

**Theme 5**  
**: India-China Relations, 1950s-1962**



## Phases in India-China Relations

- **PHASE I : Cooperation (episodic)**
- **PHASE II: Boundary Issues (1957-1960)**
- **PHASE III: Conflict (1960-62)**
- **PHASE IV: Consequences**



## Phase I: Episodic Cooperation

- **World War II:** Medical Assistance
- **1949:** Recognition of PRC
- **1950:** Korean War Diplomacy + Refugee repatriation
- **1954:** Recognition of Tibet as part of China
- **1970s:** Support for replacing Taiwan with PRC as the permanent member of UNSC.
- **1980s + 1990s:** Economic Partnership

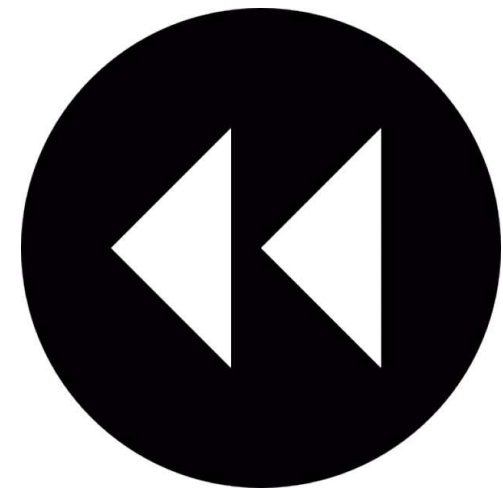


**1947 ; 1949**



1954

- **Panchsheel Agreement**
  - Mutual respect for territorial integrity
  - Mutual non-aggression
  - Mutual non-interference
  - Equality & mutual benefit
  - Peaceful co-existence



## **Phase II: Complications**

### **Cartographic 'Wars'**

**1950-1959**



## Where is the border between India & China?

### Who decided where the border was?

- **First to delineate borders:** British explorers & diplomats working in India, China.
- **1865-1911:** British attempt to discuss & decide India-China border mainly:
  - To keep Russia out from northern Indian 'boundary'.
  - To maintain Tibet as a **buffer zone**.
  - Allow China to disallow Russia from interfering closer to Indian territories.
- **Result:** Unsuccessful ; China is unresponsive.
- **Status of Aksai Chin: "Undefined"**
- **1914:** Delegates from Tibet, British India, China agree to a border in the East at **Simla Conference**.
- **Eastern Border: "McMahon Line"**
- **China later rejects McMahon Line's validity**

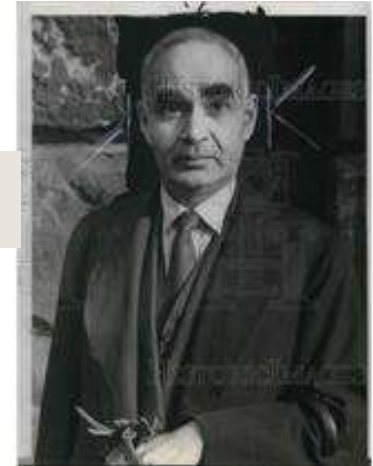


Lt Col Sir Vincent  
Arthur Henry  
McMahon

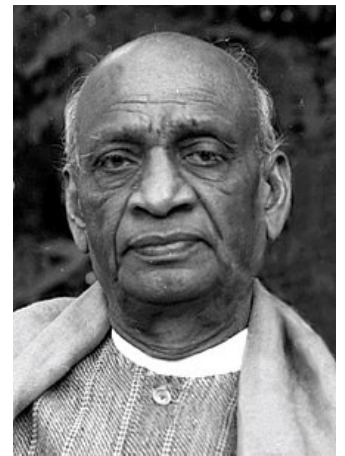
## Triggers for concern

- **1938-1944:** Consistent Chinese refusal to recognise McMahon Line.
  - Political Instability in China
  - Tibet not a 'country'
  - 'Colonialism'
- **1949:** Proclamation of PRC ; intention to redraw borders ; **IRREDENTISM**
- **1950-1954:** Invasion & Annexation of Tibet by PRC.
- **Patel + Menon + Bajpai** alert Nehru on PRC's intentions to expand and redraw borders from 1950s onwards.
- **1951 onwards:** UP govt. writing to Delhi to take steps to preclude Chinese incursions.
- **Himmatsinhji Committee 1951:** Recommends upgradation of infrastructure along the border.

**Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai:** MEA



**KPS Menon (Sr):**  
Foreign Secretary



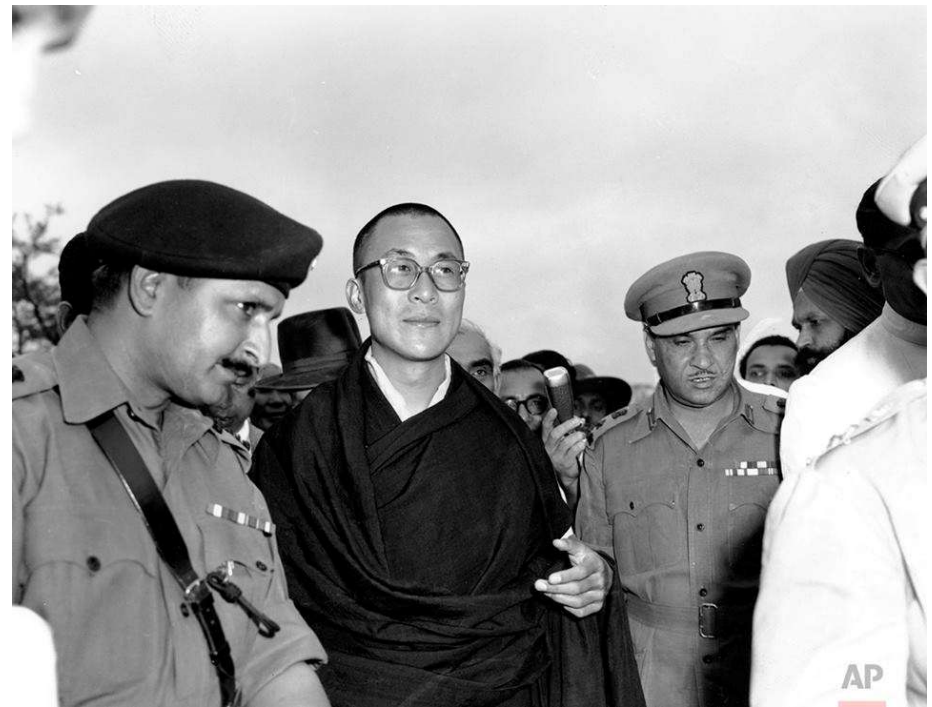


## Triggers for concern

- **1957:** Evidence of Chinese road building in Sinkiang discovered
- **1958:** Publication of Chinese maps showing Ladakh ; NEFA as Chinese territory.
- Diplomatic protests by India ; Nehru starts writing to Chinese PM.
- **1958-59:** Chinese approach on the border is not clearly decipherable. Dithering.
- **September 1959:** GOI presents a **White Paper** on Indo-Chinese Negotiations in the Parliament. Opposition alarmed.

## 1959: Tibet Uprising

- **1958-59:** Khampa Rebellion against Chinese troops.
- **1959:** Dalai Lama flees Tibet via Tawang ; arrives at Tezpur, Assam.
- Granted asylum by GOI in 1959
- China 'resentful' of the official reception given to Dalai Lama by India.
- **1959 onwards:** China hardens its stand on border issue.
- **2 way split of Indo-Chinese conflict after 1959:** 'Tibet' & the 'Border'



## Setting the stage for Conflict

- **22 September 1959:** Chou En-lai formally writes to Nehru:
  - Does not recognise Mc Mahon Line: “Imperialist imposition”
  - Calls for a fresh settlement
  - Accuses India of shielding ‘Tibetan bandits’.
- **1959-1960:** Beginning of border clashes in Ladakh , NEFA
  - **Longju Incident**, August 1959
  - **Kongka Pass Incident**, Oct 1959, Ladakh: 9 Indian soldiers killed.
- USSR informed of border clashes by China ; remains **neutral**.
- New Delhi starts military review of its border policy

