



Introduction

When the U.S. dropped the first atomic bomb in 1945, signaling the birth of the Atomic Age, it transformed global politics. Once again, it changed in 1953 when the USSR tested its first thermonuclear weapon, motivating the experts behind the 'Doomsday Clock,' a symbolic measure of how close humanity was to global catastrophe, to move it a minute closer to midnight. The U.S. was no longer the only nation with nuclear weapons, meaning global leaders now had to navigate the politics of deterrence via "mutually assured destruction," and the security dilemma, or the downward spiral of nuclear armament. This emerged a new challenge for superpowers and non-superpowers alike—how do we shape global politics without contributing to the end of the world? How can we continue to wage a war of ideologies between capitalism and communism (and occasionally, the divisions within them) without resorting to nuclear war?



Source: Frank Miller (*Des Moines Register*), 1962¹

For non-superpowers, this generally meant one of two strategies: (1) bandwagoning onto a side or (2) joining India and Yugoslavia in a non-aligned movement. This also meant investing in new tactics to propel national agendas and foreign policy for superpowers and non-superpowers alike. For the U.S. in 1961, this looked like committing billions towards Latin America via the anti-communist Alliance for Progress, founding the Peace Corps program, and continuing multilateral trade negotiations in the Dillon Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), among other strategies.

Delegates of this body will be challenged to adapt to the volatility of political brinkmanship, among other global transformations, in order to advocate for the interests, values, and priorities

¹https://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/islandora/object/ui%3Atestingmiller2_93



of their country. They will be occupied by a set of general objectives to (1) promote peaceful coexistence or, at a minimum, help prevent the end of the world as we know it, (2) advocate for certain values and ideologies on the world stage (whether that be capitalist or communist, or something else), and (3) practicing new tactics of Cold War politics to accomplish these two items.

State of the World: October 15th, 1962

Each passing year recently has brought with it a list of newly independent countries, the majority based in Africa and former colonies, such as Algeria which became independent from France back in March. There is a growing number of seats represented at the table of global discussions—echoing additional voices and accounting for more interests—but this movement has not come without new issues. Civil conflict may erupt from power vacuums created in transitions of decolonization, and newly independent nations may be volatile sites of conflict, as has been seen with the crisis in Congo. Divisions in developing countries have become an opportune breeding ground for intensifying factionalism, weaponized in the battle of influences between communism and capitalism, escalated by proxy warfare, external intervention, and foreign aid. For this reason, Southeast Asia in particular has become an international battleground for—as well as against—communism.

Indeed, conflicts between communist and anti-communist groups have broken out across Indochina. In South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem's anti-communist regime struggles to keep the ever-increasing numbers of Viet Cong at bay. Tensions remain high in the highly fragmented and impoverished state of Laos where the communist Pathet Lao competes for power with the US-backed Royal Lao Army, even following the state's commitment to neutrality earlier this year. Korea has remained divided and has actually seen a recent escalation of tensions following the seizure of power by military dictator Park Chung Hee in South Korea last year, soon responded to by increased militarization from North Korea. The battle for or against communism is also being waged in other regions of the world, for instance, in the German city of Berlin where a wall was constructed last year—quite literally dividing the city by political lines—or in Cuba where communist leader Fidel Castro has remained in power for several years, despite attempts to overthrow his regime.

The U.S. is increasingly uneasy about Soviet ties to Cuba and the possibility of its nuclear armament, especially since a Cuban nuclear base would be within reach of attacking American soil. On the other hand, in light of the Sino-Soviet split, the USSR is all the more pressured to create and maintain allies such as Cuba. Meanwhile, India continues to spearhead a movement of non-alignment, trying to avoid escalating tensions between superpowers as well as avoid alienating potential allies. Skirmishes at the border of China and India threaten to bloom into a



full-blown war, currently stalemated with the “armed coexistence” of outposts across the disputed territory. These issues, the solutions delegates develop, and the decisions they make in these defining moments—minutes to the brink of disaster according to the Doomsday Clock—will shape how the rest of 1962 will unfold and will pave the future of the Atomic Age.

