

# CHINESE STRATEGY AND INTENT DURING THE SINO-INDIAN BORDER DISPUTE

DONALD R. HETZNER

THE SINO-INDIAN BORDER CONFLICT OF 1962 PROVIDES A detailed representation of Peking's military political strategy in Asia. Unorthodox in the Western sense, Peking's tactics are the result of geographic location and historic imperialism, now structured around a framework of Maoist military-political principles. Any doubt as to the effectiveness of limited war must be revised after a critical examination of the territorial and political gains Mainland China has obtained at India's expense.

## I. 1962—The Sino-Indian Border

After several years of methodically altering the alignment of the Sino-Indian border by surreptitious encroachments, countered only by Indian paramilitary movements along the frontier, Chinese forces crossed the existing *de facto* borders of India's Ladakh and North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) on September 8, 1962. In the following weeks Chinese military action increased until it was on a large enough scale to warrant being termed an outright invasion. On November 21, Peking declared that it would unilaterally implement peace proposal made by Chou En-lai on October 24, and withdraw its troops from the line of conflict.<sup>1</sup> However, the Chinese note made it clear that this was less a truce than a demand for surrender without formalities. In effect, the note expanded and redefined the existing conflict to include India's prestige as a "non-aligned" nation, shifted the blame for a possible continuation of hostilities onto New Delhi's shoulders, and equated any attempt on India's part to escalate the conflict as an indication of subservience to imperialism and colonialism.

Following the cease-fire both countries indicated their acceptance of the Colombo Proposals as presented and clarified by six Afro-Asian nations (Ceylon, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, the United Arab Republic and Ghana). China, however, precluded any stable border settlement by declaring that it had reached an agreement with Pakistan regarding the alignment of the border between Sinkiang and that part of Kashmir occupied by Pakistan. This tentative agreement was announced on December 27, 1962, the very

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<sup>1</sup>"Statement given by the Chinese Government, 21 November 1962," *White Paper VIII* (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1963), pp. 17-21.

day that negotiations between India and Pakistan over the question of Kashmir were to begin at Rawalpindi. By March 2, 1963, when the Sino-Pakistan Agreement was finalized at Peking, it was apparent that China had successfully dominated all phases of the border dispute and settled the frontier alignment on its own terms. By deft military maneuvers Peking forced India out of strategic positions on the border and, through even more adroit diplomatic ploys nullified the Colombo Proposals and settled the Kashmir/Tibet-Sinkiang border with negligible interference from India. The border conflict with China proved that, in India's case, the theory of non-alignment and aloofness from power politics did not correspond with the realities of contemporary politics. In 1962-1963, it became apparent that a third power block of non-aligned nations, with India as its tacitly accepted leader, had little influence in dealing with the "new imperialism" of Peking.

## II. China's Posture on the Border

The Chinese version of the Sino-Indian boundary is, for the most part, supported by evidence that is lacking in quantity and quality. However, there can be no doubt that China does have some valid claims to areas in both the Eastern and Western Sectors. In the Eastern Sector Tibetan authorities collected taxes and appointed officials in several tribal areas, located south of the McMahon Line, until 1945; after that date the British occupied Monyul, Loyul, and Walong, formerly administered from Lhasa, and ended Tibetan hegemony in the sector. Chinese claims in the Western Sector are based on much firmer evidence. Official Indian maps have shown the entire Aksai Chin region of Ladakh as being undefined in relation to Tibet.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Prime Minister Nehru condemned British aggression in Tibet so many times and in such detail that he undercut India's rights of succession in the area. Also, India, by admitting that there was a definite dispute over the alignment of the border and by indicating its willingness to discuss *minor rectifications* of the boundary, in effect conceded that China did have definite claims in the area. However, if the Chinese section of the *Report of the Officials . . . On the Boundary Question* is read as containing proof of Chinese claims in these two areas, then these claims are definitely not proven but rather are stated as a unilateral point of view and not supported by verifiable sources.<sup>3</sup>

The Middle Sector of the border posed no problem to either side between 1951-62 since no major forces were deployed along its boundary and the only area actually in dispute was Barahoti/Wu-Je. Chinese claims in this area are not based directly on historical data but rather on a dispute

<sup>2</sup> India, *70-Mile Political Map of India—First Edition* (Survey of India, 1950).

