

**INSURING THE FUTURE:  
THE REPUTATIONAL IMPERATIVE AND  
TERRITORIAL DISPUTES IN SOUTH ASIA, 1947-1965**

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## **Abstract**

State policies of pursuing compromise or conflict, and the extent of each, have been subject to wide variation in territorial disputes in South Asia, both across cases and within disputes over time. Existing works on the subject, however, which focus on the salience - strategic, economic, or symbolic - of the disputed territory, often prove inadequate in accounting for such variations. They fail moreover to explain some puzzling state behaviour - why, for instance, states choose to sometimes make large concessions on territories of great value, and adopt intransigent attitudes towards territories of little salience; or why stronger states sometimes make concessions larger than they need to, and weaker states bargain harder than their capabilities would justify.

This dissertation argues that decisions by state leaders to pursue compromise or conflict on their territorial claims are influenced to a significant extent by a concern for the expected reputational implications of their actions. The theoretical framework offered suggests why we should expect reputational concerns to be independently important in the calculus of state leaders, and how they manifest themselves in decision making. In particular, it makes a novel case that states care not only for reputations for resolve, but also for that of reasonableness, and how contextual factors - bargaining strength and adversary tactics in particular - influence the assessments of what kind of reputation policy decisions are likely to engender.

The study demonstrates the utility of the argument in explaining the policy variations and puzzles that characterized territorial disputes in the South Asian neighbourhood during the period from 1947-1965. Through in depth historical research of policy making in not only the more prominent disputes in the region, the Kashmir and Sino-Indian ones, but also territorial disagreements involving the smaller states such as Nepal, Bhutan, and Burma, this dissertation illustrates how reputational concerns often drive state behaviour.

## Résumé

Les politiques de l'État poursuivant les compromis ou conflits, et l'étendue de chacune de ces politiques, varient de façon importante en territoires en disputes en Asie du Sud pour cas variés et parmi disputes au fil du temps. Cependant, les travaux existants sur le sujet qui mettent l'accent sur la prédominance - stratégique, économique ou symbolique - du territoire en dispute, s'avèrent souvent inadéquats pour expliquer ces variations. De plus, ils n'arrivent pas à expliquer certains comportements curieux de l'État - pourquoi, par exemple, les États choisissent-ils parfois de faire de grandes concessions de territoires de grande valeur, et d'adopter des attitudes inflexibles par rapport aux territoires de petite importance, ou pourquoi les États plus puissants font parfois de plus grandes concessions, et les États moins puissants négocient plus sévèrement sans avoir les capacités apparentes pour justifier la sévérité.

Cette thèse soutient que les décisions prises par les dirigeants d'États, par rapport aux compromis ou aux conflits portant sur disputes territoriales, sont influencées de façon importante par un souci des implications à leurs réputations suite à leurs actions. La théorie proposée suggère pourquoi nous devrions nous attendre à des préoccupations étant indépendamment importantes et impliquant la réputation parmi le raisonnement des chefs d'état, et comment celles-ci se manifestent dans la prise de décisions. Cela crée particulièrement un nouveau cas démontrant que les États ne sont pas uniquement préoccupés par leur réputation vis-à-vis les solutions, mais aussi à l'aspect raisonnable, et comment certains facteurs contextuels, tels que le pouvoir de négociation et tactiques d'adversaires, influenceront les genres de décisions politiques impliquant la réputation susceptibles à être prises.

L'étude démontre l'utilité de l'argument en expliquant les variations en politiques et aspects inexplicables qui ont caractérisés les disputes territoriales en Asie du Sud entre 1947 et 1965. À travers une recherche historique approfondie sur l'élaboration de politiques non seulement parmi les disputes les plus importantes, notamment celles de Kashmir et des sino-indiens, mais aussi autres disputes territoriales impliquant de plus petits États tels que le Népal, le Bhoutan et la Birmanie, cette thèse démontre comment la préoccupation de réputation influence souvent le comportement des États.

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*Mahesh Shankar*  
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*To my father.*



## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The scholarly work on territorial disputes in the South Asian neighbourhood is in some ways a puzzle for the student of the international relations (IR) of the region. Despite, or maybe because of the complexity that has characterized the prominent disputes in the region, there have been only infrequent attempts to provide cogent and generalizable theoretical accounts for state behaviour in these disputes. The large body of scholarly work on the region has, by and large either completely neglected theory, or has focussed on individual disputes thereby circumventing the issue of generalizability. The extensive theoretical literature in IR on territorial disputes, on the other hand, has failed to plumb into case histories of territorial disputes in the region to enrich and modify our understanding of state behaviour in contests over territory. This neglect in theory driven work of testing hypotheses against the empirical complexity of South Asia has therefore been as frustrating as the fact that scholars of South Asia have neglected to frame their empirical knowledge in theoretical terms.<sup>1</sup> In this process, our understanding of territorial disputes in the region has become empirically rich, but theoretically limited and often simplistic.

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<sup>1</sup> There are major exceptions of course to this critique, but by and large it stands that territorial disputes involving India, China, Pakistan and the smaller states of South Asia have been little theorized about as a whole. Some notable works explicitly engaged in theorizing about state behaviour in the region include M. Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation : Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), Sumit Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia: The Indo-Pakistani Conflicts since 1947* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), T. V. Paul, *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), T. V. Paul, "Why Has the India-Pakistan Rivalry Been So Enduring? Power Asymmetry and an Intractable Conflict," *Security Studies* 15, no. 4 (2006): 600-630, Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), Yaacov Vertzberger, *Misperceptions in Foreign Policymaking: The Sino-Indian Conflict, 1959-1962* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), Allen Suss Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Indochina* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975).