Country Brief

Last year, John F. Kennedy made history when he was sworn in as the youngest ever and first Catholic president of the United States of America. In many ways, President Kennedy represents a new momentum for progress and not just for the U.S.—although this has in part been marred by a series of missteps on the global stage in his early presidency. Despite several attempts to prevent it, Castro has come to power in Cuba. Last year the attempted Bay of Pigs Invasion failed and earlier this year the U.S. embargoed Cuba for the second time. So far, the outcomes of Project Cuba, involving a multitude of costly attempts to save the country from communism, have been sorely disappointing. From March to October, presidential approval dropped from 80 to 62%.²

Figures 2-4. The Kennedys on *Life* Magazine Covers³



Source: *Vintage Life Magazine*, 1960; 1961; 1962

Nevertheless, the U.S. remains steadfast in its commitment to promoting democracy and capitalism across the globe. Last year, the U.S. spearheaded the formation of the Alliance for Progress in Latin America and the Peace Corps which operate predominating in the Third World.

²<https://historyinpieces.com/research/jfks-presidential-approval-ratings>

³<https://www.life.com/history/jfk-covers-life/>



The U.S. is the first line of defense in protecting liberal values, especially as the Cold War progresses and tensions with the Soviet Union meet a critical juncture.

This is all the more relevant in light of the movement of decolonization, where more newly independent nations are experiencing vacuums of power that if we are not careful, may eventually become 'Captive Nations' to the communist threat. In this regard, the U.S. plays a central role in promoting JFK's "freedom doctrine" to safeguard and support potential capitalist allies. These political challenges in mind, the Cabinet is challenged to both redirect the tide in the battle against communism as well as manage the escalating nuclear threat, all while upholding the commitments made during the presidential election to appease his progressive base of supporters.

President John F. Kennedy in a Message to Congress (1961):⁴ "These are extraordinary times. And we face an extraordinary challenge. Our strength as well as our convictions have imposed upon this nation the role of leader in freedom's cause... I am here to promote the freedom doctrine. The great battleground for the defense and expansion of freedom today is the whole southern half of the globe—Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East—the lands of the rising peoples. Their revolution is the greatest in human history."

Topic A - Fulfilling the Promises of the 'New Frontier'

The country is amidst several major social movements, including the Civil Rights Movement and the second wave of feminism. Black Americans are utilizing protest and civil disobedience to fight for the end of racial segregation and discrimination, for instance during the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955, the Freedom Riders campaign in 1961, and the University of Chicago sit-ins earlier this year. The work of feminist activists has also gained momentum, and discussions around passing an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and legislation regarding gender equality in the workforce have increasingly gained attention in politics.

Both of these movements, moreover, have entailed political tactics for change, especially when Congress alone cannot be trusted to take action. For instance, fights against segregation have taken place in court with landmark cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education* unraveling the legal basis of Jim Crow Laws. Anti-discrimination has also been directly implemented at the Executive level, such as through Executive Order 10925 signed by President JFK on March 6th,

⁴<https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/united-states-congress-special-message-19610525>



1961 to establish affirmative action and prohibit employment discrimination by “race, creed, color, or national origin.”⁵ Likewise, the formation of the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW)—tasked to create recommendations and insights for the advancement of American women—was created Executive Order 10980 on December 14, 1961.⁶ As both of these examples demonstrate, the President and the Cabinet have a powerful role in paving the country’s future—although disagreements and divisions around the extent of needed change and the appropriateness of government intervention may vary.

JFK’s “New Frontier” platform is centered around technological innovation and American-style liberty. The President has drawn lots of attention with the promise of finally pushing the U.S. ahead in the space race by sending the first man to the moon by the end of the decade. His administration is tasked with navigating a complex landscape of domestic politics, pursuing these hugely ambitious goals, along with meeting societal demands for improvement during economic recovery. President JFK must manage the domestic politics of increasing grassroots calls to action in support of civil rights and women’s rights and will have to consider, for instance, the eventual recommendations of the PCSW.