<sup>3</sup> India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Report of the Officials of the Governments of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question* (New Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1962)

with India over the geographical relationship of this area to the Tunjun La Pass. A joint demarcation survey and a withdrawal of troops from the immediate area of the border would most likely have settled the delimitation of the frontier, if these actions had taken place at any time between May 1951, and September 1962.

Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal can all be considered as integral and strategic sections of India's border with China. Nevertheless, in regard to the border war of 1962, it is possible to eliminate them from the consideration of the over-all armed conflict situation, even though it has been reported that these three countries, together with Ladakh, form "the four teeth with which the Chinese will grind their way to the Southern Seas."<sup>4</sup> On occasion China has stated that it considers that Sikkim/Tibet border as being demarcated by the Calcutta (1890), Lhasa (1904), and Peking (1906) Conventions and other international agreements, both preceding and subsequent to these conventions. Chinese incursions into these areas seem to be designed merely to distract New De'hi's attention.<sup>5</sup> In regard to the border between Bhutan and Tibet, even though it is undemarcated, there were few, if any, military incursions by Chinese personnel into territory claimed by Bhutan between the years 1954-1963. Nepal settled its border, and in so doing withdrew from the steadily deteriorating border situation by signing a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with China in April 1960.<sup>6</sup> This was followed by a further strengthening of the frontier when King Mahendra visited Peking in October 1961 and signed a boundary treaty that, significantly, contained a provision allowing the Chinese to build a road from Lhasa, Tibet to Kathmandu, Nepal.

Therefore, it can be stated that the area of greatest conflict was, and is, in the Ladakh region of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. In the other two sectors there was some agreement as to the general limits of the borders of Tibet and India, but in the Aksai Chin region of Ladakh, there was no agreement whatsoever as to what constituted the limits of India and Tibet or, for that matter, whether India or Pakistan was the legal sovereign power in Baltistan and Gilgit Agency regions of Jammu/Kashmir. There was no question, however, that in 1961-62 Indian troops were patrolling up to the Chinese line of control south of the Karakorum Pass and, in doing so, menacing an area that China considered vital to its national interests.

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<sup>4</sup> P. C. Chakravarti, *India's China Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 148.

<sup>5</sup> George Knox Osborn III, "Sino-Indian Border Conflicts: Historical Background and Recent Developments," (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1963), p. 255.

<sup>6</sup> China, *New Development in Friendly Relations Between China and Nepal* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1960).

### III. China's Territorial Ambitions

The Chinese territorial claims that helped precipitate the border conflict are of only momentary significance when compared to traditional expansionism as promulgated by the conception of China as the "Middle Kingdom". This view of China as the center of the world and distributor of culture has led the Chinese in past eras to expand their borders and influence outward over large areas of Asia. This Chinese hegemony has, in the past, extended outward to Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Burma, Thailand, Malaya, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Korea, Taiwan, and the Sulu Islands. Although these states were cut away from Imperial China during periods of weakness and were seemingly lost forever, all modern Chinese leaders have considered these areas to be irrevocably an integral part of China.

The establishment of the People's Republic of China, and the growth of the first strong central government since the late eighteenth century made it possible for China to take its first steps toward regaining paramount influence in its former subject areas. In the contemporary society Mao-Tse-tung's view that "it is the immediate task of China to regain all our lost territories"<sup>7</sup> has now been coupled with workable Maoist principles concerning the expansion of the class struggle (and China's prestige) into those areas once ruled by Imperial China. This combination of Maoist principles and China's growing strength gradually gave rise to a situation in which Peking was able to proclaim itself, at some expense to Russia, as the pre-eminent power in Asia.

It would seem that China's first step in proving its new strength was to plan the re-establishment of control over former dominions. This, however, required careful calculation during the 1950's as any effort to regain influence in the north would probably evoke retribution by Russia; and, still smarting from the Korean War, China appeared unwilling to challenge the United States in Southeast Asia until a preponderance of power was established by the Communist bloc. Thus, the least dangerous course, in addition to reinforcing Sinkiang and Inner Mongolia, was to establish a central control over conquered Tibet and face a relatively weak India across its border.