This dissertation is an attempt at bringing theory back to the study of South Asian IR, and South Asia back to theory. It provides an explicitly theory driven account of state behaviour in territorial disputes in the region in the first two decades after the end of colonialism. These early years were the pivotal period during which territorial disputes emerged, state policies were framed, and much activity was undertaken to address contesting territorial claims, leading to either resolution of disputes or a cementing of protracted intractability. Indeed this was a period of dynamism in these territorial disputes, with great variety to be observed in state policies both across and within cases. While some disputes, such as those between China and its smaller neighbours, were resolved peacefully, others deteriorated to intractability and conflict, resulting in great loss of lives and resources. Even in the intractable cases however, there were varying extents to which participants were willing to compromise at different junctures. In Kashmir, a plebiscite mechanism offered early hope of a conciliatory solution only to flounder by the mid-1950s, whereas a territorial swap could have potentially resolved the Sino-Indian dispute before the outbreak of war in 1962.

State policies and behaviour in these disputes were not only dynamic, but also occasionally puzzling during this period. State leaders were sometimes firm on territory which seemed to be of little material or symbolic value to them, as was most prominently the case with Indian claims in the western sector of the Sino-Indian frontier dispute. On the other hand, decision makers sometimes appeared willing to make concessions on territory of obviously high value, as was the case with both parties to the Kashmir dispute to some extent at different points in the dispute. Equally surprising is the fact that the final outcomes in many of these disputes often failed to reflect the actual distributions of strength. Most starkly, in the asymmetric territorial disputes involving India or China against smaller states

such as Nepal, Bhutan, and Burma, the outcome invariably ended up reflecting the weaker party's claims, with the larger power making concessions much more extensive than necessary, and the weaker disputants demonstrating more firmness than was likely wise.

This dissertation seeks to theoretically account for these variations and puzzles that characterized South Asian state behaviour during the period under consideration. The hope is that doing so will both provide us with crucial insights into why territorial disputes and state policies towards them evolved the way they did in the region, as well as some broader lessons as to the determinants of state behaviour in territorial disputes, with applicability beyond the geographical and temporal limits of this study. This dissertation posits that state behaviour in territorial disputes cannot always, and wholly, be attributed to the salience of the territory being contested. Rather, decisions to compromise or not are also shaped in a very real sense by what leaders perceive to be the long term strategic and reputational implications of their actions, assessments which in turn depend on the nature of the commitment problems disputants face, and the bargaining context within which territorial claims are contested.

### **State of the Literature: History and Theory**

A vast portion of the literature on territorial disputes in the South Asian neighbourhood is enormously rich in empirical terms, but engages theory only cursorily or indirectly.<sup>2</sup> Such works have for the most part deliberately aimed at historical-legal studies,

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the prominent works include: Michael Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), Sumit Ganguly, *The Kashmir Question: Retrospect and Prospect* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003), Sisir Gupta, *Kashmir: A Study in India-Pakistan Relations* (Bombay, India: Indian Council of World Affairs, 1967), Alastair Lamb, *The China-India Border: The Origins of the Disputed Boundaries* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1964), Alastair Lamb, *Incomplete Partition: The*

seeking to present the tale of the origins and evolution of the numerous territorial disputes that have beset the region. These works engage in describing and investigating state behaviour, as well the legitimacy of the legal claims of the disputants, with the purpose of assigning blame or credit for the state of the disputes, and discovering possible ways of extricating the participants from them. Being historical by their very intent and nature, though immensely valuable on their own terms, these works offer little in terms of theoretical insight into the underlying drivers of state behaviour, insights that can easily and fruitfully be applied towards explaining the sort of variations and puzzles that animate state policies and behaviour in territorial disputes across case and over time.

To the extent that they adopt a theoretical lens, many of these works fail to reach beyond the stale and unsatisfactory categories of realism vs. idealism, loosely defined. This tendency has been clearly perceptible, for instance, in expositions of Indian policies in the period of Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership (1947-1964).<sup>3</sup> On the one end of the spectrum has been a tendency to characterize Nehruvian foreign policy as peaceful and moderate, often to a fault, in being overly accommodative to the detriment of Indian interests. India's decision

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*Genesis of the Kashmir Dispute, 1947-1948* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), Alastair Lamb, *The Kashmir Problem: A Historical Survey* (New York: Praeger, 1967), Alastair Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy, 1846-1990* (Hertfordshire, England: Roxford Books, 1991), Alastair Lamb, *The Sino-Indian Border in Ladakh* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973), Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (London: Cape, 1972), Neville Maxwell, "Sino-Indian Border Dispute Reconsidered," *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 15 (1999): 905-918, A. G. Noorani, *India-China Boundary Problem 1846-1947: History and Diplomacy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unfinished War* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2000), Robert Wirsing, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute: On Regional Conflict and Its Resolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), Robert Wirsing, *Kashmir in the Shadow of War: Regional Rivalries in a Nuclear Age* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Baldev Raj Nayar and T. V. Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major Power Status* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 115-116, Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 2. As Nayar and Paul put it, to treat Nehruvian "policy as if it were of a single piece in terms of realism or idealism is to impart it a static quality which is not justified by the facts." For a similar critique of the theoretically deficient nature of works on Chinese territorial disputes see M. Taylor Fravel, "The Long March to Peace: Explaining China's Settlement of Territorial Disputes" (Doctoral Dissertation Department of Political Science, Stanford University, 2004), 6-9.

under Nehru to voluntarily offer a plebiscite in Kashmir, take the dispute to the United Nations “in a fit of naïve idealism”,<sup>4</sup> or the failure to adequately assess and respond to the Chinese threat in the pursuit of peaceful coexistence, leading to a disastrous military defeat in 1962, have served to substantiate these impressions of Nehruvian foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, and on the other end of the spectrum, have been the notable revisionist works which paint a picture of an unremitting unilateralist, and even imperialist, Nehru who must assume most of the blame for the intractability of the Kashmir and Sino-Indian territorial disputes. India’s intractability over the terms of a plebiscite in Kashmir, the refusal to recognize Chinese claims, and particularly the failure to agree to the Chinese offer of a territorial swap in 1960, have been suggested as illustrations of an unbending India under Nehru.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, these historical works have, perhaps understandably, focussed on the most intractable and combustible of disputes in the region over Kashmir and the Sino-Indian frontier. This has, however, meant that little effort has been made to offer generalizable accounts for state behaviour across territorial disputes and participants. Especially little

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<sup>4</sup> Nayar and Paul, *India in the World Order*, 120.