Topic B - Winning the Battle of Influences between Communism and Capitalism.

Since Fidel Castro came to power in the 1959 Cuban Revolution, the island, a mere ninety miles from the United States, has been at the center of geopolitical tension. Cuba has declared itself a socialist state and has looked to the Soviet Union for aid both economically, and in terms of defending itself against American intervention. Attempts at retaking Cuba, which was long considered an extension of the United States by American leaders, have been unsuccessful.

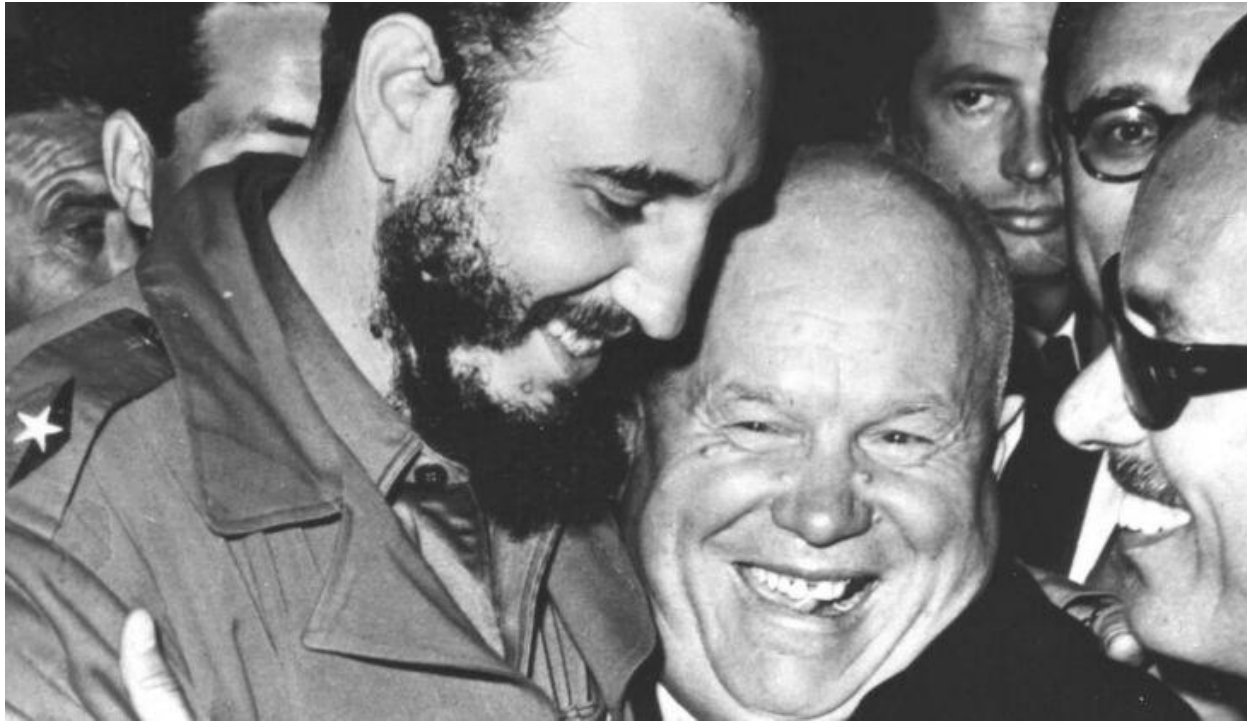
Most notably, in 1961, the Bay of Pigs Invasion saw U.S.-supported guerillas land on the island, and fail completely in their mission to overthrow Castro’s government. Though the invasion was unsuccessful, it has re-emphasized the need for Cuba to defend itself and also re-emphasized the question of how the Soviet Union (or perhaps even China), might be able to help the island remain independent. From the communists’ side, Cuba is an ally geographically near to the U.S. that should be no more of an issue than American allies such as Turkey that are close to the USSR.