Once established in control of Tibet, and subsequently having had India recognize the area as the Tibet Region of China,<sup>8</sup> Peking was faced with the problem of securing its newly won prize against an Indian Government friendly to the Dalai Lama and Tibetan autonomy in general. To accomplish this, particularly after the Lhasa riots in 1959, China attempted to ex-

<sup>7</sup> Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York: The Modern Library, 1944), p. 96.

<sup>8</sup> In reference to the 1954 "Agreement Between The Republic of India and The People's Republic of China on Trade and Intercourse Between Tibet Region of China and India, April 29, 1954," *White Paper I* (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1963), pp. 98-101.

tend the so-called "Bamboo Curtain" to the outer limits of any area over which modern Tibet wielded authority. To insure the effectiveness of this security measure, it was necessary to seal the border, render it defensible, and to guard the communications network connecting Sinkiang and Tibet with China.

### *The Application of Chinese Power*

It became imperative to gain the co-operation of the minority groups living along the Sino-Indian border in order to seal Tibet from outside influences. The Chinese used two approaches to this problem: They promoted the idea of a federation of the small Himalayan border states and simultaneously attempted to carry on border negotiations with Sikkim and Bhutan—succeeding with Nepal; and they carried on a program of infiltration, combined with a propaganda campaign, in the tribal areas along the frontier. At the same time that subversive activities were being instituted, the border regions of Tibet were further strengthened by an influx of men and materials introduced through a newly constructed communications network centering on the Sinkiang-Tibet Highway.

By the end of 1961 India was faced with a Chinese stronghold in Tibet that was effectively sealed from outside observation and interference. When this secrecy within Tibet was coupled with the well-known facts of the militancy of Chinese Communist ideology, China's historical expansionism, and its encouragement of aggressive actions in Southeast Asia, the Indian Government was forced to react by building up its military forces along the border to order to take "effective action to recover the lost territories." Chinese reaction to the Indian build-up probably could have been predicted before the troop movements began. The Chinese regarded the security of Tibet and the sanctity of Ladakh as vital to the national interests of China, since these areas serve to protect China's vital Sinkiang Province from threats emanating from the South and West and provide a base for national expansion.

As the territorial limits of China expanded, and were in turn threatened, chauvinistic-ideological factions in China began to demand the maintenance of a militant guard over China's national interests; this included the continuation of territorial expansion, the undercutting of "national bourgeoisie" influence in Asia, and the countering of the universalism of Russia and the United States. These three security measures set China and India on a collision course that was to culminate in the warfare on the Sino-Indian border.

*Peking's Evaluation of India*

Mao Tse-tung's reference to the "running dogs of imperialism" was expanded upon 1962 in order to charge that:

The Nehru government has substituted reactionary nationalism for the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution, and tied up ever more closely with the imperialist and feudal forces. . . . But the class nature and economic status of the Indian big bourgeoisie and big landlords determine that the Nehru government depends on and serves imperialism more and more.<sup>9</sup>

This equation of India with the Western World was further strengthened by a compilation of facts and figures that purported to show, and perhaps did, that India was becoming economically dependent on the West — in particular the United States. *Renmin Ribao* reached the conclusion that:

India's foreign debt burden grows heavier and heavier, and it becomes more and more difficult for India to extricate itself from its economic dependence on foreign monopoly capital. . . . What is different from the past is that U.S. imperialism is gradually taking over British imperialism's monopoly position in India.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, India was regarded by the Chinese not only as a power in her own right, but also as an area into which China's most implacable enemy, the United States had extensive and valued interests. Given this view of India and the seeming efforts of Premier Khrushchev to reach a detente with the Western Powers, it is likely that Peking not only resented China's non-involvement in great power negotiations but saw these negotiations as a threat to continued Chinese growth. China was now forced to secure its strategic border areas, but to do it in such a manner that a possible conflict could be limited to the two principals—China and India.