<sup>5</sup> Early works in the post Sino-Indian war period were largely sympathetic to Nehru who was seen to have been betrayed by the Chinese. The most notable exponent of this view is S. Gopal in Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976). Tharoor has for instance argued that Nehru’s policies were characterized by a ‘messianic utopianism’ which failed to take into account India’s national interests, and how those interests could be best served. Shashi Tharoor, *Reasons of State: Political Development and India's Foreign Policy under Indira Gandhi, 1966-1977* (New Delhi: Vikas Pub. House, 1982), 26. Chakravarti similarly termed Nehru’s China policy as one “based more on what is called wishful thinking than on objective conditions.” Prithwis Chandra Chakravarti, *India's China Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 150.

<sup>6</sup> S. M. Burke, *Mainsprings of Indian and Pakistani Foreign Policies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974), 81, Lamb, *The China-India Border*, Alastair Lamb, *Crisis in Kashmir, 1947-1966* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1966), Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy, 1846-1990*, Lamb, *The Sino-Indian Border in Ladakh*, Maxwell, *India's China War*, Maxwell, "Sino-Indian Border Dispute Reconsidered.", Noorani, *India-China Boundary*, A. G. Noorani, "Nehru's China Policy," *Frontline*, 4 August 2000.



attention has been paid to the asymmetric disputes involving the smaller states in the region, and more particularly to the policies and decision making of both the stronger and weaker parties in these disputes. This dissertation seeks to address this lacuna in the scholarly literature by suggesting a generalizable theoretical framework to account for, and be tested against, the policies and behaviour in territorial disputes of a variety of states, big and small, strong and weak.

### **State of the Literature: The Importance of Saliency**

Despite the above stated lackings, most of these historical works do implicitly, and a more limited number of works explicitly, offer insight into factors which underlie, and can be used to explain state behaviour in these disputes in theoretical terms. The one factor which is most prominent in all discussions of territorial disputes in South Asia, and offers a readily intuitive explanation for state behaviour, is the **saliency** or value of the territory. This is also, indeed, the dominant intuition which has guided theory driven works on territorial disputes, which have often sought to attribute the empirical finding that disputes over territory are a central, underlying cause of crises and wars in the modern international system, to this saliency factor.<sup>7</sup> The more salient a piece of territory is to them, the argument goes, the less likely state leaders are to compromise, and prefer conflict instead.

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<sup>7</sup> Paul F. Diehl, ed., *A Road Map to War: Territorial Dimensions of International Conflict*, 1st ed. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1999), Paul K. Huth, *Standing Your Ground: Territorial Disputes and International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), Paul Domenic Senese and John A. Vasquez, *The Steps to War: An Empirical Study* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 10, John A. Vasquez and Marie T. Henehan, *Territory, War, and Peace* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011).

Territory is salient partly owing to the intrinsic territorial bent of human nature, concretized in the importance attached to territory as the basis for the modern international state system.<sup>8</sup> Beyond this, other properties of territories may impart them with specific value, which Goertz and Diehl suggest could be ‘intrinsic’ or ‘relational.’ While ‘intrinsic’ value refers to the inherent value of a territory regardless of the disputants, ‘relational’ value alludes to the specific value that a particular piece of territory has for each of the disputants, assessments that may often vary to a large extent. It is the latter (that is the idiosyncratic value of territory), usually epitomized by territories of strategic or nationalist value, that Goertz and Diehl find to be most conflictual.<sup>9</sup> Either way, the most prominent factors which shape the salience states attach to territory are commonly understood to be its strategic, economic, and symbolic-nationalist value.<sup>10</sup>

Territory is *strategically* salient when it is viewed by state leaders as essential for either offensive or defensive military purposes, designed to maintain or enhance state security. According to realist theories, particularly its structural variants, state leaders have no choice but to care intensely about this strategic aspect of territories, because the anarchic structure of the international system engenders an essential uncertainty about the future intentions of other states.<sup>11</sup> With even survival potentially at stake, territory becomes a particularly valuable resource, one states are often tempted to acquire more of, let alone

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<sup>8</sup> Diehl, ed., *A Road Map to War*, Vasquez, *The War Puzzle*, John A. Vasquez, ed., *What Do We Know About War?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Gary Goertz and Paul F. Diehl, *Territorial Changes and International Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1992), 132-133.

<sup>10</sup> For a useful discussion see, Huth, *Standing Your Ground*.