## Nehru-Chou En-lai Summit, 1960: New Delhi

- **1959 onwards:** China offers an exchange.
  - Recognition of India's eastern sector in return for China's control over the West
  - Rejected by India.
- **April 1960, Nehru-Chou Summit: Unsuccessful.**

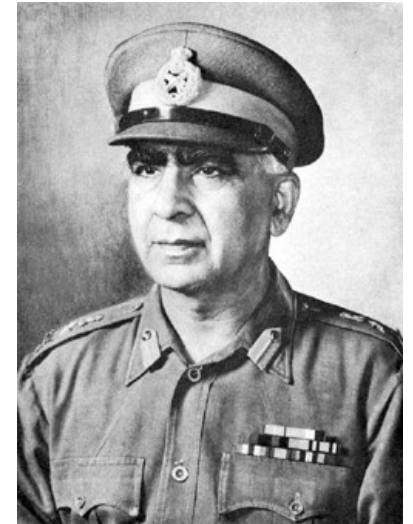
China Publishes maps showing Aksai Chin as part of their territory.
- **India reviews Forward Policy' :**

Aggressive patrolling of the Frontier regions: Frequent border clashes



## India in 1961-62

- **1960:** Establishment of BRO
- **1961:** Thimayya retires ; Gen PN **Thapar** is new Army Chief ; Gen **Kaul** is Chief of Staff.
- Army's **4<sup>th</sup> Division** from Punjab posted to NEFA (upto 30,000 troops)
- **NEFA:** largely under **Assam Rifles** ; **Ladakh:** Modest Army presence, controlled by **IB**
- **Military Strategy:** Severely Unclear ; Logistical shortage ; Civil-Military Relations = Tardy.

