrusion.

Lebanon and Iraq, the remaining two Arab sponsors of the Belgrade Summit kept a neutral stance during the conflict. The Lebanese Prime Minister Rashid Karami did express

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60 Reacting strongly to UAR's inability to condemn China, Ram Manohar Lohia, a leading Lok Sabha member of the Opposition stated that, "The UAR Premier should have been heckled". See Ram Manohar Lohia, India, China and Northern Frontiers, (Hyderabad, 1963), p.218.

his disapproval of the Chinese aggression when he visited India in January 1963 but no follow up statement came thereafter.\textsuperscript{62} On the other hand, Iraq took a rather nonchalant view of Nehru's request and the official communique blamed that "stubbornness of views and arbitrariness" of both the disputants had led to the fighting in the Himalayas and called upon India and China to revert to peaceful methods.\textsuperscript{63} At a later stage, however, President Asif, while on an official visit to India in March 1964, agreed that "... if aggression is committed in pursuit of territorial gains its fruits must be denied to the aggressor."\textsuperscript{64}

**Asian Nonaligned**

As compared to African-Arab world, the remaining nonaligned countries of Asia were far more affected by the portentous ramifications of the conflict between the two Asian giants. Most of them found the bearing of this conflict on their own national security. Their responses towards the conflict were thus far more guarded and mute. It is no surprise that barring Ceylon none of the Asian nonaligned responded to Nehru's appeal of 26/27 October. Ceylon, too, after initial expression of sympathy for India took a strict non-partisan attitude.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{63} See *Iraq Times* (Baghdad), 21 November 1962.

\textsuperscript{64} See Text of India-Iraq Joint Communique, 1 April 1964, *Indian Foreign Policy, Text of Documents*, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1965), p. 317.
However, despite their low-key involvement, the Asian non-aligned displayed myriad subregional variations in their attitudes depending on their geostrategic interests and their perception of regional and global alignment of forces.

Afghanistan, the Central Asian nonaligned, was not among the forty countries which responded to Nehru's appeal for help. It was only after the cease-fire that Afghanistan in a message expressed hope for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. The government-owned press also maintained a complete neutrality over the issue. The Kabul Times, the only English daily in Kabul, did not even publish the news of Chinese aggression on 20 October and later dispatches were published both from Delhi and Beijing keeping a strictly non-partisan posture. Subsequent visits by Humayun Kabir, Indian Cabinet Minister, and President Radhakrishnan in May 1963 also proved ineffective in obtaining any favourable comment from the Afghanistan government.

Afghanistan's neutrality and its refusal to condemn China as an aggressor were not incidental. The fact is that after establishing diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, the Chinese had given considerable attention to this strategically important Central Asian neighbour. And at about the time when

66 See Foreign Policy of India, n. 64, pp. 263-64.
failed to take off, it maintained complete silence on this issue.

The nonaligned countries of South and Southeast Asia were directly affected by the Sino-Indian conflict involving the two most powerful countries of their region and thus none of them came out openly to side with either of the disputants. Barring Laos which gave casual hints of appreciating India's concern, the remaining nonaligned—Nepal, Ceylon, Burma, Cambodia and Indonesia remained largely neutral. Though, of course, there were various shades of neutrality which they displayed during the protracted diplomatic struggle between the two Asian giants.

In South Asia, Nepal's conception of nonalignment was the result of its small stature and vulnerable geostrategic situation vis-a-vis India and China. This lent an exaggerated sense of caution to its policy. Speaking at the General Assembly on 26 October, Rishikesh Shah, the Nepalese Permanent Representative, declared:

We do not want to pass judgement on the merits of Sino-Indian border dispute. As a country friendly to both our own hope and prayer has been that the dispute be settled without resort to force and through negotiations in spirit of understanding. 71

Underlining the compulsions of Nepal's neutrality Tulsi Giri, the Nepalese Foreign Minister, stated on

71 UN Document A/Pv 1159.
the Sino-Indian hostility broke out, Afghanistan and China were in the process of settling their boundary through bilateral negotiations. In fact, the Afghan Foreign Minister during his visit to Beijing in September 1959 was persuaded by the Chinese to impress upon India to open top level negotiations to solve the boundary dispute. Afghanistan sharing its frontiers with China was so overwhelmed by the Chinese peaceful overtures that despite its known sympathies for the cause of self-determination, it refused to make any comment on the Tibetan demand when it was raised at the United Nations. The Afghan delegate felt that the raising of the Tibetan demand for self-determination could only adversely affect the admission of China to the United Nations. Naturally Afghanistan had no substantial reason for offending an overwhelmingly strong China. Although Afghanistan did respond positively to President Nasser’s offer of holding mediation conference around his 4-point proposals, once, the proposed conference

67 China finally succeeded in arriving at a border settlement with Afghanistan on 22 November 1963.


69 Kabul Times, 14 March 1962. Diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and China were established in 1955. Before that Afghanistan used to abstain from voting on the issue of Chinese admission to the United Nations.

