

CHAPTER-I

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Historical Background

India and China, the two giants of Asia are inheritors of age old, great civilizations and are neighbours. Sino-Indian relationship, although essentially bilateral in nature, is compounded and even shaped greatly by external factors of regional and global settings.¹ Although both countries initiated the process of nation building generally from late forties, i.e., 1947 and 1949 and respectively, the models of their development as well as political system was not similar. While India followed the path of parliamentary democracy, mixed economy and non-alignment; China adopted one party rule of communism, state controlled economy and joined communist camp of Soviet Union. However, different political systems did not come in the way of flowering of relationship between India and China in the era of anti-imperialist and Pan Asiatic sentiment.

In 1947, when India became independent, the nationalist Kuomintang government was in power in China; India established diplomatic relations with China in 1948 and sent K.M. Panikkar as its first ambassador. Military defeat of the Kuomintang government at the hands of the Communists led to the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949.² India welcomed this transfer of power.³ Both India and People's Republic of China emerged on the world map almost at the same time when the whole world was in the grip of cold war and the atmosphere was tense.⁴ Soon thereafter, the Government of India extended official recognition to it on December 30, 1949. Thereby, India became one of the first non-communist states to recognise the People's Republic of China.⁵ On this occasion Nehru said, that "it was not a question of disapproving or approving it was a question of recognising a major event in history, of appreciating it and dealing with it".⁶

However, Governor General C Rajgopalachari and Home Minister Sardar Vallabhai Patel did not share Nehru's enthusiasm to build bridges immediately with China. Instead they were keen that he ".....go slow in the

mater".⁷ On the other hand the Chinese Communists, were unhappy about India's policy of non-alignment.⁸ Mao Tzedong openly stated that throughout the world, one sided either towards imperialism or with socialism and a third road did not exist. He said that, ".....sitting on the fence will not do nor there a third road. We oppose the illusions about a third road". During this period, the Chinese continued to ignore the fact that India was an independent country and called Nehru a hireling of Anglo-American imperialism.⁹ Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on his part, persistently viewed Indian independence and the Chinese revolution as parallel expressions of resurgent Asian nationalism. In an oft quoted statement in Parliament, Nehru visualised China as the third great power in tomorrow's world but hastened to add that India was destined to be the fourth.¹⁰ He was aware that in New Asia, China and India were destined to play vital and perhaps competitive leadership roles. But the architect of India's China policy, Nehru wanted the two emerging Asian great nations to be friendly to each other.

During his visit to Britain and United States, Nehru pleaded both the Governments to accord recognition to China. India had quite vociferously pleaded in the U.N. to give China, a permanent footing¹¹. It was stated that this would further strengthen the immemorial friendship between India and China and consolidate to the stability of Asia and the world peace.¹² Irrespective of domestic and international public opinion, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru seemed to be overenthusiastic in developing friendly and peaceful relations with Communist China. He also strongly supported China in a BBC interview.¹³

Tibetan Episode:

The issue of Tibet stood in the way of cordial neighbourly relation. Tibet issue was a British legacy and the Britishers recognised the Chinese suzerainty, if not sovereignty, over Tibet subject to internal autonomy and British presence in Tibet. Independent India thus inherited from British the right to keep a political agent at Lahasa, maintain trade agencies at Gyantse, Gartok and Yatung, maintain postal and telegraph offices along trade route upto Gyantse and station a small military detachment to ensure safety of the British routes.

India after independence also acknowledged suzerainty of China over Tibet, subject of Tibet's status as an autonomous unit. New Delhi, therefore was surprised when the Chinese leadership declared that "liberation of Tibet was one of the basic tasks of the People's Liberation Army".¹⁴ The Chinese army moved into Tibet on October 7, 1950, approximately 40,000 troops marched without any prior intimation. India's reaction was one of shock and disbelief.¹⁵ Only on October 25, 1950, China formally announced the first phase of "liberation of Tibet".¹⁶

