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India's China policy: A critical analysis of the 1947-1962 Period

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Abstract
Two Asian giants, India and China share a close historical civilization. Both have the same exploitation history by colonial rule and started their modern statehood journey in the mid-20th Century. Since that time, India and China tried to make a friendship relation with each other. However, this paper has critically discussed the brief history of India-China relations and mainly focused on bilateral relations from 1947 to 1962, Nehru's personal beliefs, understanding for China, and his criticism after India's defeat in the Indo-China War of 1962.

Keywords: Nehru, Asian unity, Tibet issue, Panchsheel, War, Criticization

Introduction
British went back, consequently, after gaining Independence in 1947, India prioritized its economic and infrastructure development and started fighting against social evils like poverty, hunger, and death. etc. Jawaharlal Nehru after taking charge as India's first Prime Minister (1947-1964), emphasized the overall developmental process of the country and laid the foundations of modern India, and became the 'chief or principal architect' of Indian foreign policy (Dethe, 2018) [5]. However, Nehru adopted the policy of non-alignment, a policy made distant from the superpower politics during the Cold War. He believed it would lead to ensuring the development and fighting against death, hunger, and poverty. He in his statement, sought to reject isolationism in world politics because no nation can live in isolation. Not only this, he also rejected the creation of military blocs in Asia and Africa, because it led to the manifestation of neo-colonialism. Nehru adopted the anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism mindset and expressed solidarity with the national liberation movements of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Using the NAM forum and UN platform fought against colonial rule. India was also against anti-racism and played a pioneering role in condemning the policy of apartheid and racial discrimination by the Government of South Africa. Nehru stated the kernel of India's foreign policy is anti-imperialism and anti-racism (Ghosh, 2017) [7]. However, in this paper, a brief history of Indo-China relations, India's China Policy under the Premiership of Jawaharlal Nehru, and scholarly debate about Nehru's China policy have critically been analyzed.

History of Indo-China Relations
India and China are two Asian giants and share an old age, long and uninterrupted cultural and historical civilization. In the span of over two thousand years, India and China maintained a cordial relationship with mutual respect without any armed conflict. Culturally, Buddhism made India's connection with China. Several Indian scholars translated the Buddhist text into the Chinese language even after the decline of Buddhism in India. Chinese pilgrims like Fa-Hien (399-414 AD), and Yuan Chwang (630-643 A.D) visited India to keep alive the spiritual and cultural linkage of their country with India (Seth, 1968) [15]. India and China, both at a time were great powers and later were invaded and exploited by Western imperialists. However, in the 20th Century, both countries supported each other for their emancipation. India's National Congress several times supported the Chinese fight for emancipation. The ROC gained its independence in 1912 but was not established as a socialist country till 1949. However, in pre-independent India, Nehru and Radhakrishnan visited China in 1939 and 1944 respectively, and from the Chinese side Chiang Kai-Shek

visited India in 1942, during his visit he supported India's nationalist aspirations of emancipation from British rule. India and China, both as a modern statehood started their journey at the same time after WWII ended in the mid-20th Century. However, India as an independent and sovereign country started its journey in 1947 while China emerged as a socialist country in 1949 (Abitol, 2009) [1].

Factors of India's China Policy (1947-1962)