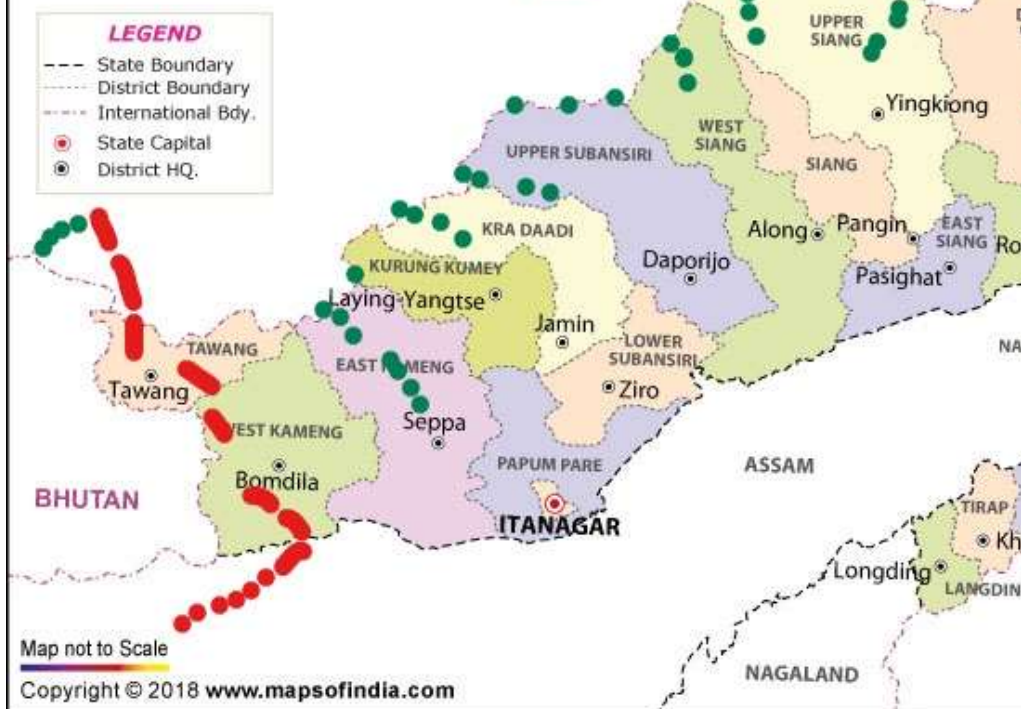


## Countdown to War

- **16 Oct:** Increased Chinese Attacks ; 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade requests (**via Kaul**) to be withdrawn from its position: **Rejected**
- **18 Oct 1962: China:** Central Military Committee approves attack plan for the Chinese Army.
- **20<sup>th</sup> Oct 1962:** Chinese troops begin full scale attacks on Indian positions : Ladakh & NEFA.