It was a reasonably safe assumption that India would not call on outside help (Russian and/or American) as this would shatter the respectability of India's non-aligned status. India's reluctance to call for help would, in turn, allow Peking to establish the nature, extent, area, and manner of settling the alignment of the disputed regions. The advantage to China of keeping non-Asian powers out of the continent, and thus to enable it to establish full sway over its weaker neighbors, has been ably commented on by P. C. Chakravarti:

The balance in Asia today is maintained by non-Asian forces operating on the Asian scene. It is not, therefore, in the interest of India nor of other free Asian nations to call upon those forces to leave Asia to itself, thus creating a

<sup>9</sup> "More on Nehru's Philosophy in the Light of the Sino-Indian Boundary Question," *The Sino-Indian Boundary Question*, p. 109.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

power vacuum which Communist China alone can fill. Nothing will please Peking better than an Asian Monroe Doctrine.<sup>11</sup>

Presumably this was the very reason that China insisted for years that negotiations on a border settlement must start on the basis of the status quo (the "line of actual control"); China would be left in possession of recently acquired territory while negotiations proceeded, no third party would be involved, and by surreptitious incursions the line of control could be altered almost at will.

#### IV. Indian Policy during the Boundary Dispute

Considering her vulnerability along the Sino-Indian border, possibly the most reasonable thing India could have done was to negotiate on the basis of the "line of actual control". Bearing its weak military position along the frontier in mind, India could have entered upon negotiations and at the same time gradually reinforced its military positions behind the roving border patrols. This would have given India a stronger bargaining position and, if the troops were held back from the border, it would not have aroused China. However, it is not unlikely that Prime Minister Nehru believed that an Indian initiative near the border would provoke the Chinese and upset the implementation of India's domestic policies. Thus, it was better to protract the conflict through endless diplomatic correspondence and an unswerving posture as to what constituted India's borders. Because the Indian Government pursued this policy, China strengthened the border of Tibet so that when India finally realized that Tibet was an armed camp and began to reinforce the frontier, it was too late; the additional troops merely spurred China into action.

The other course open to India was to settle the boundary question by accepting the *de facto* boundary in Aksai Chin (an area vital to China) and receive recognition of the McMahon Line (a strategic defense point to India) in return. This proposal had been implied in a letter from Chou En-lai to Prime Minister Nehru in 1959 and then more clearly stated at the Delhi Summit in 1960. Although the letter proceeded to the point in a round-about manner, the Delhi Summit made it obvious that China would exchange claims in the Eastern Sector for a free title to the Aksai Chin Region of Ladakh.<sup>12</sup> Though the loss of the barren Aksai Chin would pose no disadvantage to India and a non-disputed border along the McMahon Line would serve to protect the non-defensible sub-moraine region formed by the Plain of Assam, India could not accept this proposal. To maintain the country's ter-

<sup>11</sup> Chakravarti, *op. cit.*, p. 159; by limiting any conflict to a point where it is confined to China and another Asian country or countries, China is pursuing a limited Monroe Doctrine, as they are settling issues on their own initiative.

<sup>12</sup> "Letter from the Prime Minister of China to the Prime Minister of India, 23 January 1959," *White Paper I*, pp. 52-54.

territorial integrity, the sum total of the lands ruled during British Raj, which passed into the Congress Party's hands, had to remain inviolate. To lose control of any section through barter or negotiations, that is, in any manner aside from a military seizure, would mean that to the eyes of the populace and the world-at-large India was not a fit successor to the British Raj. The Indians therefore committed themselves to a course of action that eventually led to a clash with a major power, a conflict that not only wasted national resources but in the end allowed China to gain the coveted Aksai Chin.

#### V. Chinese Intentions

Even though China had definite claims to several areas occupied by India, it seems unlikely to assume that Peking was provoked over Indian refusals to extend credence to the evidence offered by Peking in support of its territorial demands. For eight years China and India played a diplomatic game of charge and counter-charge, expanded and redefined the terms and language of the conflict, and participated in completely partisan negotiations. A long term discourse of this nature, where the rules of the game are observed, does not give rise to military conflict; usually it represents a jockeying for a favorable position in order to obtain some benefit from tenuous claims. It also seems unwarranted to assume that China occupied Indian territory in order to spread Communism or to create a situation which both humiliated and drained the resources of India. The forcible acquisition of territory is neither the best way in which to spread an ideal and/or a political system nor is it in harmony with Peking's political-military strategy.