70 See Watt, n.32, p.433.
24 October 1962:

Nepal's relations with India will remain close...
...Nepal's economic and cultural relations with China are not as extensive as those with India. Yet, Nepal has a 600-mile boundary with China. China has now emerged as a great power. Friendly relations with our northern neighbour (China) should be the natural aim of the country's foreign policy. 72

As the war in the Himalayas progressed, Nepal showed no sign of changing its stance of strict neutrality. On 10 November King Manendra in a Press Conference reiterated Nepal's neutrality in unequivocal terms. 73

However, much to India's discomfiture, Nepal expressed great appreciation for the Chinese ordering a cease-fire unilaterally and the withdrawal of its forces behind the line of actual control. Expressing this view Rishikesh Shah hoped that "this gesture of peace, friendship and goodwill of the Chinese Government will be reciprocated in a fitting manner". Giving went to Nepal's insecurity, he added, "Neither India and China will win if Asia loses... We have nothing but friendship and goodwill towards our two great neighbours - China and India". 74


74 SCMP, no.2860, November 1962, pp.37-38.
Although Nepal's open appreciation of China's cease-fire went against what India would have desired, on the whole India seemed to be quite content with Nepalese neutrality. This was so in view of the bitter animosity that had marked India's relations with Nepal in the early sixties. Nepal had alleged that India was actively supporting the anti-government forces in Nepal. Hardly a month before the full-fledged hostilities erupted on the Himalayas, an official Nepali communique started, "... the anti-national elements have been receiving all sorts of help, facilities and cooperation in the friendly country India." Again on 30 September 1962, India's complicity in rebel raids was alleged by the Home Ministry and finally on 7 October King Mahendra publicly blamed India for encouraging rebel activities in Nepal.

China, on the other hand, was meticulously fomenting the anti-Indian feeling in Nepal. Chinese Foreign Minister Marshal Chen Yi speaking at a reception on the occasion of the first

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75 When King Mahendra of Nepal dismissed and arrested his ministers and proclaimed a dictatorship, Nehru, a firm believer in democracy, had made no secret of his displeasure, though he was fully conscious of the possibility of China manoeuvring to find a foothold in this region. See Gopal, n.7, p.25.

76 *Asian Recorder*, vol. 8, no. 42, 15-21 October 1962, pp. 4841-42.

77 *Indian Express*, 8 October 1962.
anniversary of Sino-Nepalese Boundary Agreement in April 1961 promised to provide aid to Nepal in case of an aggression. The statement was cleverly timed to give an edge to the anti-Indian feelings prevailing in Nepal.

It may be said to the credit of Nepal that despite worsening relations with India, it did not utilize this dispute to settle scores with India. Not only a scrupulous silence was maintained but officially it was denied that Nepal is playing off one neighbour against the other. Rather it made skilful use of this opportunity to put pressure on India to withdraw its sympathies and support to the opposition in the country. The pro-Chinese propaganda was allowed to thrive only for sometime till India, conscious of Nepal's strategic importance in the Himalayas, almost forced the Nepali Congress in exile to issue a statement on 8 November 1962 from Calcutta, appealing to its partymen for cessation of the movement against the royal regime.

However, once this was done, there appeared "a veiled attitude of sympathy and support for India despite Nepal's expressed neutrality in this conflict". In a Press interview on 10 November 1962 King Mahendra gave sufficient indication

78 Asian Recorder, vol.8, no.48, 26 November-2 December 1962, p.4913. Prior to this Nepal had signed with China, the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in April 1960.

79 See Jha, n.72, pp.209 and 213.

80 See S.D.Muni, Foreign Policy of Nepal (Delhi, 1973), pp.135-36.
of Nepal's softened attitude towards India. He said:

... this being a case of dispute between India and China, Nepal deems it more appropriate that they should resolve it through mutual understanding. It is, however, an in-born virtue of the Nepalese to be sympathetic in a friend's distress because Nepalese are gallant people, and treachery is totally alien to their nature. It is in the course of life-long efforts in the cause of peace that Mr Nehru's hair have turned grey and I do not think that he will lag behind in solving the present conflict as well.81

Nepal, however, never displayed any interest in providing its good offices to the two disputants to resolve their dispute. Nonalignment for it simply meant keeping aloof from the two great powers of the region. Highlighting this very aspect of nonalignment, King Mahendra stated many years after the conflict that:

"Our policy of non-alignment and non-interference in the affairs of other countries is well known. Whatever the apparent differences between India and China, we do not believe that they will reach a stage where any third party will or need be involved".82

In contrast to Nepal's passivity, the other South Asian nonaligned Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) remained most actively involved in the diplomatic activities that ensued after the Sino-


82 Ibid., p. 113.
Indian conflict. 83 Through her protracted mediation diplomacy Sirimavo Bandaranaike brought tremendous prestige to her country in the Afro-Asian nonaligned world. Indeed, "... it was perhaps the highest of Ceylon's efforts in seeking to achieve its foreign policy aims." 84 Although Ceylon's role in the formulation of the Colombo Proposals and its subsequent mediation have been examined in detail in the next chapter, it is necessary here to highlight its overall disposition towards this conflict.

The initial Ceylonese responses to the conflict were discernibly pro-Indian. In fact, it was the only nonaligned from Asia which responded positively to Nehru's appeal for help contained in his letter to world statesmen of 26/27 October 1962. Replying to Nehru's message Sirimevo Bandaranaike stated rather sympathetically:

I appreciate the gravity of the consequences that can ensue not merely to India but also to the rest of the world. I do appreciate very much that India would not want to do anything to prejudice her territorial integrity or self-respect by submitting to negotiations under pressure of armed forces. 85

83 For an excellent account of Ceylonese reaction, see Urmila Phadnis, "Ceylon and the Sino-Indian Border Conflict", Asian Survey (California), vol. 3 (April, 1963), pp. 189-96.
However, soonafter, the Ceylonese Government started to drift towards a strictly neutral position which sometime appeared to be predisposed towards China. So noticeable was this shift that during the debate, in Ceylonese House of Representatives it was attributed to "hide and seek policy" of the Government. The public opinion in Ceylon also voiced surprise at this suddenly assumed neutrality and criticized the Government for "its strange sympathies in far away Atlantic (Cuba) while being deaf and blind to Red Chinese aggression to neighbouring countries".