Figure 5. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev embraces Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro in the United Nations General Assembly on Sept. 20, 1960⁷

⁵<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ofccp/about/executive-order-11246-history>

⁶<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/executive-order-10980-establishing-the-presidents-commission-the-status-women>

⁷<https://www.deseret.com/2014/2/26/20536196/this-week-in-history-khrushchev-denounces-stalin-in-secret-speech>



Source: Marty Lederhandler (AP), 1960

The last few years have seen several direct incidents between the Soviet Union and the United States. In 1960, an American U-2 Spy Plane was shot down while flying over the Soviet Union, and its pilot was arrested. The fallout of this incident led to a major summit between the superpowers being canceled, a summit at which they would have discussed the problem of divided Germany and Berlin. This problem would be brought to the forefront in 1961, when Nikita Khrushchev ordered the construction of a wall around the Western-controlled section of Berlin, physically separating the city to match its political division between East and West.⁸

The true danger of these conflicts is not just conventional warfare, but the nuclear arms that are aimed between the superpowers. While the United States maintains missile bases in Europe and Turkey, the Soviet Union has no such nuclear capabilities that are as close to the United States. In part, this is what has made Cuba such an attractive geostrategic ally. Regardless, the two superpowers have nearly 30,000 warheads combined,⁹ and the principle of Mutually Assured Destruction is sometimes seen as the only thing keeping the two superpowers from annihilating each other, and perhaps the world as a whole.

President John F. Kennedy in an Address Before the General Assembly

⁸<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/berlin-crises>

⁹<https://www.statista.com/chart/16305/stockpiled-nuclear-warhead-count/>



(1961):¹⁰ “For in the development of this organization [the United Nations] rests the only true alternative to war—and war appeals no longer as a rational alternative. Unconditional war can no longer lead to unconditional victory. It can no longer serve to settle disputes. It can no longer concern the great powers alone. For a nuclear disaster, spread by wind and water and fear, could well engulf the great and the small, the rich and the poor, the committed and the uncommitted alike. Mankind must put an end to war—or war will put an end to mankind.”

Premier Nikita Khrushchev in an Interview Given to I. McDonald (1958):¹¹ “Doctors at first treat a man emaciated by a grave illness gradually and prescribe food for him in small doses. If more were given to the patient, it might kill him. And so we want to begin disarmament not with a full dose, although we are prepared even for a full dose. I have said already that the Western Powers have shown great distrust of us and we, too, do not trust them in everything. And so, in order not to wreck something of great and vital importance to mankind—disarmament—we suggest beginning not with a cardinal but with a gradual solution of disarmament problems, beginning with what offers hope, inspires confidence. Thus, step by step, gradually, it would be possible to reach the main goal, that is, the full solution of the disarmament problem.”

The conflict between the superpowers has been more than a contest in armament but also one in advancement and innovation. The Soviet Union began the Space Race in 1957 when Sputnik became the first manmade object to orbit the Earth. Since then, the Soviet Union has remained dominant, achieving the first animal in orbit, the first images of the moon’s far side, and in 1961, the first man in space and to orbit the Earth, Yuri Gagarin. While the Soviet Union has many impressive firsts, the United States has embarked on its own space program, and whatever lead the Soviets might possess, the Americans have stayed close on their heels. Regardless of what the future of space exploration might be, it has clearly become yet another realm in which the world’s superpowers seek to show their might.

While the Soviet Union and the United States each dominate a sphere of influence and compete on the world stage, not every country neatly aligns with one of the superpowers. Within the socialist camp, the People’s Republic of China has broken with the Soviet Union, and Mao Zedong is leading the country towards its own brand of socialism. Meanwhile, to the Southwest

¹⁰<https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/united-nations-19610925>

¹¹<https://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1959/for-victory-in-peaceful-competition-with-capitalism.pdf>



of China, India also seeks to chart its own path. India is one of the foremost members of the Non-Aligned Movement and explicitly seeks to create its own path between the superpowers. India and China represent two sides of the same coin: India is a mixed economy, while China is staunchly communist. Each currently remains aloof from the influence the superpowers wish to exert on them. These two powers, which are themselves rivals, represent the fact that the superpowers' control over the international community is not absolute, and there are some very large parts of the world that remain wholly or partially outside of their conflict.