To understand India's China policy after establishing the socialist China, need to explain the basic three trends operating at that time in the international system level of analysis which deeply influenced India's China policy. *First of all*, after emerging as a socialist country and following the Leninist-Stalinist ideology, China captured Tibet which was the buffer state between India and China. *Secondly*, the collapse of the European colonial empires and the emergence of newly independent states in Asia and Africa were other trends during that time. However, the international order change of old imperial systems raised the questions of what roles newly liberated India and China would play in the emerging post-colonial world. *Thirdly*, the onset of the Cold War between the US and USSR-led camps during that time and its expansion to Asia circle in 1950. India's efforts try to shape a new Asia free from superpower politics. From India's perspective, the US and the USSR were both Western powers. India during that time tried to become the leader of newly emerging nations. Nehru's personal belief was that Chinese support or opposition to India's effort would be a significant determinant (Garver, p 83, 2017) [6]. India's security concern, domestic politics, and several scholars argued Nehru's socialistic learning became the influential factor in shaping India's China policy (Chatterjee, p 139-40, 2017) [2]. However, despite the negative view from the Chinese Communist Party, which recognized Nehru as a collaborator of imperialism, a loyal servant of US imperialism, and an 'American running dog', Nehru tried to emphasize India's relations with the Peoples Republic of China (Resurgent India, 2015) [13]. Nehru believed making a strong connection and cooperation with China, would be immensely important to the success of India's non-alignment, Pan-Asianism, Asian solidarity, and creating a new balance of power aspirations (Seth, 1968) [15].

Indo-China Relations

Based on international trends and Nehru's personal beliefs, India looks at China. After the decisive victory of the CCP in the civil war in China, India was the first non-socialist country to recognize and welcome the People's Republic of China and established diplomatic relations on 1st April 1950. China was impressed by India's recognition during that time (Chatterjee, 2017) [2]. However, despite the ideological differences with China, India's efforts to make warm, peaceful, and cooperative relations with China initially succeeded which led to a warm and cooperative relationship from 1950 to 1959 (Abitol, 2009) [1]. Then one should ask the question what was the different ideology in shaping their foreign relations during that period? China after emerging as a socialist country participated in the Soviet Bloc during the Cold War period while India adopted the non-alignment foreign policy distancing the Cold War power politics. Nehru believed that adopting the non-alignment foreign policy would be more beneficial than its alignment with the Cold War power politics (Chatterjee, pp 139-40, 2017) [2]. However, one of Nehru's main assumptions about China was that maintaining cooperation and friendship with China would reduce the possibility of a direct Chinese attack on Indian territory (Jagat, 2020) [8]. During that period, India and China mostly had a common opinion and understanding of international issues (Sumedh, Lokhande 2020) [17]. After recognizing the socialist regime of China, India provided its mediatory role in the Korean War and categorical support for China's position on Tawan. China also appreciated India's bidding on a seat for China at the UN. (Li, 2010) [10]. During that time, India also voted against a resolution of the General Assembly in UNO in branding the PRC as an aggressor state in Korea in 1951 (Resurgent India, 2015) [13]. All these events help to boost the India-China relations during that time.

However, if we critically discuss bilateral relations during that time, it was not a static one. The Tibet issue challenged the relationship. *The Shimla Convention-1914* was acknowledged by India ensuring the suzerainty of China over Tibet constituting an autonomous unit of the People's Republic of China, but India was shocked when the Chinese army entered numbering 40000 troops into some areas of Tibet on October 1st, 1950. Consequently, from India's side, a letter was sent to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs explaining India failed to receive any intimation to the effect that PLA units have been ordered to advance in Tibet by using its ambassador in Peking or from the Chinese ambassador in India. However, two days later, the Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai in a reply, made it clear Tibet was an integral part of China and Tibet's is a domestic problem. However, Lhasa sent feelers to India if India was ready to sponsor the Tibetan appeal to the UN. Although India made it clear to Lhasa by replying that India would certainly support an appeal from Tibet, but not sponsor it. Later, India made it clear if other nations raised the Tibetan case India would support it. Although, later Nehru conveyed his statement on Tibet issue on December 6, 1950. He was interested in Tibet's autonomy but without challenging Chinese suzerainty over it. Nehru in his other parliamentary speech `cleared that he was aggrieved by the activities of China in Tibet but he did not want to be affected by that issue over India's friendly relations with China. Although from the Chinese side, Zhou Enlai assured that China in every way would intend the Indian interest in Tibet. China's soft approach to India was welcomed during that time (Resurgent India, 2015) [13]. Despite different points of view both countries try to maintain a friendly relationship with each other and India showed the Tibetan question a minor significance. India viewed Tibet would prove to be the limit of Chinese expansionist policy and China consequently, would adopt the peace policy (Seth, 1968) [15]. Sharma and Kumar (2019) [14] argued that the realization of Nehru's Asian unity, he always tried to remain in favor of China's appeasing.