Thus, the so-called "liberation" altered the status of Tibet from an autonomous country, to a Chinese province. Concurrently, it led to a dispute between India and China over the alignment of their common border. Subsequently, their dispute involved developments in the Tibetan region. India considered China's annexation of Tibet as a threat to her border. It made her lodge a strong protest with the Chinese Government through several notes¹⁷ which expressed "surprise" and "regret" on the use of armed force in Tibet. India sent three notes to China and stressed that the settlement of the Tibet problem should be effected by peaceful negotiation adjusting the legitimate Tibetan claim to autonomy within the framework of suzerainty.¹⁸ In response China made sharp remarks to these notes. It stated that India had raised objections as result of "having been influenced by the imperialists" and asserted that "Tibet and integral part of the Chinese territory", besides the "problem of Tibet is entirely a domestic problem of China".¹⁹ The Chinese Government further proclaimed that in the settlement of the Tibetan question "no foreign interference will be tolerated."²⁰

The unexpected rebuff from China gave rise to a widespread demand that the Government should revise its attitude towards China. Some rethinking on Sino-Indian relations started in Nehru's cabinet itself. Home Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, publicly criticized Chinese intervention in Tibet as "unjustified,"²¹ and wrote to Nehru that China was behaving like a "potential enemy" and that the "liberation of Tibet" could be a new threat from the country's north and northeast. Sardar Patel described the Chinese occupation of

Tibet as a tragedy that had brought “the expansion of China to our gates”.²² He also cautioned that Communist China had some definite aim and ambitions that were contrary to India’s national security. He also warned Nehru of the danger of adopting a complacent or vacillating attitude towards China in the context of its perfidious action in Tibet.

Some members of Parliament drew the attention of the Government of India to Chinese maps depicting Chinese boundaries extending up to river Brahmaputra in Assam,²³ Prime Minister Nehru categorically stated that India’s northern borders were clearly defined by the “McMahon Line”²⁴ and “map or no map, that was our frontier”.²⁵ In the wake of the Tibetan tragedy, India perhaps realized the potential Chinese threat to its northern frontiers.

As a result of Chinese annexation of Tibet there was uproar in the Indian Parliament which flayed Nehru’s China policy. Indian public opinion favoured a military retaliation to protect Tibetan autonomy.²⁶ The Indian intelligentsia was inclined to the maintenance of Tibet as a buffer between India and China, whereas the upper echelons of the Indian bureaucracy were of the view that India should acquiesce to the Chinese occupation of Tibet. While the Indian public opinion emanated from emotional considerations the administrative leadership took a different view due to ground realities.

The Government of India believed that Indian intervention to protect minimal extra-territorial privileges acquired in Tibet through inheritance would make a weak case in the face of international public opinion.²⁷ Nehru was of the opinion that non-violent struggle to protect Tibetan culture and religious autonomy was best. Taking up arms, Nehru felt, would only give China an excuse to use military might to crush Tibet. In such an event India was too weak to do anything militarily.²⁸ Moreover, Indian military capability could not comfortably challenge the Chinese military machine in Tibet. Thus India decided against a confrontation with China in Tibet. In this regard India did not take any initiative on the Tibet issue in the United Nations, as she was against internationalising the matter. This implied that she was reconciled to sacrifice some of her own interests in the matter.²⁹

Due to the dangers of expansion of the Korean war in November 1950, the question of the Indo-Tibetan border was, however, relegated to the background for sometime to come.³⁰ The Korean war provided an opportunity for India to play a role of 'honest broker' between China and Western powers.³¹ Nehru became conscious by then about the shift in the world balance of power caused by the emergence of China as a formidable land power, able to face the American challenge in Asia, as also the advantageous position gained by India in holding middle ground in the new power balance. Nehru and his advisers thought as Mrs V.L. Pandit put it, "..... war is a greater threat to us than communism in Asia."³² In this context it becomes necessary for India to avoid bickering with China on the issue of Tibet, so that she might play the role of an honest peace-broker between the warring parties.