Although, it may not be correct to describe the Ceylonese responses as categorically pro-Chinese, as some scholars have tried to prove, one must agree that in its quest to keep equidistance from both India and China, "... Ceylon oscillated from one side to another often swinging in favour of China". For instance in her opening speech at the Colombo Conference, Sirimavo Bandaranaike showed an undue concern for "India being obliged to seek arms assistance from Western Powers" and


stated that "this kind of entanglement with power blocs would be contrary to the cardinal principles of non-alignment". It is also conspicuous that Ceylon at no point referred to the fact of Chinese aggression nor for that matter did it decry Chinese refusal to accept the Colombo Proposals.

The Sri Lankan Premier, however, denied the allegation that she took an anti-Indian stand. In this context, she clarified that:

There are many in this country and abroad who blamed us for not taking sides at initial stages and motives were alleged that we were not doing so because we were indebted to one side for the supplies of rice ... if we had taken sides we could not play the role of mediators.

In an embittered tone, she complained in the Ceylonese Senate on 23 January 1964 that the Indian Press carried on false and malicious propaganda against her, alleging that she was toeing the line of Beijing, while China went to the extent of questioning the honesty of Colombo Powers and charged that the clarifications given to them were drafted at New Delhi.

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90 *Asian Recorder*, vol. 9, no. 5, p. 4979. The Times of Ceylon reported on 9 January 1963 that "the Chinese are ... chuckling with glee at the ease with which they have made the Prime Minister of Ceylon sing their tune".

91 At the United Nations, the Sri Lankan delegate referred to the Sino-Indian conflict as "the unhappy developments on the border between India and China". Prasad, n. 101, pp. 361-62.


However, despite evoking criticism from both Indian and Chinese circles and despite the eventual failure of the Colombo Proposals, the Ceylonese attempt at mediation was simply remarkable. As highlighted in the next chapter, Ceylon, by its own meticulous observation of non-partisanship, inspired the other participants to adopt similar attitude. Its attitude to Sino-Indian conflict was justified by its own standards of nonalignment, as clarified by Mrs Bandaranaike when she asserted that "... nonalignment does not mean alliance or identity of interest between such countries as call themselves non-aligned".94

The Sino-Indian conflict saw a rather peculiar polarization in Southeast Asia. While the majority of aligned countries such as Malaysia, Philippines, South Vietnam and Thailand expressed their solidarity with India,95 the three nonaligned countries of the region remained noncommittal on this issue.

To begin with, Burma which had earlier provided its good


95 See Asis Kumar Majumdar, Southeast Asia in Indian Foreign Policy: A Study of India's Relations with Southeast Asian Countries from 1961-1982, (Calcutta, 1982), pp.65-66.
offices to resolve the boundary dispute, refused to express any official opinion regarding the merit of India's case except to say that it hoped for an early settlement of the dispute. Burma not only preferred to ignore Nehru's appeal of help the Indian diplomatic mission led by Mrs Laxmi Menon which visited Rangoon also met with a silence. In reply to a query whether Burmese President General Ne Win had expressed sympathy for India, Mrs Menon's reply was: "We put our case before him and he listened with great interest .... He never expressed sympathy or non-sympathy and we never expected him to do so."

During the Colombo deliberations, Burma was generally seen as being representing the Chinese case. General Ne Win, while referring to Colombo Powers as 'friendly third parties', repeatedly warned against "any attempt to pass judgement in any way on the rights and wrongs, merits and demerits of the positions adhered by the two parties to the dispute". This

96 In early 1962 before the war broke out Burmese Premier U Nu came to India after visiting Beijing and suggested that Nehru should go to China to reopen boundary negotiations. Nehru, however, refused to do so and instead authorized U Nu to convey to China to take initiative in this regard. See Gopal, n.7, pp.205-6.


98 The Statesman, 30 November 1962.

99 Guardian (Rangoon), 12 December 1962.
was in line with the Chinese position and in contrast with Nehru's appeal to the Conference not to ignore the facts of aggression. Furthermore Burma not only opposed the passing of any resolutions which would not be acceptable to the Chinese, but in doing so, often expressed its appreciation of the peaceful intentions of China and the measures China had taken such as the unilateral cease-fire and the withdrawal of forces and the release of Indian personnel.¹⁰⁰

In any case, it was virtually impossible for Burma to take a categoric stand in favour of India in view of its small size and vulnerable geostrategic position. As was correctly said by an observer, "the geographic location plus the small size and weakness of their country (Burma) dictates no other course than that of close cordial and friendly relations with Communist China".¹⁰¹ An equally important reason was the special importance that China had accorded to the settlement of its boundary dispute with Burma resulting in a border treaty and non-aggression pact in January 1960. This was followed by a special conference on trade between the two countries in April 1961 and it was only a few months before the outbreak of the Sino-Indian conflict

¹⁰⁰ See Jansen, n.21, pp.339-41.

that Prime Minister U Nu and President Ne Win had attended a grand celebration in this regard at Beijing.\textsuperscript{102} Obviously Sino-Burmese cordiality was at its zenith when Burma was called upon to make a choice between the two Asian giants. It is no surprise then that Burma not only chose to be non-chalant about the Indian request of help, but its neutrality bore a distinct predisposition to the Chinese position.

Much in line with the Burmese posture, Cambodia (now Kampuchea) too preferred to ignore Nehru’s appeal for help and remained neutral vis-à-vis the Sino-Indian conflict.\textsuperscript{103} At the same time, it actively opposed Indian efforts to obtain an Afro-Asian mandate against the Chinese aggression.