Aside from the powerful nations of the world, there are also the ongoing and unprecedented events of decolonization. For the first time in world history, each year sees new nations joining the international community. While postwar plans by the imperial powers of Europe often involved a period of nation-building before full independence, the reality of decolonization has been messy, unplanned, and largely driven not by European statesmen, but by the nationalist aspirations of colonized peoples. However, just as these countries are breaking free of the shackles of colonialism, many are being drawn into the conflict of the Cold War.

The non-aligned movement represents the aspirations of some nations to avoid joining the Eastern or Western blocs. Despite these aspirations, civil wars have divided several recently decolonized nations into communist and capitalist factions, and the superpowers each seek to draw newly independent nations into their orbits. Finally, there is the influence of the People's Republic of China. Though the PRC has voiced support for decolonial movements, and specifically for communist-aligned movements, the Sino-Soviet split has created a third power that also seeks to spread its ideology on the world stage. Even once a nation falls into the communist sphere, it is important to know whether its leaders will look to Moscow or Beijing for guidance.

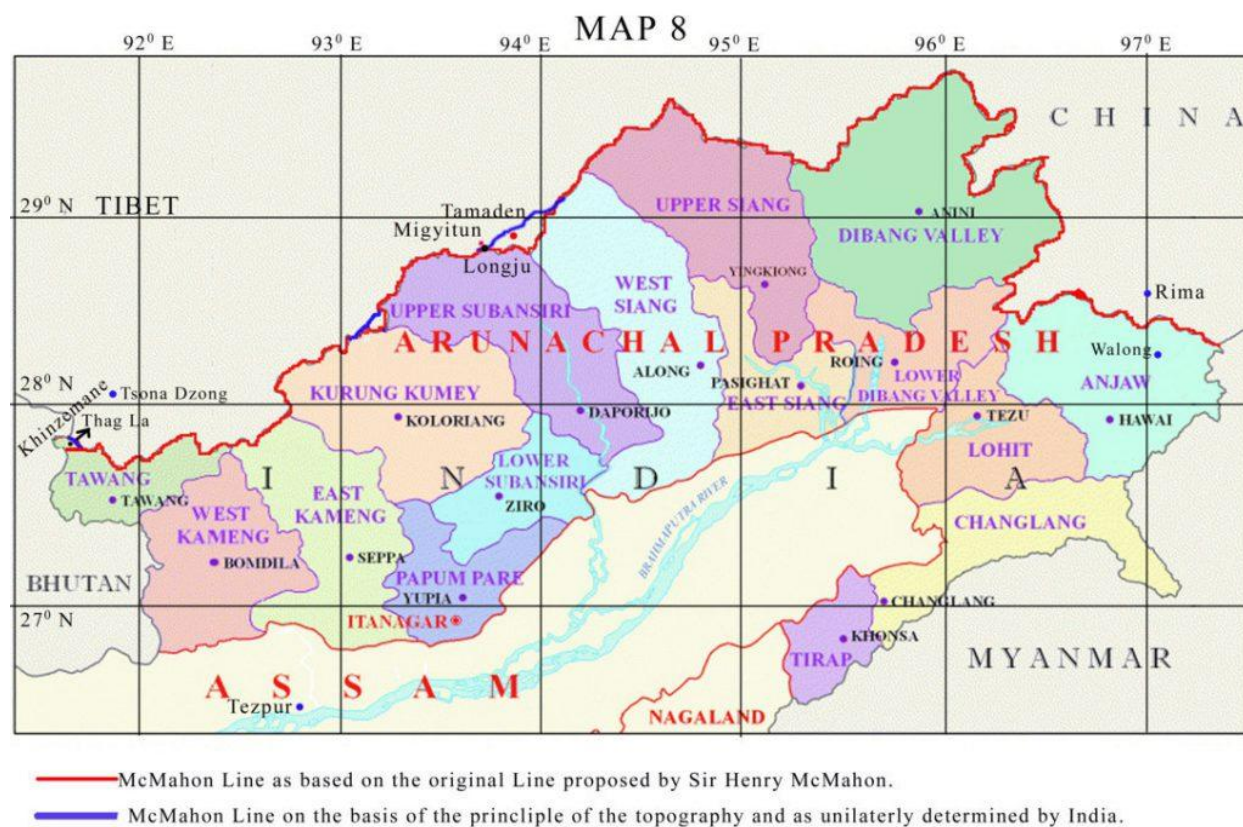
Topic C - Managing Tensions at the Sino-Indian Border.