On December 6, 1950, Nehru clarified that he was interested in Tibet's autonomy but without challenging China's suzerainty over it. He further said that Tibet was not in position to begin or continue the war and "there is no threat from Tibet to China obviously".³³ India voted against a resolution, branding the People's Republic of China as an 'aggressor' in Korea, in General Assembly on February 1, 1951.³⁴ And taking over of Tawang in the first week of February without any opposition from the Chinese was rightly regarded by the Government of India as indicating that China was psychologically prepared to accept the McMahon Line as the boundary. All this led to a further improvement in Sino-Indian relations during this period.³⁵ Sino-Indian Friendship Association grew like mushroom all over the country and it was hoped that relations between the two countries would gradually grow more positive.³⁶

Nehru stated in Parliament on February 12, 1951, that "we were aggrieved at a certain turn of events in Tibet, but we did not allow that to affect our policy or our desire to maintain friendly relations with China. I am glad to say that our relations with the new China are friendly at present".³⁷ According to the Government of India, "friendly China and a friendly Tibet are the best guarantee for the defence of the country".³⁸ The Government of India got some

relief when the Tibetan authorities signed a 17-point agreement with the Chinese Government on May 23, 1951.³⁹ As a result of this agreement Tibet was incorporated as a Chinese province. It then became known as Tibetan Autonomous Region with China permitting it to enjoy independence in purely provincial matters; but exercised control over her defence, communications and external affairs.⁴⁰

Nehru's policy towards Tibet was preservation of security and integrity of India; India's desire to maintain friendly relations with China; and India's sympathy for the people of Tibet.⁴¹ During 1950 the Chinese occupation of Tibet cast a dark shadow over Sino-Indian relations for a brief period.⁴² Since 1951, there started an exchange of visits between India and China by goodwill and cultural missions, and this fostered mutual understanding.⁴³ There was a discernible conciliatory shift in China's attitude towards India, partly in response to India's constant friendly overtures and partly influenced by a subtle change in international communist tactics.⁴⁴ The Chinese press started praising Nehru's statesmanship and spoke of India as a neutral and peace loving country. The Government of India welcomed the soft attitude adopted by the Chinese.⁴⁵ India declined to attend a conference convened in San Francisco on September 8, 1951 to sign a peace treaty with Japan because, among other reasons, China was not a party to it.⁴⁶

On September 27, 1951, Chou En- Lai informally assured the Indian ambassador, K M Panikkar at Beijing that China intended in every way to safeguard Indian interests in Tibet, adding that "there was no territorial dispute or controversy between India and China."⁴⁷ India welcomed the new soft line in China's policy and resumed its endeavours to put Sino-Indian relations on a firm basis in a wider perspective. As early as 1952, India as a gesture of goodwill had expressed its willingness to remove in due course its telegraph lines and military escort in Tibet and being to trade agents and other subordinate agencies within the framework of normal consulate relations. A high powered Government of India cultural delegation went to China. In September 1952, the Indian Political Agency at Lahasa was named Indian

Consulate General. India's ambassador to China, K M Panikkar has observed that, "the main issue of our representation at Lahasa was thus satisfactorily settled and thus there was no outstanding issue between us and the China."⁴⁸

Talks had been going on between the Government of India and China regarding a new arrangement in respect of Indo-Tibetan relations in March 1953.⁴⁹ The aggravation of the conflict in Indo-China in 1953 also contained new portents of a widespread conflict in Asia. In this context of a danger of war in Asia due to threat of American expansionism prompted the Government of India to mend their fences with China.⁵⁰ Secondly, a hostile Pakistan on its Western and Eastern fronts that was part of America's anti-communism coalition and was receiving American military aid also forced India to initiate a friendly policy towards China.⁵¹ Nehru insisted that any policy towards China would have to take into consideration the close proximity of the two nations having a frontier of 2000 miles. He said that, "..... we have to consider our policy in regard to China remembering not only whatever past we may have had, but the present and the future, that we have to live together in peace and friendship, and I hope co-operation."⁵² Such utterances of Nehru prove that he was alive and sensitive to the reality of some future border war tension between the two nations, but under the pressure of exigency or passing events, could not go beyond dealing with these in an idealistic manner.⁵³