## ARUNACHAL PRADESH DISTRICTS



## Chinese Thrust into NEFA

**TAWANG (25 Oct)**

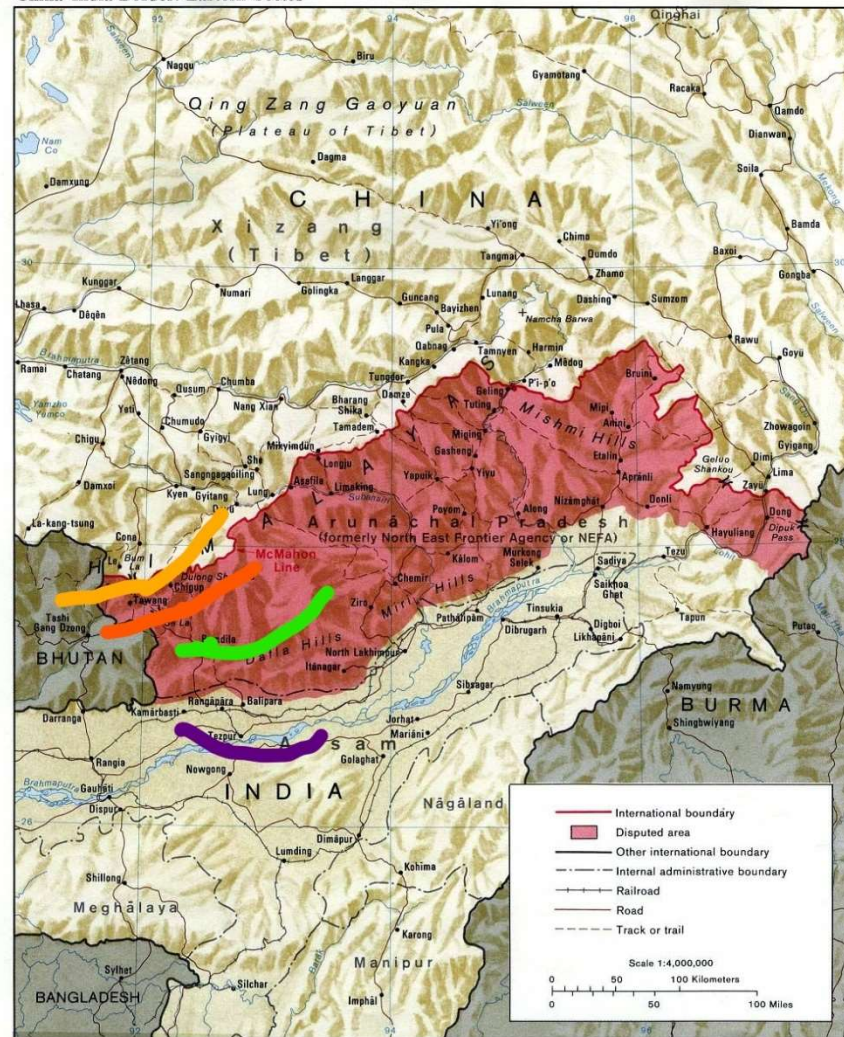
**Se La (14 Nov)**

**Bomdila (20 Nov)**

**Tezpur**

**Chinese 3 point proposal: India rejects it**

## China-India Border: Eastern Sector

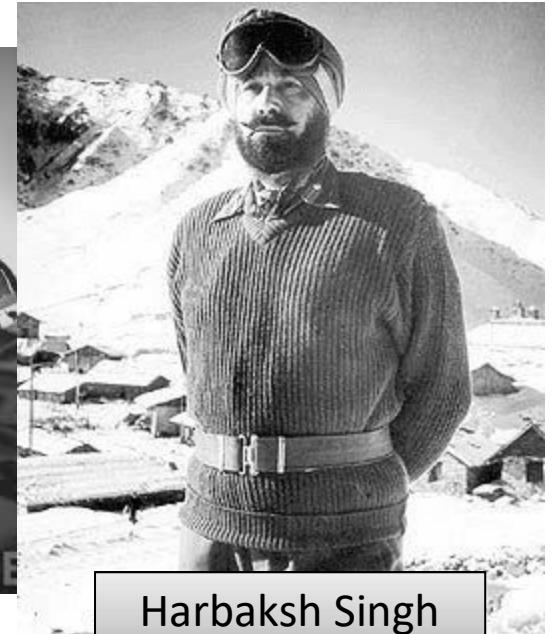


## Military failures

- **18<sup>th</sup> October:** Gen Kaul calls in sick
- **18-24<sup>th</sup> Oct:** NEFA sector leaderless  
(Tawang Occupied on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct by China)
- Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh appointed in Kaul's place.
- **25-27 Oct:** Kaul reinstated.
- Accelerated failure of command and operations.
- **Role of the IAF?**



Kaul



Harbaksh Singh



Nehru writes to Kennedy

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of State

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Return

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Action

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Rec'd: November 19, 1962

Info

FROM: New Delhi

4:47 p.m.

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 1891, November 19, 8 p.m.

EYES ONLY

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NIACT

EYES ONLY PRESIDENT, SECRETARY AND SECDEF

FILE

Verbatim Text

Following is text of message dated today from Prime Minister to President, to be delivered by B. K. Nehru. Copy handed me this evening by M.J. Desai.

Begin Text.

Dear Mister President,

It is now a month since the Chinese massive attack on India started on 20 October. I think I must write to you again to acquaint you with further developments that have occurred since my letter of 29 October. Before I deal with these further developments, however, I would like to say that we are extremely grateful to you and the Government and people of the USA for the practical support given to us. We particularly appreciate the speed with which the urgently needed small arms and ammunition were rushed to India.

There was a deceptive lull after the first Chinese offensive during which the Chinese mounted a serious propaganda offensive in the name three-point proposals which, shorn of their wrappings, actually constituted a demand for surrender on their terms. The Chinese tried, despite our rejection of these proposals, to get various Afro-Asian countries to intercede with varying offers of mediation.

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

NK-91-54 Appeal

By NARA, Date 11/3/94

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## Nehru's Dilemma



11/19/62 ✓  
EMBASSY OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

19th November 1962

My dear Mr. President,

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from the Prime Minister of India which has been received by this Embassy telegraphically.

With my high regard and esteem,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'B.K.' followed by a stylized surname.

(B.K. NEHRU)  
Ambassador of India

The President,  
The White House,  
WASHINGTON D.C.

11/14/62 3a

NEW DELHI  
19th November 1962

Dear Mr. President,

Within a few hours of despatching my earlier message of today, the situation in the N.E.F.A. Command has deteriorated still further. Bomdila has fallen and the retreating forces from Sela have been trapped between the Sela Ridge and Bomdila. A serious threat has developed to our Digboi oil fields in Assam. With the advance of the Chinese in massive strength, the entire Brahmaputra Valley is seriously threatened and unless something is done immediately to stem the tide the whole of Assam, Tripura, Manipur and Nagaland would also pass into Chinese hands.

2. The Chinese have poised massive forces in the Chumbi Valley between Sikkim and Bhutan and another invasion from that direction appears imminent. Our areas further North West on the border with Tibet in the States of U.P., Punjab and Himachal Pradesh are also threatened. In Ladakh, as I have said in my earlier communication, Chushul is under heavy attack and shelling of the airfield at Chushul has already commenced. We have also noticed increasing air activity by the Chinese air force in Tibet.