At the Six-Nation Colombo Conference, Prince Sihanouk was generally supportive of the Chinese stand. He Sihanouk was evidently representing the Chinese viewpoint when during the Conference he cautioned against any move to pass judgement on the merit of the dispute. According to him, "Technical problems were for China and India to resolve and if the Conference intervenes it could only aggravate the crisis".\textsuperscript{104}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102} Majumdar, n. 95, pp. 63-64.
\item \textsuperscript{103} Cambodia’s neutral stand was evident when Prince Sihanouk made it a point to visit China after his visit to India in January 1963 and made almost identical statements in both the countries. See Statesman, 26 January 1963.
\item \textsuperscript{104} Asian Recorder, vol. 9, no. 5, 5015.
\end{itemize}
only wanted the Conference to ratify the cease-fire which China had declared unilaterally and did not see much scope of "third party intervention" in this conflict. His non-chalance regarding the Colombo Conference was evident when he left for home after the inaugural session. 105

Cambodia's indifference towards India can be understood when one considers its pathological dependence on China at that juncture. It considered that Beijing could restrain a communist North Vietnam and also the Chinese community within its own territory. At the same time it saw China as a potential protector of its sovereignty against its traditional enemies South Vietnam and Thailand which were actively supported by the United States. 106 And once India sought American arms and support during the conflict, Cambodia suddenly lost all interest in Indian policy of nonalignment. Sihanouk at that time was also quite disillusioned with the Soviet Union whom he blamed for adopting a soft approach on the issue of Cuba. All this made China the single most important power on whom Kampuchea could depend on. 107

105 See *The Nation* (Rangoon) 24 December 1962.


Indonesia, one of the main protagonists of Afro-Asian solidarity and a leading nonaligned country, was faced with a difficult choice. India having historical linkages with the Indonesian leadership expected it to come out openly in favour of Indian claims. On the other hand, China which had lately evolved an intense Afro-Asian camaraderie with Indonesia strove to utilize her services in presenting the Chinese version of the conflict on international forums.

However, President Sukarno neither obliged Nehru nor did he respond to Zhou's overtures in this regard. Sukarno also gave a cold shoulder to President Nasser when he did not even acknowledge his message regarding a ten nation mediation conference which was widely seen as a pro-Indian move. Such strict posture of neutrality was obviously not appreciated in many circles and the general feeling was that Indonesia had let down India.

108 See Jansen, n. 21, p. 332.

109 An observer of Indonesian foreign policy has remarked, "... Indonesia should have taken the initiative to alert the nonaligned nations in general and Asian-African nations in particular, calling for a full fledged conference in order to condemn China's aggression to impose a cessation of the hostilities ... But nothing of that sort happened, and the Soekarno regime remained reticent ...." Ide Anak Agung Gde Augung Twenty Years of Indonesian Foreign Policy, 1945-65 (The Hague, 1973), p. 361.
So stern was the Indonesian resolve to maintain her neutrality that Foreign Minister. Subandrio initially overruled any possibility of his country participating in mediations in this regard "unless there is a point of meeting that both countries can accept." 110 However, with the passing of time President Sukarno gradually changed his policy of sitting on the fence. On 17 November, he revealed that he is working hard to bring peace in the Sino-Indian border dispute. Confirming this Subandrio declared the next day that Indonesia could not remain passive and would find a way out to resolve the conflict. 111

Consequently, President Sukarno readily accepted Mrs Bandaranaike's mediation proposals and played an active role in the six-nation mediation conference at Colombo in December 1962. However, Subandrio, who represented Indonesia at the conference, followed Ne Win's pattern of nonalignment and strict neutrality by declaring that the conference would certainly not intervene in the substance of the conflict between India and China. 112

Indonesia's lukewarm attitude to the Indian request for help and its nonpartisan role in the Colombo Conference disappointed many in India. It was in stark contrast to the zeal

110 *Indonesian Herald* (Djakarta), 6 November, 1962.
111 Ibid., 23 November 1963.
112 See *Asian Recorder*, vol. 9, no. 5, p.
and diligence with which Nehru had assisted Indonesia in the late fifties in her struggle for independence from Dutch colonial role. However, Indonesia's lack of cordiality for India during this period should not have surprised those familiar with India's deteriorating relations with Indonesia and the corresponding improvement of Sino-Indonesian relations.

China had over time not only fomented Indonesia's anti-West attitude but had supported it on concrete issues such as the West Irian struggle against Malaysia. In late 1961, a treaty of friendship was signed by the two countries supporting each other's claims, i.e. China's regarding Taiwan and a seat in the United Nations and Indonesia's on West Irian. Beijing's appreciation of the Indonesian withdrawal from the United Nations and the subsequent offer of 50 million dollars which the latter had forfeited by leaving the United Nations also brought the two countries closer. The growing influence of the Communist Party in Indonesia further enhanced China's influence over Indonesia. 113

On the other hand, there were various irritants impinging on Indo-Indonesian relations at that time. To begin with, open clash of opinion between Sukarno and Nehru at the Belgrade Conference had cast a shadow on the relations between the

two countries. The Indonesian President leading the "militant radical group" had put exclusive emphasis on struggle against colonialism and imperialism as the sole cause of all trouble. This theme came in sharp contrast to Nehru's approach that the issues of colonialism and imperialism could not be given priority over the issues of war and peace which are far more urgent. The fact that Nehru's views found place in the 27-point declaration further embittered Sukarno who was already sore at the West Irian issue not being mentioned in the document. 114