In September 1953 Nedyam Raghavan, the Indian ambassador to China delivered a letter from Nehru to Chou En-Lai, the Chinese Premier, which expressed India's desire to open negotiations with China on bilateral issues. The subsequent consultations between the foreign affairs officials of both the countries resolved that negotiations should be held immediately. Negotiations between the representatives of the two Governments began on December 31, 1953 and though expected to take only six weeks dragged on for almost four months. Contrary to the Indian approach towards these negotiations, China attached great importance to its "first ever negotiations with a non-socialist country" and set up an eleven member "Commission for Sino-Indian negotiations."⁵⁴ Nehru had already expressed his desire to waive off any claim

in Tibet as being not in keeping with full sovereignty of China, and to maintain trade relations with Tibet in cooperation with China. As China declared Sinkiang a closed area, India had also agreed to drop the Kashgar consulate from the agenda of the forthcoming talks, despite its earlier hopes of reopening the trade routes between Kashmir and Sinkiang through Ladakh.⁵⁵ Even while the negotiations were going on, some members expressed their distrust of the Chinese motives and urged the adoption of a “more positive policy”. Nehru assured the House that the Government was fully aware of the need for maintaining the country’s security and that McMahon Line was India’s boundary and there was no question of discussing it with any country.⁵⁶

The Year of Panchsheel – 1954

The efforts on the part of both sides led to the signing of “Sino-Indian Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between India and the Tibet Region of China” on April 29, 1954. This marks the beginning of a new phase in Sino-Indian relations. Accordingly, India renounced the traditional position it had enjoyed in Tibet as inheritor in British treaty rights.⁵⁷

The main provisions of the Agreement and notes exchanged between the two governments provided:

1. The Government of India agrees that the Governments of China may establish Trade Agencies at New Delhi, Calcutta and Kalimpong. Similarly, India may establish trade agencies at Yatung, Gyantse and Gartok.
2. Government of China agrees to specify Yatung, Gyantse and Phari as trade markets, India in turn named Kalimpong, Siliguri and Calcutta as trade marts.
3. Pilgrims from India may visit Kailash (Rimpoche) and Mansarovar (Mavam Tso) in Tibet and pilgrims from Tibet may visit Indian Buddhist sites such as Benaras, Sarnath, Bodh Gaya and Sanchi.
4. The traders and pilgrims from both India and China would carry passports and other travel documents issued by respective governments.
5. The Government of India would withdraw within six months from now, the military escorts stationed at Yatung and Gyantse in Tibet, and would hand over to the Government of China at a reasonable price 12 rest

houses, the postal, telegraph and public telephone services together with their equipments.⁵⁸

In the preamble to the agreement the two countries reaffirmed that they would abide by the famous five principles “Panchsheel”, namely: (1) mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, (2) mutual non-aggression (3) mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs (4) equality and mutual benefit and (5) peaceful coexistence.⁵⁹ India viewed Panchsheel as a major step towards world peace. It was this aspect that Nehru emphasized while presenting the agreement to Parliament on May 15, 1954, he said that “by this Agreement, we ensure to a very large extent peace in a certain area of Asia. I would earnestly wish that the area of peace could be spread over the rest of Asia and indeed over the rest of the world”.⁶⁰

Nehru’s words, so sincere and hopeful, sound strange in retrospect. The Indian Prime Minister asked the members of Parliament to accept the solemn declaration of peaceful co-existence contained in the preamble “not only with respect to India and China but also the other countries of Asia”, promising that “this atmosphere of fear which is haunting us will gradually go away”. Nehru added, “We have done no better thing than this since we became independent”.⁶¹

No doubt Nehru was optimistic regarding 1954 treaty which he anticipated to be proved as corner stone of Sino-Indian friendship but the opposition front was not satisfied with this move, consequently mixed reactions and criticism came up. For instance the opposition leader Kriplani declared that China had demolished a buffer state, in international politics when a buffer state is abolished by a powerful nation that nation was considered to have aggressive designs on its neighbours. In consonance with his critical view to Nehru’s policy he articulated that India should not go to war with China but at the same time should not under estimate Chinese intentions because Chinese aggressive intentions did not reflect any healthy sign for its neighbour India. Kripalani later described the 1954 treaty as being “born in sin because it was enunciated to put the seal of our approval upon the destruction of an ancient

nation which was associated with us spiritually and culturally.” Collectively, Parliamentary and public reaction in India to the new pact was nevertheless generally favourable. Press and Media also appreciated the step.⁶²

The Sino-Indian agreement thus gave strong signals to other Asian countries that the China indeed could coexist peacefully with its neighbours. It was for the first time that China through negotiations made a capitalist country to abolish its privileges in China. It exhibited the independent foreign policy and new diplomatic approach of New China on all fronts including the negotiation policy, negotiation skills and the spirit of resolving the jittery problems through consultations.⁶³ The agreement between India and China, on Tibet certainly contributed a great deal towards the improvement of relations between the two countries.