Tensions between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India have been simmering and could boil over soon over their shared border along the Himalayas. The recent escalation in violence is rooted in the deep history of the land border these two states share. India and China recognize two different borders which date all the way back to the early 1900s when India was still under British rule. The desire of both nations to maintain territorial lines, avoiding increased scale of conflict, and, if possible, still promote a pan-Asian alliance on the global stage has meant an uncertain future.

The McMahon Line is the border between India and Tibet that was decided in 1914 at the Shimla Conference. While Chinese delegates were present for the conference, they did not sign the final agreement based on their objection to Tibet's ability to sign any agreement on their own. At the time Tibet was functioning as an autonomous region of China and despite Chinese protest, was

declaring itself independent.¹² China continues to maintain its position on the border to this day and goes further in claiming that Chinese territory extends beyond the McMahon Line, protruding into territory that India recognizes as its own.¹³ While the McMahon Line is more or less a division of the Himalayas across geographical boundaries, it was drawn in 1914 when the area was more difficult to explore than it is now. The Indian government has claimed some area on the Chinese side of the McMahon Line as their own, citing insufficient mapping of the area at the time it was drawn (see Fig. 1), adding yet another layer to the complexity inherent in the border dispute.¹⁴ This border is understandably a source of tension, but it was not always a conflict zone.

Figure 6. The McMahon Line and Additional Indian Claims¹⁵



Source: BYJU, 2023

In 1954, India and the People's Republic of China signed the Panchsheel Agreement, an attempt from both sides to define what terms for a mutually beneficial future would be. Both delegations

¹²<https://freetibet.org/freedom-for-tibet/history-of-tibet/tibets-history-timelines/>

¹³<https://www.britannica.com/event/McMahon-Line>

¹⁴<https://theprint.in/defence/how-brutal-chinese-assault-across-namka-chu-drove-indian-forces-back-as-1962-war-broke-out/1176634/#>

¹⁵<https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/this-day-in-history-sept08/>



were hoping it could be a framework for a third way, with Indian Prime Minister Nehru going as far as to say he was hoping it could be a foundation for peace and security throughout the world.¹⁶ Unfortunately, the Panchsheel Agreement failed to bring about lasting friendly relations between India and China, and bilateral talks continued over the border until the most recent incident this year. The Panchsheel Agreement did lower the temperature on the border briefly though, with the end of that era punctuated by the Kongka Pass incident.¹⁷

The Kongka Pass incident on October 21st, 1959 heightened the tensions along the Sino-Indian border significantly. During this incident, an Indian patrol near the McMahon Line went missing, captured by Chinese soldiers who claimed they had crossed the border at Kongka Pass. Both states claim their forces were only patrolling their own territory.¹⁸ Indian policemen formed a search party to find the missing patrol which encountered Chinese forces and engaged them in a firefight which led to the death of ten Indian policemen and one Chinese soldier.¹⁹ This outbreak of violence helped establish what would become the status quo in the region, with both sides establishing outposts along the border.