In addition, India's friendly attitude towards Malaysia and its refusal to support Indonesia on West Irian issue lent substance to the growing animosity between the two countries. It was evident during the Asian Games held in Djakarta in September 1962 when a violent mob led by a Cabinet Minister attacked the Indian Embassy and dishonoured the Indian National Flag and Anthem. 115

In view of the above developments, and especially after the unconditional support to India by Malaysia, it was indeed creditable that Indonesia restrained its hostility towards India and strove to appear to be neutral in this conflict. The fact that

114 See for details, Gde Augung, n. 109, pp. 315-42.
115 See L.P. Singh, Power Politics and South East Asia, (New Delhi, 1979), pp. 88-89.
it did not allow its pro-Chinese attitude to affect its judgement during the Colombo Conference had definitely much to do with its ostensible commitment to the principle of nonalignment. As has been amplified in the next chapter, Indonesia tried to act as an arbitrator at the conference between an almost openly pro-Chinese Burmese delegation and a pro-Indian delegation of the UAR; an aspect which is generally overlooked. 116

Outside Afro-Asia

Cuba, Cyprus and Yugoslavia—the three nonaligned falling outside the Afro-Asian region—were far less affected by this Asian conflict. Their responses towards the Sino-Indian conflict, however, offer interesting insights into the formative temper of the policy of nonalignment which had recently assumed an international dimension.

Cuba, the only Latin American country which attended the Belgrade Summit, was then more or less a passive member of the nonaligned community. And almost coinciding with the Sino-Indian conflict, it had been facing one of the worst crises of its history. An overwhelming Soviet Military presence on its soil

116 See Tribune:Ceylon News Review, 15 December 1962 and Mahinda Wizerathe, "The Colombo Conference" Radical Humanist (Calcutta), vol. 27, 6 January 1963, p. 3. It has been rightly observed that "In the Colombo Conference, while the UAR backed India, Ghana and Indonesia were closer to India than China, and Burma and Cambodia were supporting the Chinese stand." Mohan Ram n. 48, p. 142.
meant to counter perpetual American intervention had very nearly set the stage for a global conflict. Thus Cuba was not only completely immersed in the war-games of the two Super Powers but as such it was not left with much independence in the sphere of foreign policy due to a decisive Soviet influence. With the Soviet Union taking an ambiguous position vis-a-vis Sino-Indian conflict, Cuba could not afford to take an independent stand either. Its total silence regarding this Asian conflict, therefore, came as no surprise.

In contrast, Cyprus, the nonaligned from Mediterranean, took a forthright position in favour of India. President Archbishop Makarios responding favourably to Nehru's appeal of 27 October issued a statement that very day in which he described the Chinese attack as "unprovoked and unjustified". Later on a ten-day state visit to India's fight against the Chinese invasion. Thus, Cyprus turned out to be the second nonaligned country after Ethiopia to support India's case. Although, of course, it was the direct western influence that accounted for such categoric support from Cyprus, India highlighted it quite a bit and projected it as an instance of nonaligned support to India.120

117 See Hussain, n.11, pp.135-71.  
118 See Watt, n.32, p.431.  
119 See Jansen, n.21, p.326.  
120 Statesman, 28 October 1962.
From the viewpoint of the present study, the reactions and responses of Yugoslavia are perhaps the most significant. Being one of the main protagonist of the nonaligned movement and having strong bonds of friendship with India, it was reasonably expected that Yugoslavia's support would be readily available to India. More so, in view of its bitter and acrimonius dispute with China on the issues relating to the International Communist Movement.

However, much to India's disappointment, Yugoslavia remained curiously silent in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. It took nearly a fortnight for the Yugoslav Government to respond to Nehru's appeal for help contained in his letter of 27 October and it too was confined to a non-committal and formal appeal for a peaceful settlement of the dispute.\textsuperscript{121} Yugoslavia also kept a low profile in the nonaligned diplomatic arena and did not evince much interest in the mediation activities which were going on. Only once did the Yugoslavs come out to suggest some kind of group action within the nonaligned frame of solidarity to take up the issue of Sino-Indian dispute.\textsuperscript{122}

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\textsuperscript{121} According to G.H. Jansen, "Nehru's appeal was delayed in transmission to Belgrade by an oversight and Yugoslavia sticking to protocol waited for its arrival". See Jansen, n. 21, p. 327.

\textsuperscript{122} The Yugoslav Foreign Minister, on an unexpected visit to Cairo, suggested the convening of a Second Belgrade Summit to consider this issue. But the Egyptians were most unwilling to entertain this proposal. See Al Ahram (Cairo), 29 November 1962.
Yugoslavia's cautious and non-committal position remained unchanged for quite some time. However, once the Soviet Union expressed open disenchantment with the Chinese policies in December 1962, the Yugoslav leadership became more forthright in indicating its solidarity with India. Edard Kardelj, the Vice-President of Yugoslavia, during his visit to India in the second half of December 1962 gave first hints of Yugoslavia ridding its nonpartisan official stand. In a news conference he said that, "the Chinese attempt to impose by force a settlement on India was bound to cause extraordinary negative effects for the cause of peace and social progress." He, however, refused to make a categoric statement in favour of India.

It was only in February 1963, four months after the war, that Yugoslavia officially acknowledged the fact of Chinese aggression on India and also offered its full support to India. Yugoslavia's unequivocal support, though belated, came as a great relief to those who had seen much in India's diplomatic ties with Yugoslavia within a nonaligned frame of understanding.