In itself, the desire to humiliate and at the same time pauperize India by exposing its weakness in comparison to China and forcing an increase in defense spending seems unreasonable. This does not preclude saying that China did not welcome any and all benefits that accrued as a result of the venture. However, these several side effects, all of which Peking obviously desired, were not in themselves valuable enough to warrant risking an open break with India (and possibly Russia), endangering its posture as a "peace loving" nation, or causing a general war. Nevertheless, after the border warfare in 1962, India did lose the capacity to mediate between China and the West or, for that matter, to mediate between Peking and any nation. As a result, India lost most of its power to act as head of various International Control Commissions—particularly those in Cambodia and Laos. There can also be no doubt that since October 1962, India has given priority to defense needs along the Tibetan and Pakistani borders, and because of the cost in manpower, equipment, and the drain on the economy, it is now unable to halt or obstruct any additional Chinese encroachments in Southeast Asia that directly affect India.

It also seems unlikely to assume that China wished to provoke an armed clash with India and/or any other country on the Tibetan border if it could

possibly be avoided. For several years Peking pursued a course of action aimed at a pacific settlement of the border, providing that New Delhi met some minimum demands. Chou En-lai's letter to Prime Minister Nehru and the Delhi Summit talks tacitly stated these minimum demands which, in essence, meant Chinese control of Aksai Chin in return for giving India clear title to the NEFA.<sup>13</sup> This barter had a clear precedent in the Sino-Burmese Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Non-aggression, a situation in which China had been able to adjust a controversial border by effecting an exchange of disputed territory.<sup>14</sup> However, any exchange made on the basis of transferring the NEFA claims in return for a free title to Aksai Chin did not guarantee that a stable, contiguous border would not be used by Peking as a staging area, a shield for guerrilla actions, or a base for propaganda activities. These facts notwithstanding, Peking did offer a barter with India that expanded upon an already dangerous precedent, that is, they offered to alienate a section of territory regarded by them (leaders and populace) as irrevocably an integral part of China. The most plausible reason for this concession was that it centered around the inadvisability of entering a military conflict with the then acknowledged leader of the non-aligned bloc, particularly when it had a population of 450 million, a modern army, and was in a better position to threaten Tibet than China was to invade India.

### *Strategic Considerations*

There can be no doubt that China considered the disputed border regions, the Aksai Chin in particular, not only as an indisputable part of the *irredenta* but also as essential to the protection to the eastern provinces and, in turn, a necessary factor for continued national growth. Traditional expansionism and the concept of "Middle Kingdom" demands that modern leaders regain the lost territories, as their continued alienation amounted to nothing less than "National humiliation."<sup>15</sup> This "National humiliation," in itself a rather nebulous term, is reinforced by a completely pragmatic view of strategic needs, the power that can be wielded by exploiting common cultural bonds, and a typical Marxian tenet — that they (Marxists) have discovered, understood, and applied the laws of history.

Historically, Kashmir has been a seat of power in Central Asia. During, and since, the period of the Kushan Empire, this general area has been the crossroads of Asia.<sup>16</sup> In this region the Aksai Chin is of particular value to China because it provides easy access to Tibet and Sinkiang by way of the Sinkiang-Tibet Highway; affords a staging area in any possible future conflict

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> China, *A Victory for the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence*, (Peking: Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, 1960).

<sup>15</sup> Chiang Kai-shek, *China's Destiny* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1947), p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> This is not in reference to Ladakh in particular but rather to the area directly north that includes Kashgar and Khotan.

with India; and by virtue of its location, it could become not only a vital area for screening activities in Tibet but for extending influence outward into Iran and Russia's Central Asian Republics.