<sup>11</sup> The classic exposition of this theory is found in Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979).

concede.<sup>12</sup> This is especially so when the geographical location or characteristics of particular pieces of territory, in so far as they affect the offensive and defensive military potential of the disputing states, impart them with strategic importance.<sup>13</sup> Such strategic concerns in turn make concessions on disputed territory difficult for state leaders, for fear that any material concessions made now may be exploited by an adversary in the future for still further gains. The *commitment problem* logic captures this dynamic more formally, by proposing that the primary obstacle to compromise often lies in the inability of states to credibly commit to not exploit at a later date any bargaining advantages derived from a current settlement. When concessions are to involve strategic territory this absence of a credible commitment from the adversary leaves policy makers with no choice but to choose the path of conflict over compromise.<sup>14</sup>

The *economic* endowments and characteristics of territory may similarly impart it with salience. Lands (or the seas) that are rich in natural resources are likely to be contested intensely by states, on the one hand, because of their intrinsic value. On the other hand, such territories may also acquire strategic, and therefore relational, salience if their possession is viewed as integral to the preservation of economic and security interests, which may be undermined by adverse possession. This may be the case, for instance, because economic resources are expected to be readily fungible (that is they can be converted relatively easily

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<sup>12</sup> In the offensive variant of realism, states are expected to look for opportunities to expand territorially, provided the costs of doing so do not outweigh the benefits. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Scholars have identified geography as one element in determining the ‘offense-defence balance,’ that is whether offense or defence is more or less costly in particular contexts. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167-214, Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

<sup>14</sup> James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 408, Robert Powell, "War as a Commitment Problem," *International Organization* 60, no. 01 (2006): 185.

into military capability), activating thereby ‘relative gains’ thinking in the leadership of the disputant parties. Alternatively, territories and sea lanes may not be rich in economic resources themselves, but might serve as crucial arteries for the transit of vital economic resources, again making their possession strategically important. In either case, the expectation is that the more important a piece of territory is in economic terms, the more likely it is to be coveted by states, making compromise difficult.

Finally, the *symbolic-nationalist* dimension highlights the psychological and domestic political roots of attachment to territory, which may render territory “effectively indivisible,” and encourage resort to force and war.<sup>15</sup> Certain territories in this account acquire high salience because their possession is seen as central to the assertion of nationalism, owing either to the ethno-religious composition of the disputed territory’s population, or because the territory is perceived to have been part of traditional, historic borders or homeland. From a constructivist perspective, such territories become indivisible because political leaders, and the population at large, are psychologically convinced that the state’s and their own identities are intrinsically connected to the disputed territory, without the possession of which they are incomplete. For Toft, therefore, “homeland” territories are “not an object to be exchanged but an indivisible attribute of group identity.”<sup>16</sup>

An alternative, more rationalist account argues that political elites actively trying to balance the imperatives of external security with domestic political survival, dare not

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<sup>15</sup> Monica Duffy Toft, "Indivisible Territory, Geographic Concentration, and Ethnic War," *Security Studies* 12, no. 2 (2002): 82-119, Stephen van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994): 5-39, Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War.", Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003). Mansbach and Vasquez speak similarly of “symbolic” or “transcendent” stakes associated with territory. Richard W. Mansbach and John A. Vasquez, *In Search of Theory: A New Paradigm for Global Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 61-67.

<sup>16</sup> Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, 20. Also, Ron E. Hassner, "The Path to Intractability: Time and the Entrenchment of Territorial Disputes," *International Security* 31, no. 3 (2007): 107-138.

compromise on territory which has symbolic-nationalist salience for fear of being punished domestically.<sup>17</sup> Political leaderships are therefore constrained from making any concessions, and policy with regard to the disputed territory is driven by the intensity of domestic political and societal pressures which make for indivisibility. These political constraints are expected to be particularly severe in democracies, where compromise on *any* territory (salient or otherwise) is subject to exploitation by an ‘opportunistic opposition,’<sup>18</sup> as well as in newly created democracies where nationalist tendencies are likely to be rampant in the first place.<sup>19</sup>

This conception of the strategic, economic and symbolic-nationalist salience of territory as being central to explaining state behaviour in territorial disputes has found particular traction in the works on South Asia. The intractability of the dispute over Kashmir, for one, has often been attributed to these very properties of the territory. While Kashmir’s location at the apex of the Indian sub-continent makes it of intrinsically high strategic value to both contestants, it is the proximity of major Pakistani communications arteries to the Kashmir border, as well as the presence within the state of the headwaters of three major rivers that constitute the lifeline of Pakistan’s agricultural economy, which has been argued to make Kashmir particularly salient strategically to the Pakistani leadership. For

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<sup>17</sup> Huth’s significant study was one of the first to systematically building the domestic political calculus into the study of territorial disputes, with what he terms a “modified realist model,” the expectation being that given domestic pressures political leaders may push claims to even otherwise irrelevant territory for fear of incurring domestic political costs. Huth, *Standing Your Ground*. Also see, Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 427-460, A. Bikash Roy, "Intervention across Bisecting Borders," *Journal of Peace Research* 34, no. 3 (1997): 300-314, Stephen M. Saideman, *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Paul K. Huth and Todd L. Allee, *The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> The logic is somewhat similar to the argument about why emerging democracies are prone to be aggressive in their international relations. See, Edward D. Mansfield and Jack L. Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005).

many scholars, even more central to the conflict is the fact that Kashmir represents the extension into the post-colonial period of the contested nationalisms which led to the partition of the sub-continent in the first place.<sup>20</sup> Ganguly therefore suggests that in addition to the strategic aspects of the territory, the “underlying issue” that has driven conflict over Kashmir “is closely linked to the ideological factor...perceived threats to the contending ideologies of the two states...”<sup>21</sup> Hagerty, in the same vein, neatly characterizes Kashmir as a “zero-sum test for each state’s legitimizing ideology.”<sup>22</sup>

The Sino-Indian border dispute has similarly been accounted for by a mix of strategic and symbolic-nationalist factors. While India’s interest in the preservation of the McMahon Line in the eastern sector, and Peking’s desire to hold the Aksai Chin in the west has been explained on the basis of the strategic importance of the respective territories for each party, India’s failure to agree in 1960 to a Chinese proposal for a territorial swap has prominently been attributed by scholars to the symbolic-nationalist importance attached to the disputed territories by New Delhi. For the Indian leadership, Hoffman suggests, nationalism played a “subtle and pervasive” role, with ‘Indian nationalism’ defined as “beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions brought forth by India’s struggle for independence...and shaped by the long history and culture of the Indian subcontinent.”<sup>23</sup> The domestic political

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<sup>20</sup> See Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, Ashutosh Varshney, "India, Pakistan, and Kashmir: Antinomies of Nationalism," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 11 (1991): 997-1007.