Yugoslavia's early predicament is generally attributed to its inability to define its policy posture in favour of a

123 See Gopal, n. 7, pp. 252-53.
125 See President Tito's letter to Nehru, released to Press on 11 February 1963, Statesman 12 February 1963.
nonaligned India against a Communist China. It was suggested that:

Yugoslavia may be a heretical Communist, but her umbilical link with Communist world was considered more important than her association with her oldest friend among the Afro-Asian non-aligned countries.126

Thus, it was clear that, notwithstanding its loyalties to nonaligned principles, Yugoslavia could not afford to take a categoric position against China which till then had indirect support from the Communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. The clear-cut global polarization with the Western bloc throwing its lot with India further dampened Yugoslavia's will to support India. All this perhaps explains why Yugoslavia remained officially silent despite having a fullest possible understanding of India's position on the boundary.

It was, however, remarkable the way Yugoslav media and Press supported India's stand. In fact the Chinese were so much offended by the unfavourable comments that appeared in various Yugoslav newspapers in October/November 1962 that they decided to publish a survey of these comments and alleged that "Yugoslavia is backing a despicable role of Indian reactionaries".127 According to the survey, Yugoslav newspaper Politika of 13 October 1962 carried a news "Peking provokes the conflict in NEFA" and on 21 October Oslobojenji reported that "until

126 Jansen, n. 21, p. 327.
127 See Jen-Min-ji-Pao, 3 December 1962, Cited in SCMP, no. 2875, December, 1962, p. 32.
recently China had recognized this line - McMahon line". It further quoted Narodna Armija having stated on 9 November that "since 1950, the Chinese have quietly and without much publicity or fanfare occupied vast areas in Ladakh". Thus, the survey found Yugoslavia even more shameless than the Indian expansionists and the British imperialists.

China also refused to accept Yugoslavia as a mediator. In a rather disparaging tone the government controlled press remarked:

The Chinese people absolutely do not permit Tito group of Yugoslavia, lickspittle of US imperialism, to poke its nose into Sino-Indian boundary issue... Tito group ... lebelling Yugoslavia as a 'non-aligned nation tries to sneak into ranks of Asian, African nations, is engaged in the foul activities by pretending to take part in the "mediation" over Sino-Indian dispute. That the Tito group is so shameless as to try to participate in "mediation" over Sino-Indian dispute is something at which one can only laugh with scorn. 128

Such strong Chinese reaction pre-empted any possibility of Yugoslavia participating in mediation activity along with other Afro-Asian countries. It was generally felt that for getting the Chinese approval for any mediation, it is necessary to keep Yugoslavia away from it. In fact, Yugoslavia's inclusion into any mediation would have given such mediation a nonaligned frame-something which China was actively

128 Ibid. Also see People's Daily (Official organ of the Chinese Communist Party), 17 November 1962.
However, it remains doubtful whether it was exclusively due to the Soviet position on this issue that moulded Yugoslavia's initial postures regarding the Sino-Indian conflict or it had something to do with the conception of nonalignment which for quite some time prevented Yugoslavia in taking a partisan stand in favour of India.

**Summation**

As is evident from the preceding discussion that the nonaligned countries by and large revealed no sign of taking sides unconditionally in the Sino-Indian war of 1962. This despite the fact that India, holding a premier position within Afro-Asian nonaligned community did try hard to mobilize international support in its favour. As already mentioned, according to an Indian official estimate, by 7 November 1962 forty countries had responded positively to Nehru's appeal to help addressed to the statesmen world over and condemned China as an aggressor. Of these countries only three were from the nonaligned group—Ethiopia, Cyprus and Sri Lanka. However, as the previous discussion reveals, Sri Lanka had only shared Nehru's concern initially regarding the consequences of the war, but later

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129 Beijing had declared way back in 1958 that Yugoslav neutralism is not acceptable to them as it benefits US imperialism. See V. P. Dutt, *Chinese Foreign Policy, 1958-62* (Delhi, 1964), p. 155. Also see Edvard Kardelj, *Socialism and War* (Beograd, 1960) in which he had attributed China's bellicosity to its immense internal difficulties and called it "Socialist Bonapartist adventurism", pp. 104-10.
categorically declared itself to be neutral in this war. The much publicized support from Ethiopia and Cyprus—the two rather insignificant nonaligned states—did not carry much importance anyway.

The conscious reluctance of the larger nonaligned community to appreciate India's version of Chinese attack as against a readily available support from the Western bloc and countries like Malaysia generated much disappointment in India as also in the Western World. Doubts were raised regarding the claims of the nonaligned to decide each issue on its merit or to stand by a fellow nonaligned being subjected to an unprovoked attack. The subsequent refusal of the six-nonaligned Colombo Powers to pass judgement irked an already hurt public opinion in India. "Only the UAR showed a marked disposition to support the Indian cause, and India thus learned that open support from fellow non-aligned states was not to be counted on". It is in this context that Nehru noted with exasperation that "the nonaligned countries were failing to grasp things that were obvious to India". To his dismay, he realized that India's insistence on the restoration of the position that obtained on 8 September 1962 was not supported by the nonaligned countries excepting perhaps the UAR. On the other hand, there was a

130 Peter Lyon, Neutralism, (Bombay, 1964), p.130.
131 Quoted in Maxwell, n.5, p.470.
marked inclination to give Beijing credit for a genuine attempt to return the dispute to the negotiating table. He spoke bitterly of the efforts of these "well intentioned countries" who were impressing upon India to enter into a dialogue with China at least admitting India's grievances:

People advise us to be good and peaceful as if we are inclined to war. People talking to us to be good boys and make it up have no particular meaning unless they come in grips with the particular issues involved. 132

There are other instances wherein Nehru expressed his disappointment with the nonaligned countries. 133

An overwhelming impression was thus created that the nonaligned countries had let India down by being neutral in this conflict. Indian Ministers reportedly stated that, "We have no friends, by sermonising to everybody on what to do or not to do we have alienated all. All the nonaligned countries are afraid to stand up and be counted." 134 In the Lok Sabha, the members openly attacked the nonaligned countries for their...