Geopolitically, Tibet, Sinkiang, and Ladakh all form a portion of Sir Halford MacKinder's Heartland or Pivot Area, the possession of which could give the sovereign power access to Africa and Eurasia. This Asian Pivot has become even more valuable to the possessor, as MacKinder's dictum—"Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island; Who rules the World Island commands the World."—might well appeal to any country anxious to become a major world power.<sup>17</sup> There are now two major powers which are logically bound to compete for control of this area—Russia and China. Russia holds control in the west and north but is blocked to the south by Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, a highly nationalistic United Arab Republic, and Western supported Turkey and Israel. China, on the other hand, has gradually secured control of the Asian portion the Pivot Area at the expense of Russia. Viewed in this light, it is not unlikely that China considered the Aksai Chin Region of Ladakh—after securing it through surreptitious incursions between 1954-1962—irreplaceable.<sup>18</sup>

Even though the Aksai Chin region is essential for the protection of China's Tibet and the implementation of further expansionist policies in Inner Asia, it does not appear probable that China had any intention of promoting more than a limited conflict in reaction to Indian troop concentrations in Ladakh and the NEFA. This conflict was intended to be a quick, decisive action to secure an already occupied, strategic area. The Chinese had troop concentrations in Tibet that were well equipped and acclimated to the high altitudes in the contested areas; these facts would most likely have assured victory in battles waged on a much larger scale. If a full-scale invasion had been planned, the starting date would not have been in the cold pre-winter months of September-October, nor would the Chinese have complicated their logistics problems (transportation difficulties at high altitudes and the scarcity of food and war materials in Tibet) by precipitating simultaneous actions on two fronts. In view of the terrain along the Sino-Indian border, had Peking planned a massive invasion it would have been much more logical for the Chinese to have grouped forces along the McMahon Line in order to penetrate quickly and deeply into the NEFA and then, after co-ordinating and reforming, to overrun the Plain of Assam. Meanwhile, a holding action could have been waged in Ladakh until India was compelled to withdraw troops in order to reinforce the less-defensible, and more critical, sub-morraine

<sup>17</sup> Sir Halford MacKinder, "Geographical Pivot of History," a lecture delivered to the Royal Geographical Society, London, in 1904, (Royal Geographical Society: London), quoted in Helmut G. Challis, *China: Confucian and Communist* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1959), p. 474.

<sup>18</sup> Werner Levi, "The Sino-Indian Border War," *Current History*, XLV (September, 1963), pp. 136-143.

regions in the Eastern Sector. Viewed in this perspective, the facts of the conflict all point to the conclusion that the Chinese offensive was never intended to be more than limited in scope and time—serving to secure an area that was ultimately to provide a basic step toward the implementation of evolving, wide-range goals.<sup>19</sup>

*A Speculative Model for Further Study*

At this point it might be noted that an analysis of Peking's hot-cold attitude between the years 1954-1962 might well provide further insights into the cause of the Sino-Indian border conflict. As a hypothesis, it could be assumed that China was attempting to expand upon its domestic practice of establishing Pavlovian responses (stimulus substitution) by varying the amount and application of stimuli used in the conduct of negotiations in order to establish a *limited* neurotic pattern to Indian responses. The application of psychological techniques has been the hallmark of the Communist countries, Russia in particular, for the past eighteen years. However, in the sphere of international politics, it has been applied over such a wide area that all but the immediate effects were dissipated.<sup>20</sup> Thus, it could be assumed that Peking, in refining the technique, limited the area and increased the amount of stimuli. For example, China entered into the *Panch Sheel* agreement in 1954, immediately broke its provisions, and then began peaceful negotiations that were intermittently broken by armed conflicts. The next step screened Tibet and kept the Indian government on edge by leaving them in doubt as to what the movements along the border meant, whom they were directed toward, and exactly how large they were. Finally, the quick assault and the unilateral cease-fire left New Delhi in a quandary as to just what China was attempting to accomplish.

In total, the entire eight years of the boundary question could have been structured not only to secure the strategic Aksai Chin but as an *en vitro* experiment in applying psychological pressure. The above is all, of necessity, within the realm of speculation. However, there can be no doubt that China followed a hard-soft line, took the decision as to war or peace as well as the areas and length of the conflict out of Indian hands, and determined the "reality" of the conflict. As a result, India relaxes during the winter but tensely awaits renewed attacks in the spring—large scale attacks that never materialize.