<sup>21</sup> Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 12. “Each state,” Ganguly further states “was keenly aware of the ideological significance of Kashmir and most unwilling to concede it to the other as this would undermine its own ideological legitimacy.” Ibid., 19.

<sup>22</sup> Devin T. Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons from South Asia* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 67.

<sup>23</sup> Steven A. Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 7. For Hoffman’s discussion of the roots of Indian nationalism with regard to the border dispute, see pages 25-28.

manifestations of Indian nationalism, in the form of rabidly anti-Chinese parliamentary opposition and public opinion, only made Indian compromise even more unlikely, and the disputed territory effectively indivisible, according to this account.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, in the case of the much less discussed asymmetric disputes involving the larger (especially China) and smaller states in the region, surprising compromises by the larger state have been accounted for at least partly by the low salience of territories being disputed. A recent, comprehensive study of China's territorial disputes suggests that one important reason why Peking was able to readily compromise on disputed territories in the frontier regions was the absence in these territories of permanent populations, let alone an ethnic Han majority. This, in addition to the dearth of any resources or endowments of economic value, rendered these territories of low overall salience and hence eminently susceptible to compromise. In contrast were the 'homeland' territories that formed part of the ethnic Han core, as well as the resource rich off-shore islands in the South China Sea, with regard to which Chinese leaders were far less conciliatory owing to the higher symbolic-nationalist or economic-strategic salience attached to these disputed lands.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Limitations of Salience**

While intuitively appealing, there are several reasons to contend that strategic, economic, or symbolic-nationalist value alone does not tell us the entire story of state behaviour in territorial disputes. First, such a focus leads to the expectation of leaders

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<sup>24</sup> Nancy Jetly, *India China Relations, 1947-1977: A Study of Parliament's Role in the Making of Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1979).

<sup>25</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 41-54.

adopting zero-sum positions on territories of high salience, and readily making compromises on less valuable pieces of territory. Such a contention is however difficult to sustain empirically as state leaders do sometimes seem willing to make concessions on highly salient territory, while adopting intractable and zero-sum positions with regard to territories of ostensibly less importance.<sup>26</sup> In South Asia, while both India and Pakistan have been willing to make some concessions on the obviously valuable Kashmir, especially early in the conflict when a plebiscite was acceptable in principle to both sides, the Indian leadership proved persistently intractable over claims to territory in the western sector of the Sino-Indian frontier, territory which was freely acknowledged in New Delhi to be of little importance to them. In the asymmetric disputes similarly, while the Chinese made large concessions on territory which did enjoy at least some symbolic-nationalist salience given their characterization as 'lost' territories, the smaller states often proved averse to even minor concessions on territories which for the most part had little obvious symbolic-nationalist, or strategic significance. An emphasis on salience clearly cannot adequately account for these outcomes.

Second, in addition to being unable to fully account for tendencies towards compromise or intransigence in states, salience based accounts also have trouble explaining the *extent* of compromise or intransigence, as the case may be. In the strategic and economic value based arguments underpinned by the realpolitik logic, for instance, it is conceptually unclear why even when disputed territory is of low salience and compromise is viable, state leaders motivated by 'relative gains' concerns sometimes make concessions well beyond what they can reasonably demand given their stronger bargaining position, and at other times

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<sup>26</sup> Barbara F. Walter, "Explaining the Intractability of Territorial Conflict," *International Studies Review* 5, no. 4 (2003): 137-153, Barbara F. Walter, *Reputation and Civil War: Why Separatist Conflicts Are So Violent* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).



refuse to make even minor concessions when placed in a disadvantageous bargaining position against a clearly more potent adversary. Such a pattern has been apparent in the asymmetric disputes in the South Asian region, where the final solution to the disputes has almost invariably involved the stronger power making large compromises, to the extent of surrendering all claims to disputed territories, in the face of small state intransigence.

Third, there are specific conceptual lacking's in the salience based logics which makes them inappropriate in accounting for the variations in state policies over time. This is particularly true of the symbolic-nationalist argument. In its constructivist avatar, the logic demands that salience remain constant over time, by rendering territory indivisible, because of deep psychological attachments to the disputed lands. In turn, given this indivisibility, there is little variation that we can expect in terms of state policies, which too must remain constant over time. The problem however with such an argument, as has been pointed out elsewhere, is that the salience attached to territory, and its indivisibility, has been known to vary.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, as noted above, even as certain territories retain their high symbolic-nationalist salience, state policies have been known to fluctuate with time, an outcome inexplicable from this psychological perspective.

The domestic political mechanism of the symbolic-nationalist argument, on the other hand, is problematic in its denial of elite agency, whereas elites might be as capable of framing public opinion, as they are constrained by it. This elite agency is particularly relevant for our case studies, given that “national liberation leaders' standing as fathers of the nation made their honeymoon longer and their political autonomy greater,” allowing them to lead

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<sup>27</sup> Stacie E. Goddard, *Indivisible Territory and the Politics of Legitimacy: Jerusalem and Northern Ireland* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

rather than be necessarily directed by their people.<sup>28</sup> An emphasis on domestic politics also ignores the fact that the pursuit of conflict itself may have domestic costs for leaders, especially when such action leads to military defeat,<sup>29</sup> which means that political elites often have strong incentives to sidestep domestic pressures, and develop preferences for outcomes independent of, and different from public opinion.