133 In a relatively recent article Michael Brecher mentions that, "Many Indian politicians and officials reported to him in 1964-5, and in 1971-4, Nehru's profound disappointment in the behaviour of nonaligned states during this crisis." Michael Brecher, "Non-Alignment Under Stress: The West and the India-China Border War" Strategic Digest (New Delhi), vol. 10, no. 8, August 1980, p. 524.  
134 See Kuldip Nayar, Between the Lines, (New Delhi, 1969) p. 169. Highlighting the impressions of the Indian Government, S. Gopal writes, "... the Government of India found themselves perilously close to non-alignment deteriorating into isolation. Even the other non-aligned leaders, with the honourable exception of Nasser and Tito, were guarded in their responses to India's case." Gopal, n. 7, p. 223.
refusal to brand China as an aggressor. 135

Scholars especially from the Western world were pre-disposed to point out that, "the non-aligned turned nonalignment against India by being nonaligned between India and China." 136 The refusal of the nonaligned to take sides openly in favour of a fellow-nonaligned was pointed out as a failure of the nonaligned movement as such and opinions went to the extent of advocating the winding up of the movement. One typical expression on this line merits mention here which clearly highlights the Western view of nonaligned solidarity, equating it almost with the military blocs. A few days before the Conference of Six-Nonaligned countries was held in Colombo, the New York Herald Tribune reported:

One would have supposed that Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Ceylon, Indonesia, and all the others (nonaligned) would have rushed to support India - not because it was a victim of aggression but because it was a founding member and outstanding leader of their organization. But nothing of this kind. There


136 Robert L. Rothstein, Alliance and Small Powers (New York, 1968), p. 125. John Rowland observed, "India looked for moral, if not material help.... But found to its dismay that non-alignment could apply to Sino-Indian hot war as well as to East-West Cold War." John Rowland, A History of Sino-Indian Relations: Hostile Co-existence, Indian Reprint, (Bombay, 1971), p. 168. And Michael Brecher finds, "the even-handed attitude of non-aligned states in this conflict", as one of the main causes of India's subsequent withdrawal from "an active dynamic involvement in world politics". Brecher, n. 133, pp. 523-24.
was hardly a whisper of protest ... at the United Nations or elsewhere. The 45 members (sic) of the neutralist bloc with few exceptions turned their back on India... This could seem to be disloyalty and treachery almost without parallel in contemporary history. The sooner the club of nonaligned disappears, the better it is.137

However, there were others who strongly vindicated the non-partisan attitude of the nonaligned countries vis-a-vis the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962. They convincingly ask as to why India or for that matter any nonaligned country should expect support from their fellow-countries; the NAM does not function as a bloc after all. Such views were best represented by V.K. Krishna Menon, the then Defence Minister of India. He stated:

I am sometimes asked by some of my good friends: Why, if we are the leaders of the nonaligned group, so called, every such nonaligned country has not proclaimed herself on our side? To me it sounds fantastic. The essence of nonalignment is to be nonaligned. If all the impartial people gang up together they would become another bloc and aligned to each other against the rest. The essence of nonalignment is, each country and government acts independently and not as a part of group or bloc or alliance. China is a great country, relations with whom have been strongly promoted in respect of ex-colonial countries. We ourselves have actively promoted it. Therefore, it is not valid or wise to criticize nonalignment because some of the nonaligned countries have doubts or ill-informed or make statements that we do not like.138

Thus it was suggested that if the nonaligned refused to take sides and provided mediation "it was true to Nehru's traditional approach to international politics". Nehru's reservations for lending a cohesive bloc-like character to the nonaligned movement were well established and it was on this very ground that he had opposed the formalization of the movement on the eve of the Belgrade Summit.

Moreover, if it is true that most of the nonaligned did not come out openly in favour of India and condemn the Chinese aggression, at least some of them provided valuable support to India - a fact which is generally overlooked. For instance, the UAR broadly fulfilled India's expectations and Nehru is on record to have lauded Nasser's role in the conflict. Nasser's efforts to convene a conference of ten Afro-Asian nonaligned nations to mobilize support for his four-point proposals were distinctly meant to bolster India's diplomatic position in this arena. Similarly the UAR sincerely strove to guard India's interest at the Colombo Conference. However, not many in India and elsewhere shared Nehru's belief that in case the UAR had come out openly in favour of India, perhaps India's ability to use it as a spokesman especially during the mediations would have suffered greatly. Yugoslavia, the other major nonaligned sponsor of the non-aligned solidarity, though strangely mute in

139 See W.F. Van Eekelen, Indian Foreign Policy and Border Dispute with China, (The Hague, 1969) p.204.
its initial responses, did come out strongly in India's favour. And all along the Yugoslav press supported the Indian case so much so that the Chinese accused it for being "shamelessly pro-Indian".