Latter on the two Asian nations – India and China, thus emerged from the Geneva Conference as factors of decisive importance in the context of world politics in general and Asian affairs in particular.⁶⁴ Nehru wanted India to play an important role at the international stage in the capacity of a big Asian power, which could be gleaned from the activities of Menon in Geneva. China on its part as reported by most of the Chinese sources entered the international political stage in Geneva with the status of the fifth great power of the world, and was face to face in a trial of strength with the US and UK etc.

While in Geneva, Krishna Menon had extended an invitation to Chou En-Lai to visit India. Chou took time off from Geneva Conference and visited India for the first time from June 25-29, 1954. The Chinese premier was given a rousing welcome and slogans of “Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai” (Indians and Chinese are brothers) generated a temporary euphoria about China. Chou had cleverly timed his visit to India with deliberate finesse. Pointing out that no solution of any international problem, an Asian problem in particular, would be possible without the participation of the China; Premier Chou had mooted the suggestion for an Asian consultative Committee to which Nehru showed no interest.

Intoxicated by the agenda of world peace, the Indian leadership did not raise the crucial issues that existed between India and China, instead harped on Panchsheel throughout. Chou also proposed to Nehru that by adhering to the Panchsheel, India and China should set an example for the world, providing that countries can coexist peacefully. On June 28, both the Prime Ministers issued a joint statement that reaffirmed their faith in Panchsheel. Both propounded that India and China would not only build their relationship with Asian countries on the basis of these principles but would also use these as basis for developing relations with other countries of the world. Before his departure, Chou invited Nehru to visit China. Chou flew back to Geneva and continued his honeymoon with Krishna Menon.⁶⁵ Barely six weeks after the conclusion of Sino-Indian Agreement on Tibet, the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi on July 17, 1954, delivered a note to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs accusing that “over thirty Indian troops armed with rifles had crossed the Niti Pass on June 29, 1954 and intruded in the Wuje [Wure] [Bara Hoti] area of the Tibet region of China. The above happening was not in conformity with the principles of non-aggression and friendly co-existence between China and India, and the spirit of the Joint Communiqué issued by the Prime Ministers of China and India.⁶⁶ On August 14, Chou En Lai in a telegram to Nehru lauded the role played by India at Geneva Conference.

Nehru’s China Visit:

Elated by India’s international position and say in the world affairs, Nehru did not lose much time to ponder over the invitation extended by Chou En-Lai. Barely four months after Chou’s India visit, Nehru was in China on October 18, 1954.⁶⁷ A two year trade agreement between India and China was signed on the eve of Nehru’s departure from India.⁶⁸ Nehru received a red carpet welcome in China and was greeted by large numbers of people. Nehru stayed in China for next ten days and met many Chinese heavyweights including Mao, Liu Shaoqi, Chou En-Lai, the Dalai and the Panchen Lama. Mao met Nehru four times separately on the 19, 21, 23 and 26 October. Although there was no specific agenda for the talks between Nehru and the

Chinese leaders, reports from Beijing indicated that in the latter's discussion of the general question of preserving peace in Asia "an alternative to SEATO had figured predominantly".