Similarly, the commitment problem logic as currently framed, in addition to having the same problems of an inability to account for variation in policies over time, because commitment problems are endemic and constant, raises additional questions as to its empirical traction. While the commitment problem scholarship has largely confined itself to theory and formal modelling, with little sustained empirical testing, research on territorial disputes has largely ignored the idea, with Huth for instance suggesting that the argument is unpersuasive because states in fact rarely renege on territorial agreements, and indeed have strong reputational incentives to adhere to them.<sup>30</sup> Neither set of works, however, tells us much about whether commitment related concerns actually matter in decision making on territorial disputes, and if so how. One strand of my argument in this dissertation, as

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<sup>28</sup> Given this, “bold choices shaping new structures could be made.” Ashutosh Varshney, “Why Democracy Survives,” *Journal of Democracy* 9, no. 3 (1998): 48.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Audience costs’ at the domestic political level are likely to apply as much to military defeats, the costs of military conflict, and other such foreign policy setbacks, as they are to making concessions on territorial issues. James D. Fearon, “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes,” *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): 577-592, H. E. Goemans, *War and Punishment: The Causes of War Termination and the First World War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), Kenneth A. Schultz, “Looking for Audience Costs,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 1 (2001): 32-60.

<sup>30</sup> Huth, *Standing Your Ground*, 48, 91, Paul K. Huth, “Why Are Territorial Disputes between States a Central Cause of International Conflict?,” in *What Do We Know About War?*, ed. John A. Vasquez (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 2000), 104-105. There are however instances, as is attested to by cases in Latin America, where even after agreeing to arbitration over disputed territory, states sometimes renege on such commitments if the verdict goes against them, or when leaders get overthrown. Beth A. Simmons, “See You in Court? The Appeal to Quasi-Judicial Legal Processes in the Settlement of Territorial Disputes,” in *A Road Map to War : Territorial Dimensions of International Conflict*, ed. Paul F. Diehl (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1999).

developed later, is that commitment problems should matter, but when and how they do so is inadequately conceptualized in extant works, something which I seek to correct, and test against the empirical record in South Asia.

### **An Alternative: Reputation in Territorial Disputes**

Reputation as a concept has enjoyed rich pedigree in the general scholarly work on international relations, from the work of Thucydides to influential debates on deterrence theory, and most recently in neoliberal institutionalist works on the determinants of cooperation in interstate relations.<sup>31</sup> Reputation after all, as Schelling famously observed “is one of the few things worth fighting over,”<sup>32</sup> a feeling seemingly shared by policy makers who have often resorted to just this logic to support monumental decisions.<sup>33</sup> Snyder and Diesing consequently, in their seminal study of crisis bargaining, speak of *reputation* as being one of

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<sup>31</sup> Some of these works include: George W Downs and Michael A Jones, "Reputation, Compliance, and International Law," *The Journal of Legal Studies* 31, no. S1 (2002): S95-S114, Paul K. Huth, "Reputations and Deterrence: A Theoretical and Empirical Assessment," *Security Studies* 7, no. 1 (1997): 72-99, Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), T. V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), Robert Powell, *Nuclear Deterrence Theory: The Search for Credibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), Thucydides, Rex Warner, and M. I. Finley, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Rev. ed., *Penguin Classics* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972).

<sup>32</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 124.

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

three categories of interests at stake for state leaders in crises, *strategic* and *intrinsic* interests being the other two.<sup>34</sup>

Despite this traditional prominence, reputation as a concept has only seen limited application in theorizing about territorial disputes. Nevertheless prominent recent scholarly efforts<sup>35</sup> have sought to resuscitate the concept, by suggesting that choices of intransigence and conflict in territorial disputes can often be attributed to reputational fears. States involved in, or expecting to be faced with multiple challenges over territory of value are expected, in this account, to prefer conflict over compromise against any territorial challenge for fear that any concessions would convey weakness and vulnerability to all other actual or potential challengers, thereby rendering the territory indivisible. As Walter argues in the context of separatist conflicts, a concern for reputation means “governments would not offer ethnic groups a deal short of independence that would satisfy both sides.”<sup>36</sup> Toft similarly contends that states are likely to regard territory as “indivisible when they believe that allowing one ethnic group to gain territorial sovereignty will set a precedent.”<sup>37</sup>

Such an argument, while again intuitively appealing, is beset by its own drawbacks in how it is presently framed. First, it shares with some of the arguments discussed above the problem of assuming indivisibility, making it impossible to account for variations in state behaviour over time and across disputes. Empirically, however, states involved in multiple

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<sup>34</sup> Glenn Herald Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), 183-184.

<sup>35</sup> Duffy Toft, "Indivisible Territory, Geographic Concentration, and Ethnic War.", Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, Barbara F. Walter, "Building Reputation: Why Governments Fight Some Separatists but Not Others," *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 2 (2006): 313-330, Walter, "Explaining the Intractability of Territorial Conflict.", Walter, *Reputation and Civil War*.

<sup>36</sup> Walter, *Reputation and Civil War*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, 28.

disputes do often compromise on their territorial claims. China for instance compromised in the majority of its territorial disputes in the early 1960s, while being simultaneously engaged in other more intractable ones,<sup>38</sup> while India similarly demonstrated some willingness to make concessions in Kashmir early in the dispute, all the time fearing the emergence a Chinese territorial challenge. Concern for reputation, therefore, does not seem to have necessarily rendered territories indivisible.