<sup>19</sup> For a further discussion of mainland China's use of time and weapons control refer to: W.F.K. Thompson, "When Two Empires Meet," *Survival*, V (March-April 1963), p. 79-80.

<sup>20</sup> Ferreus (Stefan T. Possony), "Communist Psychological Warfare," *Orbis*, I (Spring, 1957), pp. 97-121, reprinted in, Robert Strausz-Hupe *et al.*, *Protracted Conflict*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 201-229.

## VI. Structured Conflict

In line with traditional Chinese expansionism, Communist China began a program in 1949 that was designed to regain the areas lost during what it terms the "Old Democratic-Revolutionary Era." The establishment of a strong central government and a resultant growth in economic power gave Peking the strength with which to implement this goal. During this formative period, any possible expansion to the north was blocked by Russia and partially halted in the south by the United States; factors that left Tibet as the least dangerous area into which expansion was feasible. In addition, Tibet was an area to which Peking had definite legal claims under the provisions of the Simla Agreement. After re-establishing suzerainty over Tibet in 1950, a concerted effort was made to assure absolute control over Lhasa. Subsequently, the 1954 Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between China and India, because it recognized the area as the Tibet Region of China, served to establish the area as an irrevocable section of Mainland China.

To maintain their control over Tibet, the Chinese initiated a program in 1954 to seal the border, render it defensible, and protect the communications network connecting Sinkiang with Tibet. To assure that these measures were effective, the boundaries of Tibet were extended to include the areas over which Lhasa had claims by virtue of administration, custom, or usage; these outer limits were then considered as being the strategic boundaries of China. This held particularly true for the Aksai Chin region, as it formed not only a portion of the Asian Pivot Area but also contained the vital Aksai Chin Road—both necessary ingredients for further expansion to the west and north.

It can be assumed that the above area was irreplaceable to China since it was the one portion of the *irredenta* that had truly coalesced. By 1962 Peking was beginning to feel external pressures not only from the Sino-Soviet dialogue but also from the direction of New Delhi. Statements by Prime Minister Nehru to the effect that it had become necessary to "free" India (Ladakh and the NEFA) of Chinese troops, and Krishna Menon's that "they (India) would fight to the last man and last gun" virtually precluded any further attempts at peaceful negotiation.<sup>21</sup> Also, military posts were matched at nearly a one-to-one ratio along the actual line of control in Ladakh; a fact most likely considered by China to be a menace to its continued national growth. Because of Peking's ideological debate with Russia and the extent of United States interests in India, it became imperative to move quickly and directly but at the same time to keep the area and scope of the conflict limited. In this way India was not likely to appeal for help from either of the two super powers, and China could pursue a policy of quick gain through

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<sup>21</sup> "Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peking, to the Embassy of India in China, 20 October 1962," *White Paper VII*, p. 123.

limited warfare. Subsequently, attacks were mounted at the height of the Cuban missile crisis not only in the Aksai Chin but deep into the NEFA and Barahoti/Wu-Je. Then, after the unilateral cease-fire was implemented by the Chinese, they altered the terms of the cease-fire and the Colombo Proposals in such a manner that India would be held responsible for any resumption of hostilities. The Chinese troops then quietly withdrew from the NEFA and consolidated their control in Ladakh. As the total result of the conflict, China secured the vital Aksai Chin in exchange for the NEFA—a trade that was the duplicate of Chou En-lai's proposal.

Seen in the above context, it is possible to assume that the Sino-Indian border war was waged to secure immediate objectives—the security of Tibet and unchallenged control of the Aksai Chin region. The Indian troop movements during 1962 menaced these areas, and Peking reacted by staging an open clash that allowed it to set the time, area, and scope of the hostilities. The conflict itself must, however, be viewed as an intermediate step taken by China in its progress toward securing long range goals—gradual expansion toward the West and Southeast, a militant countering of the universalism of the United States and Russia, and the exclusion of all but the Maoist version of communist thought from the emerging and underdeveloped nations. Thus, the border conflict of 1962 can be considered as a temporary, albeit explosive, episode in what seems certain to be a protracted struggle for *dominance of Asia*.