Nehru, however, had the notes exchanged between India and China on the border intrusions in mind and raised the issue with Chou En-Lai. Nehru raised the matter in a private meeting by saying that "the boundary drawn in your maps is not correct". Chou En-Lai took a realistic view and told Nehru that "China was still not been able to produce new maps". Chou then patiently explained to Nehru why? "The Sino-Indian boundary problem is an issue left over by the history. Since the founding of New China, we have not been able to survey and demarcate (the boundary), the newly published maps are the reprints of old maps, moreover, these maps were first published and circulated by the Kuomintang Government". Reassuring Nehru, Chou said, "once the conditions are ripe, we would produce a new maps in accordance with the outcome of the negotiations". The official Report also confirms these remarks of Chou who further told Nehru that "there were such errors even in the depiction on these Chinese maps of the frontier of China with the Soviet Union and outer Mongolia". It could be discerned from Chou's remarks that China wanted to renegotiate the boundary issue between Tibet and India especially after the Sino-Indian Agreement on Tibet that gave China basis for such negotiations as India had tacitly accepted the "illegality" of McMahon Line by recognising Tibet as a part of China albeit it was known to all that India administered the area south of the McMahon Line.

A part from the boundary question, Nehru also discussed the issue of Nepal with China. There was also a discussion on the question of the restoration of China's status in the United Nations.⁶⁹ Nehru returned with full praise for China's economic development. Thus the "Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai" euphoria had reached its zenith in 1954. In the hysterical euphoria generated in the wake of Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai, Nehru turned a blind eye towards China.⁷⁰ Praising Nehru's efforts in extending the area of peace, Chou En-Lai maintained that the "friendly co-operation of India and China constituted an

important factor in safeguarding peace in Asia and the World.” Echoing similar sentiments, Nehru in his reply stressed the peaceful nature of China. “I am convinced that the people of China, like the people of India, are devoted to the cause of peace”.⁷¹

Reporting on his visit to Lok Sabha on November 22, 1954, Nehru stated that while it was difficult to ascertain the political consequences of his visit or to measure its effect on India’s relations with China, it had undoubtedly brought about deeper understanding between the two nations. Both countries were fully aware of the differences in their political and economic structures, but such differences, Nehru stated, need not come “in the way of our cooperation in many fields and, more especially, in our working for peace in Asia and the world”.⁷²

In Nehru’s eyes, the supreme need of the moment was peace, particularly peace in Asia. The only power that might disturb Asian peace was China with her irredentist ambitions. Unfriendly policies would merely antagonise the Chinese Communists and make them belligerent. Friendly policies, on the other hand would win them over to the cause of peace, stability and progress. This appears to have been the assumption on which Indian policy towards China was based.⁷³

Having just returned from his China visit, Nehru’s unrelenting enthusiasm for China was once again exhibited at the Bandung Conference 1955, when he became the main sponsor of Chou En-Lai to this conference irrespective of criticism from various countries. The credit for the success of the Bandung Conference goes to the close cooperation between Chou and Nehru. The “Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai” hype was followed by the flurry of a number of diplomatic, trade and cultural exchanges.⁷⁴

The Sino-Indian relationship entered into a bright phase in 1955. India sincerely wanted China’s participation in international affairs. China’s participation in the Afro-Asian Conference, held in Bandung was possible because of the good offices of Nehru. China got an opportunity to enter into

world diplomacy and at the first instance could succeed to woo the Afro-Asian nations away from India's leadership. China had the ambition to lead the uncommitted block and to become the spokesman of Asia. Nehru was the stumbling bloc to the Chinese designs. The foreign policy of China had a dual role to perform; on the one hand it had to show that good neighbourliness was its perennial concern and on the other that it had the most important military strength in Asia.⁷⁵

After Chou and Nehru visits, Song Qingling (the widow of Sun Yat-sen), Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of National People's Congress (NPC) visited India in December 1955.⁷⁶ Chou En-Lai visited India for the second time in November 28, 1956 on a goodwill mission. Besides discussing many international issues with Nehru, he referred to the border between India and China, and it was decided that while there were no dispute regarding the border, there were certain petty problems which should be settled amicably by the representative of two Governments.⁷⁷ In an address to members of Indian Parliament on November 29, Chou referred to the long unbroken record of Sino-Indian friendship for several thousand years and hope for the continuation of this peaceful tradition in future.⁷⁸ Chou surprised the crowd when he ended his speech with the words "Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai" and "Jai-Hind" (long live India)