Nehru had perhaps never imagined that he would have to look for diplomatic support from within the larger Afro-Asian nonaligned world in case of a war with China. He was always reluctant to bring out the facts of boundary dispute before the Afro-Asian and the nonaligned forums. And by the time India took measures in this regard, China with its skilful diplomacy had propagated its version of the boundary dispute through left-wing newspapers and the more effective Beijing Radio. India could not mobilize its public media and other diplomatic means to build up a strong case regarding its claims on the boundary dispute. The Indian viewpoint had to be channelled through the pro-West newspapers which in any case did little good to India's case. Consequently, India's insistence on Chinese withdrawal up to the 8 September 1962 line before any talks could

140 Nehru depended primarily on India's equation with the Super Powers, especially the Soviet Union to offset the Chinese threat. But the Cuban crisis upset India's calculations. See Gopal, n.7, pp.221-27.

141 Laxmi Menon, Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, admitted in a Press Conference, the inadequacy of India's diplomatic machine and the superiority of the Chinese in propagating their views. "India's Case", she said, "was better understood in West than in Asia", Tribune, Ceylon News Review, 8 December 1962 p.9. Also see UAR Magazine (New Delhi), January 1963, pp.1-3 in which Indian diplomacy and public relations were called 'poor' as compared with the Chinese. Nehru also admitted this weakness, see Prime Minister on Sino-Indian Relations, n.132, p.185.
be held got far less currency than the well-publicized Chinese willingness to negotiate without any pre-conditions.

Nehru's appeal for help against China's expanding imperialism was successfully countered by Zhou by presenting the boundary problem as an outcome of imperial legacy and which did not relate to the anti-imperialistic temper of non-aligned movement. On the other hand, a full-fledged Western support to India's stand and with "aligned" countries of Southeast Asia following suit, China could effectively project India, "as a stooge of Western imperialism". 142 It was this aspect of Chinese propaganda which further alienated the non-aligned countries from India. Thus, Ghana openly castigated the United Kingdom for supplying arms to India, and Ceylon warned against an increasing Western involvement in Asia.

In any case, the nonaligned being mostly small and weak powers were not much in a position to invite the Chinese wrath, especially the initial: lukewarm attitude of the Soviet Union had an inhibiting impact on many nonaligned; from Indonesia and Cambodia in the east, to the UAR, Algeria and Ghana in the west. If the Soviet Union had come out against China in October 1962, which of course it did a few months later, perhaps many nonaligned countries would have come out to support India. A case in point was Yugoslavia which

142 Following the Indian delegation's visit to Ghana in November 1962, a five member Chinese delegation arrived in Accra to propagate the Chinese version of the dispute. The next day, the local press described the dispute as a "creation of imperialists" and criticized the imperial propaganda in favour of India. See Ghana Evening News, Accra, 11 December 1962.
did come out openly against the Chinese aggression after Soviet disenchantment towards the Chinese policy was made public.

Many Asian nonaligned were directly vulnerable to China's overwhelming preponderence in their region and China's known credentials for creating civil unrest in their countries through overt and covert means. The three nonaligned from Southeast Asia fall into this category.

There were other important considerations also. The fact is that starting from the Bandung Conference of 1955, China had made tremendous strides in improving its ties with its neighbouring Afro-Asian countries and with other nonaligned countries of the continent. Through a series of border agreements it had settled long-standing border disputes with many of these countries and in many cases the negotiations were still on. Be it Afghanistan, Burma or Nepal, China had ostensibly revealed peaceful intentions in negotiating border agreements. In contrast to China, India had not given much importance to improve its bilateral relationship with the countries belonging to the nonaligned zone. In many cases bilateral misunderstandings were responsible for the lukewarm response of nonaligned countries towards India's appeal of moral support. While India's support to the popular opposition in Nepal had created severe irritants in the traditionally strong relations between the two South Asian neighbours, Indonesia's unhappiness over Nehru's offhand dealings with Sukarno on the issue of
the Second Bandung was well known. Similarly India's refusal to recognize Iraq's claim vis-a-vis Kuwait or Morocco's vis-a-vis Mauritania hardly predisposed them in its favour.

The other important handicap India faced was its declining influence amongst the newly liberated countries of Asia and Africa. At the time of the conflict, India had been outgrowing the Afro-Asian camp by her strong advocacy of Brioni-Belgrade frame as an alternative means of Third World co-operation, and had yet to consolidate its leadership role within the nonaligned movement. In fact, India's predominant influence in the Afro-Asian nonaligned world began to wane by 1957 when it took little interest in the first Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity conferences in Cairo. India's apathy towards the African sensitivities was much apparent during this period. For instance, when some of the African leaders suggested that India should join hands with them to fight Portuguese colonialism, Nehru is reported to have told them bluntly that "Goa's liberation was an exclusively Indian problem just as the liberation of Mozambique or Angola was an African".

143 Nehru initially had strong reservations about holding of the Belgrade Summit, and it is significant to note that invitation to the Cairo Preparatory Summit in 1961 and the Belgrade Summit held that very year were not addressed under the name of Nehru but by President Tito and Nasser; while the invitations of the Second Summit at Cairo (1964) were sent by Yugoslavia, the UAR and Ceylon. See Ceylon News Letter no. 814, 27 February 1964, pp. 2 and 4.

And lastly, there was a general feeling in the nonaligned circles that "for a country following a nonaligned policy, it is inexpedient to come out openly in favour of either of the contestants. Such a course, it was thought, would subvert the efforts in the direction of a peaceful settlement". These considerations overrode the essence of the policy of nonalignment which does not prevent its adherents from making value judgements and taking sides.

145 S.N. Verma, "India and Africa", International Studies, vol. 2, no. 1 and 2, 1963, pp. 191-92. Arthur Lall also mentions that "because of their understanding of nonalignment many of these African States were of the view that they could not take sides against China when her forces attacked India in 1962".