3. Hitherto we have restricted our requests for assistance to essential equipment and we are most grateful for the assistance which has been so readily given to us. We did not ask for more comprehensive assistance particularly air assistance because of the wider implications of such assistance in the global context and we did not want to embarrass our friends.

4. The situation that has developed is, however, really desperate. We have to have more comprehensive assistance if the Chinese are to be prevented from taking over the whole of Eastern India. Any delay in this assistance reaching us will result in nothing short of a catastrophe for our country.

.... 2

Orig 77Ms. Lwiner 11/20  
cc S/S. Kagan & Komer





5. We have repeatedly felt the need of using air arm in support of our land forces, but have been unable to do so as in the present state of our air and radar equipment we have no defence against retaliatory action by the Chinese.

6. I, therefore, request that immediately support be given to strengthen our air arm sufficiently to stem the tide of Chinese advance.

7. I am advised that for providing adequate air defence a minimum of 12 squadrons of supersonic allweather fighters are essential. We have no modern radar cover in the country. For this also we seek your assistance. Our needs are most immediate. The United States Air Force personnel will have to man these fighters and radar installations while our personnel are being trained. U.S. fighters and transport planes manned by U.S. personnel will be used for the present to protect our cities and installations from Chinese air attacks and to maintain our communications. We should if this is possible also like U.S. planes manned by U.S. personnel to assist the Indian Air Force in air battles with the Chinese air force over Indian areas where air action by the I.A.F. against Chinese communication lines supplies and troop concentration may lead to counter air action by the Chinese.

8. Any air action to be taken against the Chinese beyond the limits of our country, e.g. in Tibet, will be taken by I.A.F. planes manned by Indian personnel.

9. Determined as we are to liberate all parts of our territory which may pass into the hands of the Chinese aggressors it is clear that sooner or later we would have to neutralise their bases and airfields by striking from the air. For this purpose I request you to consider assisting us with two Squadrons of Bombers of B-47 type. To man this indispensable arm we would like to send immediately our Pilots and Technicians for training in the United States.



10. The Chinese threat as it has developed involves not merely the survival of India, but the survival of free and independent Governments in the whole of this sub-Continent or in Asia. The domestic quarrels regarding small areas or territorial borders between the countries in this sub-Continent or in Asia have no relevance whatever in the context of the developing Chinese invasion. I would emphasise particularly that all the assistance or equipment given to us to meet our dire need will be used entirely for resistance against the Chinese. I have made this clear in a letter I sent to President Ayub Khan of Pakistan. I am asking our Ambassador to give you a copy of this letter.

11. We are confident that your great country will in this hour of our trial help us in our fight for survival and for the survival of freedom and independence in this sub-Continent as well as the rest of Asia. We on our part are determined to spare no effort until the threat posed by Chinese expansionist and aggressive militarism to freedom and independence is completely eliminated.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

The President,  
The White House,  
WASHINGTON D.C.

## Consequences

- Krishna Menon: Sacked on 31 Oct 1962
- Gen PN Thapar: Resigns, 19 Nov 1962
- Gen JN Chaudhuri appointed next Chief.
- Increased development of the northeast
- **Military reorganisation: Paramilitary forces set up.**
- **Pakistan: Begins boundary discussions with China in 1962-63**
- Increasing unrest in Kashmir fomented by Pakistan : 1965 Conflict



## India had 2 choices on the eve of 20<sup>th</sup> Oct 1962

- Solve the dispute diplomatically: Not possible after April 1960 India-China Summit in New Delhi.

Or

- Solve the dispute militarily:
  - Be aggressive on the border: “Forward Policy”
  - Invest in border infrastructure
  - **Strategise for a future stand-off**
  - Keep Civil-Military nexus robust

## Whither Non-alignment?

*Nehru's letters to Kennedy*

*Is Alliance building essential for security?*

*Why do countries act in particular ways?  
What is the role of political ideology?*

*How can other countries restrict their  
actions?*