In Calcutta during a press conference, when a reporter asked Chou whether he would like to send a message or any proposal for the US Government through Nehru who was about to visit the US ? Chou replied Prime Minister Nehru is a messenger of peace, no matter where he goes, no matter who he meets; he would discuss matter concerning the world peace. If Nehru happens to discuss the problem of Sino-US relations with President Eisenhower, in that case we are sure that he would raise the view that would be beneficial for improving Sino-US relations. As expected by Chou, Nehru did voice China's concern to the US over various issues including Taiwan, and yet again supported the Chinese claim for the UN seat in his UN address on

December 20, 1956. At this point it could be said that Chou's understanding of Nehru far exceeded Nehru's understanding of Chou.⁷⁹

A trade agreement signed between India and China in October 1954 was renewed in 1956. This agreement led to steep rise in trade between the two countries. The New China News Agency reported that trade between India and China had increased steadily in the past fifteen months. India's exports to China had increased nine-fold, while imports from China had increased three and a half times over the pre-agreement period.⁸⁰ In 1956, Indian visitors to China included a Parliamentary delegation, an agricultural delegation to take stock of Chinese techniques, and another agricultural delegation to study Chinese cooperatives. Military delegations were also exchanged. Thus by 1956, China was making inroads into what had been known till then as an Indo-centric region to convert it into a Sino-centric region. General K.S. Thimayya had cautioned the Government of India to be wary of China more than of Pakistan and advised it to make adequate defence preparations on the northern and north-eastern frontier. However General Thimayya's advice was ignored.⁸¹ Reports of violation of Indian territorial integrity in many border areas also soon began to reach New Delhi. These complaints went on multiplying as time passed.⁸²

The Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-Lai after visiting the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and Afghanistan yet again landed in New Delhi on January 24, 1957. He held three hour long discussions with Nehru. Though Chou informed the reporters that he had come to India just to hold private discussions with Nehru, however, it is obvious that issues such as increased uneasy calm at the Sino-Indian borders. The inclination shown by the Dalai Lama to stay on in India, and to some extent to gauge the Indian reaction prior to his Nepal visit were in his mind. Chou also drew India's attention towards Kalimpong that was being used by America and other countries as a centre of espionage and sabotage against Tibet. Nehru expressed sincerity and assured Chou En-Lai that the Dalai and Panchen would return to Tibet through

same route they had followed for their journey to India. As regards activities of espionage in Kalimpong, India would follow a cautious approach.⁸³

The Indian Vice President S. Radhakrishnan visited China from September 18 to 28, 1957. Both sides as usual harped on the issues of “peaceful coexistence” and “world peace” at the time when real trouble was brewing on the boundary. Mao in a banquet held in the honour of his Indian guest on September 19 spoke, “Our two people are each building their own state and striving for world peace. For the shake of these common goals, our two countries are carrying on a close and friendly cooperation. The uniting together of one billion people of China and India constitute a great force and is guarantee for Asian and world peace”. Mao also thanked India for the support it had extended to China on various international issues and expressed no doubt about India assuming an ever-important role in the world.⁸⁴ Radhakrishnan on his part reiterated Indian position of sponsoring China at every international forum by saying that without any suggestion and guidance from China it would be difficult for us to solve the problems concerning Asia. Contacts were also developed between the two nations outside the pale of governmental cooperation, at the cultural and commercial levels. There was a steady flow of study teams, military missions and educational delegations between the two countries. India-China Friendship Associations were also established in both the countries to promote better understanding and relations.

Side by side on other front according to China, India occupied the area between Hopsang Khad and Shipki Pass in 1957. According to India, Chinese troops intruded into Walong in Lohit Frontier Division of NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh) in October 1957, in the Eastern Sector which India regarded as delimited by the McMahon Line.⁸⁵ The construction of Tibet Sinkiang highway in October 1957 was another turning point in the Sino-Indian relations. The completion of the road meant that it would be difficult for Tibet to put any resistance to China, as the latter would have access to Tibet from both western and eastern sides. Secondly, as the road penetrated through the Aksai Chin, the area claimed by India, China would be in position

to contest it militarily as there was no Indian communication network in this area. Since the completion of this road, China according to Indian perception shed the element of duplicity in dealings with India, and by calculative aggressive moves went on occupying covertly Indian territory and consolidating its position there.⁸⁶ The subsequent moves on border from both the sides did not show any signs of reconciliation, and both posed in extremely dangerous confrontational attitude.