However, the relations between India and China received positivity with the signing of the bilateral agreement on Tibet on 29 April 1954 in Peeking, officially with the name of '*Agreement on Trade and Intercourse Between Tibet Region of China and India'*, which ensured in promoting trade and cultural intercourse (MEA, Government of India, n. d). By signing the treaty, India relinquished its British inherited special cultural and commercial rights in Tibet that were provided by the Shimla Convention and recognized the Chinese claim on Tibet (Garver, 2017) [6]. The above treaty

incorporated the Panchsheel or five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, i.e., 1. Mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, 2. Mutual non-aggression, 3. Mutual non-interference, 4. Equality and mutual benefit, 5. Peaceful co-existence. In the post-colonial world where many nations were seeking an alternative ideology for the peace and development of all, the Panchsheel was developed in that context. *Hindi-Chini-Bhai-Bhai*, which was espoused by Nehru, became the slogan of Indo-China relations since that time. However, the basic tenets of Panchsheel were incorporated in a resolution on peaceful co-existence by India, Yugoslavia, and Sweden, and unanimously adopted by the UN on 11 December 1957. Later in 1961, the Belgrade Conference of Non-Aligned Nations accepted the Panchsheel as a core principle of the Non-Aligned Movement (MEA, Government of India, n. d).

The 'Honeymoon period' of the relations was interrupted by the Chinese diverging perceptions on the border issue. China rejected the McMahon Line as a boundary and hence sought to redefine the boundary through negotiations as there was no demarcation. China never recognized the McMahon line as a boundary between India and China, which was drawn by the British and imposed on then-local Tibetan authorities by the Shimla Convention in 1914. However, India was showing its stickiness with the McMahon as a border (Li, 2010) [10]. Nehru already declared that the McMahon Line was India's boundary, map or no map. India will not allow anybody to come across that boundary" (Seth, 1968) [15]. The Chinese border issues with India's Northeast and Northwest became the biggest obstacle. With the growing awareness of China's true intentions, India adopted a policy to stem the tide of expansionism at its second line of defense. Indian Government launched a '*Forward Policy*' after the Chinese violation of India's territorial integrity by constructing the road in the Aksai Chin Plain connecting Xinjiang and Tibet. Although China claimed that it was the Chinese territory. From the Chinese side, the Panchsheel agreement was not renewed. Another important issue of Indo-China relations arose with the political asylum of the Dalai Lama in India. Tibet started a massive revolt against Chinese authority, consequently, PLA moved to put down the rebellion in the capital of Lhasa by breaking the popular will. Later Dalai Lama fled from Tibet into India in 1959 (Abitol, 2009) [1]. Nehru at a time declared from military and other point of view, the situation had been challenging and needed to take action to recover India's territory in 1961. The Chinese forces from the Northeast Frontier area launched an offensive attack (Seth, 1968) [15].