Second, and relatedly, the argument suggests that when reputation is viewed to be at stake, state leaders view all concessions as conveying the exact same reputation of weakness, making all disputed territory equally indivisible. This neglects the fact that the context within which concessions are made, that is what concessions are being made to whom and under what conditions, might influence how decision makers view the reputational consequences of their actions. By equating all territories and all contexts, the reputational argument as currently framed, ignores the fact that all concessions might not be viewed by leaders as having the exact same reputational implications, and that compromise might indeed be reputationally viable in some cases and not others. Concessions in some circumstances might indeed be expected by decision makers to demonstrate generosity and not weakness making compromise not just viable, but also potentially useful.

Finally, the emphasis on multiple future challengers as the trigger for reputational concerns is logically overstated. Theoretically, it is equally possible that states involved in just one, or multiple territorial disputes, might care less about establishing reputation with other parties and more about shaping the expectations of the immediate adversary.<sup>39</sup> Territorial

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<sup>38</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*.

<sup>39</sup> The literature on rivalries for instance points to the importance of reputation building for states involved in such dynamics. States in this account are reluctant to compromise on any one issue with a rival because of the imperative to avoid a reputation of weakness, in the expectation that they will be

disputes might therefore not be as interdependent, disputed lands not as indivisible, and compromise not as rare or unexpected as the existing reputation based works seem to suggest. Indeed, there is logically no a priori reason to confine the theory to cases involving multiple territorial challenges, because reputational concerns might often be as evident and intense within a single dyad.

For all these lacunae, however, a reputational argument might have a lot to tell us about state behaviour in disputes over territory. This dissertation therefore offers a modified and alternative conception of when and how reputational concerns affect policy decisions with regard to territorial claims and disputes. In combination with the commitment problem logic, it offers a framework to account for some of the gaps in the literature on territorial disputes in South Asia identified above.

## **The Argument**

When faced with threats to their territorial sovereignty and claims, or costs associated with persisting with or fulfilling them, state leaders have two basic choices: to compromise and make concessions on their territorial claims and thereby mitigate or eliminate those threats and costs, or adopt a path of firmness and intransigence, address the threats unilaterally and risk the costs of conflict, but avoid the necessity of giving up part or all of their claims to the disputed territory. Understanding how state leaders resolve this dilemma

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competing with the rival for the foreseeable future over varied issues and interests. See, Michael P. Colaresi, *Scare Tactics: The Politics of International Rivalry* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), Paul F. Diehl and Gary Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry* (Ann Arbor: University Of Michigan Press, 2000), Paul, *The India-Pakistan Conflict*, Karen A. Rasler and William R. Thompson, "Contested Territory, Strategic Rivalries, and Conflict Escalation," *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (2006): 145-168.

of whether to be conciliatory or intransigent, and to what extent, is the central objective of this study.

I suggest that state behaviour in territorial disputes is future oriented, in that leaders care about the potential long term consequences of their decisions. Being wary of the uncertainties that beset divining other states' future intentions and actions, decision makers seek to avoid not just making material-strategic concessions which may be exploited by an adversary in the future, but also aim to ensure that their actions do not engender an impression of weakness which might encourage an adversary's potentially aggressive tendencies. However, while desirous of this reputation for resolve, leaders are also conscious of the long term benefits that can accrue from building a reputation for generosity or cooperation. Therefore where possible, and useful, decision makers have incentives to compromise in order to present such an impression, rather than adopt intransigent or conflictual postures, thereby generating the opposite reputation of being aggressive and unbending. Both types of reputational concerns therefore, independently of material-strategic concerns, are argued to influence state behaviour in territorial disputes. The question that remains however is that of how state leaders determine the potential reputational implications of their actions, and how this affects their eventual conduct with regard to their territorial claims.

When do states care most about the potential strategic and reputational costs of their actions? These concerns and fears are after all not always present, or at the same level of intensity. I argue that strategic and reputational fears are most intense the more potent the *commitment problem*, that is the more likely and easy state leaders perceive it will be for an adversary to renege on its prior commitment, and exploit territorial concessions in the future. Leaders perceive the intensity of commitment problems, in turn, based on a combination of

an assessment of the likely evolution of the relative military balance of power between their state and the adversary, and a reading of the others prospective intentions. The greater this commitment problem, the more state leaders worry about making concessions that either surrender strategic advantages to the adversary, or are expected to engender a negative reputation of weakness. Concessions are only viable when in addition to being strategically costless they generate either no reputation, or better, an alternative positive one of generosity. In the absence of commitments problems, on the other hand, strategic and reputational fears are more muted or absent. Territory of inherent strategic value can now be conceded, and a reputation for resolve becomes less important. Leaders can then, in response to threats and costs associated with their territorial claims, concentrate more on the possibility of acquiring a positive reputation for generosity and reasonableness, and avoiding a negative one of being aggressive and unreasonable.

The modified logic of commitment problems presented above, while useful in suggesting what kinds of strategic and reputational implications concern states, and when, is still insufficient in telling us exactly how decision makers assess the reputational consequences of particular courses of action, and the *extent* to which state leaders are likely to be conciliatory or intransigent on their territorial claims. It conveys little about what concessions are likely to be viewed by decision makers as demonstrations of weakness, resolve, generosity or aggressiveness. Indeed by itself the argument does little to surmount the indivisibility problem identified earlier, because it implies that when a reputation for resolve is important any concession is impossible. Functioning as if territory is indivisible, however, is costly for states and we must expect state leaders to evaluate the trade-offs between establishing a reputation for resolve and the costs associated with indivisibility and resultant conflict.