Map Controversy:

Meanwhile in June 1958, the Chinese crossed into the Indian territory and occupied Khurnak Fort well inside Ladakh. Using the Fort as a military base, the Chinese gradually established posts at Spanggur and Diagra. The exchange of notes through diplomatic channels was further quickened by the publication of a map of China in China Pictorial Magazine, in July 1958. The following parts of India's territory were claimed by China:-

- 1) Four of the five divisions of Indian's North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) now known as Arunachal Pradesh.
- 2) Some areas in the north of Uttar Pradesh; and
- 3) Large areas in eastern Ladakh, which constitutes part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, China had laid claims on over 51,000 square miles of Indian Territory.

The year-to-year publications of these maps naturally give rise to some concern in Indian political circles. While drawing the attention of Beijing to the maps showing Indian territory as part of China, the Indian government in its protest note to the Counsellor of China in India on August 21, 1958, pointed politely that sufficient time had by now elapsed since the new Chinese government was established for them to correct the old maps. On September 28, 1958, a Chinese armed party intruded into the Di Chu valley of the Lohit Frontier Division and advanced upto Jachap. In October 1958, Chinese intruded in Sangcha Malla and Lapthal and established outposts at these two places. The Chinese are also said to have violated the Indian air space in October 1958 in the Spiti Valley. China on the contrary considered these areas

within Chinese territory and accused India of occupying these. Subsequently, the Indian government sent a protest note to the Chinese ambassador in India on October 18, 1958. China in a strongly worded note of November 3, 1958 replied that the Indian armed personnel unlawfully intruded into the Chinese territory and, as such they have been detained but deported subsequently on October 22. China also repeated its earlier stand that they had not yet undertaken a survey of their boundaries, nor consulted the countries concerned and they would not make changes in the boundary on their own.

India replied to the Chinese note on November 8, 1958 expressing surprise at the Chinese contention. It further noted that whether Aksai Chin belonged to India or China was a question of dispute and need to be settled. The Indian note remained unanswered. It is rather strange to note that contrary to its stand in eastern sector, India at this stage maintained that Aksai Chin was indeed a disputed area. Nehru in a letter of December 14, 1958 to Chou En-Lai pointed out that “there can be no question of these large parts of India being anything but India, and there is no dispute about them. I do not know what kind of surveys can affect these well-known and fixed boundaries.” Chou En-Lai replied to Nehru’s letter on January 23, 1959. Chou repudiated the Indian claim of traditional boundary and wrote that Sino-Indian border has never been formally delimited. Thus, Chinese Premier had emphatically made it clear that a border dispute did exist between India and China. However, he shrewdly concluded, “the Chinese government has always held that the existence of the border question absolutely should not affect the development of Sino-Indian friendly relations.”⁸⁷ China also questioned the legality of the McMahon line and rejected it as the product of British imperialism and as being judicially invalid.

From the above discussion it can be concluded that small border clashes began from mid and late fifties, first in the middle sector, then in the western sector of Ladakh, where the Chinese constructed a road linking Sinkiang to Tibet across the Aksai Chin plateau and finally in the eastern sector along the McMahon line.⁸⁸ The bitterness of relationship grew over the cartographic

invasion of China. The foreign policy of China had a dual role to perform, on the one hand it showed that good neighbourliness was its perennial concern and on the other hand it showed that it had the most important military strength in Asia, thus by 1959, China had exhibited its territorial ambition in the Himalayan region and made India aware with the reality of the boundary dispute between the two. Nehru's illusions of containing China through diplomacy and appeasement had been shattered. The relations between the two countries had nose-dived there by setting into motion a process of deterioration. A part from it, the entry of Dalai Lama added fuel to the fire in embittering the relations between the two nations. Beside this two other developments – an uprising in Tibet and the Sino-Indian confrontation – occurred which turned deteriorating relations into open hostility.

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