Criticization of Nehru's China Policy

However, as a Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru made many controversial and debatable foreign. Even after his death, more than half a century, scholarly debate continued about the meaning and significance of his initiatives in foreign policy. Kennedy argued, that there are two variants of scholars, some scholars argued Jawaharlal Nehru was a bold idealist crusader, who ignored frequently the national interest of the country. In reverse, some scholars argued that Nehru was a subtle practitioner of real political statecraft. However, Kennedy in his paper argued Nehru followed both an idealist and a realist foreign policy and must be remembered in these perspectives (Kennedy, 2015) [9]. However, concerning Nehru's China policy, several scholars criticized it from different points of view. It has been described that Nehru's China policy was a total failure and it was one-sided with little reciprocity. Bhasin argued that Nehru had mishandled India's China policy. Despite the negative signal from China, Nehru remained in the belief of the bhai-bhai relationship hiding the contradictions from the people. China showed the flexibility to resolve the border issues if India relinquished its demand over Aksai Chin but it was Nehru who remained rigid and rejected the Chinese compromise flexible policy. Consequently, in his book *Nehru Tibet and China* Avatar Singh Bhasin argued that India is still paying the price of Nehru's rigid decision (Bhasin, 2021) [3]. The opposition political party, more importantly from his political party also criticized Nehru's China policy. President Radha Krishnan publicly chided the government for its 'credulity and negligence' (Raghavan, 2014) [12]. Nehru believed China would not resort to armed forces against India and if China did, it would be locally very limited. His policy was to be firm with China. However, Nehru expressed his views in the Indian Parliament that the Indo-China border issue and the bilateral relations came at a time when India had prestige. In April 1960 Nehru rejected the Chinese offer to settle the boundary issues on reasonable terms during the famous summit between Nehru and Zhou Enlai (Singh, 2022) [16]. Neglecting the compromise policy with China, Nehru used its hardline policy despite its military weakness. The combination of hardline policy and military weakness lead to the biggest defeat in the war with China. Garver argued accepting the Chinese compromise McMahon borderline policy would be a better solution during that time. India's unprepared military forces were not ready for the Chinese offensive war in the eastern sector (Arunachal Pradesh), especially the Tawang sector near Bhutan China Arunachal Pradesh tri-juncture (Gerver, 2017). India's 'Forward Policy' perhaps was a big mistake. One of the important questions arose as to why Nehru adopted the forward policy being acutely aware of India's military weakness in 1961. Singh argued that Nehru believed the international environment favored India in its dispute with China. Nehru had a growing confidence that India's relations with the US and USSR were developing while China's relations with the superpowers were deteriorating during that time. It would be India's more positivity than China. Nehru also believed that China would not go for such a war because it would be a major risk for China as the USSR would not support it. It would moderate China's behavior. Although, in February 1960, Nehru suggested an informal Soviet role in reducing the India-China differences. But Khrushchev advised to India solve their problem bilaterally rejecting the Soviet's mediatory role. He said, "We would not like our relations with either of our two friends to cool off." (Singh, 2022) [16]. Nehru interpreted Chinese silence over the McMahon Line as its acceptance, he could not imagine a direct territorial conflict with China. The intelligence report of Chinese roadbuilding in the Western sector-Ladakh, Nehru did not much attention to and ignored it. Although, it had no formal claim until 1954; after publishing a map showing a big territory of India as being within China in the 'China Pictorial magazine', Nehru came to know the real Chinese intention (Chanda, 2023) [4]. However, in the post-independent era, Seth argued that it was not Communist China but India that offered the hand of friendship (Seth, 1968) [15]. Then India's Home Minister Sardar Patel warned

Nehru about the Chinese intention and he said; "while we regard the Chinese as friends, they do not regard us their friends." Patel also cleared his view about the Chinese intention of Tibet as it was not a settled issue, consequently China at a time could put India into a perilous position in Tibet. Patel also advised Nehru about India's army modernization and India's defense need to concentrate itself on the two fronts simultaneously. The Patel views were supported by then many politicians as well. However, Nehru provided his different views and rejected Patel's warning about Chinese intention and India's army modernization proposal and tried to keep the bhai-bhai relationship with China (Sharma and Kumar, 2019) [14].

Conclusion

In the conclusion part, it could be said the Indo-China relation was not a smooth one. The relationship witnessed an ups and downs trajectory from 1947 to 1962. Nehru followed the mixed form of idealist and realist foreign policy and on the other China followed the hard realist foreign policy which led to India's defeat in the Indo-China war of 1962. Nehru's soft foreign policy approach towards China was a big mistake and he mishandled India's China policy. Although, Nehru's global image and non-alignment policy were very strategic in the international arenas during that particular period.

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