In 1961 the Indian government outlined its so-called “Forward Policy” concerning the Sino-Indian border. The Forward Policy called for the establishment of military outposts along the border in contested but uncontrolled territory to cement India’s presence in the region and push China to relinquish its claims on the disputed territory. The Chinese responded in kind, dotting the map with outposts and causing military buildup on both sides. By September 1962, an operation from India to remove Chinese from the Kameng division of North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) was coined Operation LEGHORN.²⁰

Small skirmishes between sides were relatively common, but casualties were in the dozens at most—although tensions appear at an all-time high this month. An attack on Indian-occupied Tseng-jong on October 10th, for instance, forced Indian troops to withdraw and resulted in 77 Chinese dead and a hundred injured.²¹ Critical shortages in materials and enforcement have illustrated a half-baked commitment to militarization in the region, to some extent strategic in the purposes of minimizing the scale of conflicts.²² Nehru has had strong doubts that China will

¹⁶https://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/191_panchsheel.pdf

¹⁷<https://www.usiofindia.org/publication-journal/1962-the-battle-of-namka-chu-and-fall-of-tawang-a-view-from-the-r-side-of-the-hill.html>

¹⁸<http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/chinese-shadow-darkens/>

¹⁹<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/hot-springs-the-chinese-and-police-commemoration-day-7582748/>

²⁰https://archive.claws.in/images/journals_doc/18-Confrontation%20At%20Thag%20La%20-%20Indo%20China%20War%201962.pdf

²¹https://idsa.in/system/files/jds_6_4_JohanSkogJesen.pdf

²²https://archive.claws.in/images/journals_doc/18-Confrontation%20At%20Thag%20La%20-%20Indo%20China%20War%201962.pdf



willingly escalate further, especially considering how it may impact other ongoing geopolitical tensions.²³

The future of the Sino-Indian border and Sino-Indian relations more broadly is up in the air. Both sides seem to believe they are only defending their rightful claims to the land. Further, the Chinese leadership is skeptical of Indian relations with Tibet while Indian leadership notes their close cultural and historical ties as their reason for interest rather than eyeing Tibet as an avenue for territorial expansion. Bilateral talks have failed to produce any meaningful progress and prior to this confrontation neither the United States nor the Soviet Union expressed serious concerns about this potential flashpoint, instead focusing on their own tensions and conflicts.²⁴ While this escalation may prompt their interest, if India and China want to forge their own way forward and form the 'Asian Axis' that Nehru desired, they will have to find a way through this on their own.²⁵

Additional Resources:

- Chapter 6: Eras of the New Frontier and the Great Society 1961-1969
<https://www.doi.gov/general/aboutdoi/history/dolchp06>
- Special Message to the Congress on Urgent National Needs
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-urgent-national-needs>
- Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union.
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/annual-message-the-congress-the-state-the-union-4>
- U-2 Overflights and the Capture of Francis Gary Powers, 1960
<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/u2-incident>
- The Bay of Pigs Invasion and its Aftermath, April 1961–October 1962
<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/bay-of-pigs>
- Bandung Conference (Asian-African Conference), 1955
<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/bandung-conf>
- Non-Aligned Movement
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Non-Aligned-Movement>
- Report from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, 'The Soviet Union's Stance on the Sino-Indian Boundary Question and Soviet-Indian Relations'
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/report-chinese-foreign-ministry-soviet-unions-stance-sino-indian-boundary-question-and>

²³<https://www.usiofindia.org/publication-journal/indias-wars-since-independence-a-concise-history.html>

²⁴<https://www.usiofindia.org/publication-journal/1962-the-battle-of-namka-chu-and-fall-of-tawang-a-view-from-the-other-side-of-the-hill.html>

²⁵<https://indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/china%20decision%20for%201962%20war%202003.pdf>



Chicago International Model United Nations XX (1962)
Cabinet of the United States of America (USA)

- The Sino-Indian Border Dispute (1961-62)
<https://web.archive.org/web/20070701042636/http://www.foia.cia.gov/CPE/POLO/polo-09.pdf>