I suggest that features of the bargaining context crucially shape the reputational calculus of state leaders, and thereby either mitigate or exacerbate strategic and reputational concerns, making compromise more or less possible. This allows for cases of some compromise when commitment problems are acute, as well as the prospect of greater intransigence, or alternatively larger concessions than necessary, when commitment problems are low or moderate, and in essence makes the question less about *whether* states will compromise, but a more specific and useful one of *how much*.

The two features of the bargaining context which are argued to most influence state leaders' assessments of the viability of compromise are the *relative bargaining strength* of the contestants over the disputed territory and the extent of successful use of *coercive or unilateral techniques* by an adversary. States are expected to be more willing to make larger compromises when their bargaining strength over the territory under dispute is strong because concessions made from such a position are expected to be perceived by the challenger not as demonstrations of weakness, but rather as that of generosity and cooperation. By mitigating reputational fears therefore, in addition to creating a better negotiating position,<sup>40</sup> stronger bargaining strength makes not only compromise, but larger concessions more likely.

Similarly, the more the bargaining context is viewed to have been shaped by an adversary's coercive or unilateralist methods, the more exacerbated reputational fears are expected to become. This owes itself to the fact that decision makers are likely to fear that being seen to suffer and condone aggression is likely to demonstrate weakness, encouraging an adversary to resort to more coercive measures in the future. When commitment related concerns are already intense, such fears can lead to an exacerbation of pre-existing

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<sup>40</sup> Fravel has argued that states might be less likely to use force, and rather prefer to reach compromise solution from positions of strength owing to the fact that strong bargaining positions can be expected to lead to outcomes largely in keeping with one's bargaining power in the first place. Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 28-29.'

reputational concerns. On the other hand, when decision makers do not perceive themselves to have been the target of blatant coercion, or have clearly reversed and punished prior coercive or unilateralist acts, reputational fears are somewhat mitigated.

In combination, the nature of commitment problems, and the bargaining context in the theatre of dispute are argued to shape the extent to which state leaders are willing to resort to compromise, or intransigence and conflict with regard to their state's territorial claims and disputes. They do so importantly by way of a reputational mechanism, and not just a strategic one, influencing leaders' calculus about what consequences acting on their various policy options will have for the reputation that is attributed to them by the adversary, if at all. The argument offered here is therefore one about how reputational considerations play into the decision making of state leaders engaged in territorial disputes.

This suggests that salience, as traditionally understood, alone is inadequate in theorizing and explaining state behaviour. This study, rather proposes an alternative explanatory account for policy outcomes that are in consonance with the expectations of arguments that emphasize the importance of the strategic, economic, and symbolic-nationalist value of territory for state behaviour in territorial disputes. It also, furthermore, explains cases where policy outcomes are at variance with the prognostications of such arguments, that is, where states make large compromise on salient territory, or alternatively stay firm on claims to tracts of land of little value.

Similarly, and finally, domestic politics is expected here to again be less influential than commonly asserted, by serving often as a reinforcing mechanism, rather than as a determinant of state behaviour. The same factors that increase strategic and reputational fears of compromise in decision makers are also expected to drive domestic political opinions in more virulently nationalist directions. When the bargaining context is more

benign however, in terms of the anticipated strategic and reputational costs of compromise, domestic opinion is likely to be (and viewed by political leaders as) more amenable to persuasion. For the most part then, political elite are expected to be most responsive to domestic political pressures on territorial claims when they share the, albeit exacerbated, concerns expressed domestically, and more resistant to public opinion when fundamental assumptions about the long term implications of compromise differ. In short, the frequent contention that domestic pressures drive political elite in directions diametrically opposed to their own initial preferences, especially in territorial disputes, is suggested to be overstated.

### **Cases and Methodology**

This dissertation is motivated as much by the desire to study territorial disputes in the South Asian region, as it is by the need for providing a theoretical explanation for state behaviour in territorial disputes in general. In fact, as mentioned earlier, the two objectives are in perfect harmony given the prevailing tendency of empirical work on South Asia, and theoretical work on territorial disputes, to ignore and speak past each other. The period of inquiry of this study is confined to the first two decades after the formation of these countries as independent states, roughly from the mid-late 1940s to the mid-1960s. These years were the periods of the greatest activity and flux as state leaders decided on their territorial claims, and how to address them. Two wars were fought over Kashmir by 1965, interspersed by fierce negotiations over compromise solutions involving plebiscite and/or partition of the state, while in the Sino-India dispute by 1962 the contending states had concretized their positions, conducted abortive discussions, and even fought a war. The

asymmetric disputes similarly had been debated, negotiated and in most cases resolved by the early 1960s.

The case studies look at inter-state border and territorial disputes involving states in the South Asian neighbourhood. The focus is, moreover, specifically on disputes between the post-colonial states, as opposed to remnant territorial contests between states in the region and their former colonial masters. Disputes of the latter variety, such as those involving Goa and Pondicherry (in the case of India), and Hong Kong and Macau (in the case of China), are acknowledged to be likely motivated by different dynamics for the contestants, and therefore disregarded in this study. Intra-state territorial disputes, the staple of extant work on reputation, will similarly remain unaddressed, though the concluding chapter will endeavour to extend the theoretical implications for the study of intra-state separatist conflicts.

The object of study is primarily the decisions and actions – compromise or intransigence, and the extent of each - of individual states over time, and the logic underlying those decisions and actions, rather than explanation of outcomes in a territorial dispute as a whole. The states that feature in the case studies include India, China, Pakistan, and the small states in and neighbouring South Asia, specifically Burma, Nepal, and Bhutan. Each of these states has been involved in one, if not more, border or territorial disputes with its neighbours in the period under investigation. While India has most prominently been involved in disputes with Pakistan and China, it also had a territorial disagreement with Bhutan during the period of study. China, on the other hand, was party to disputes with each of the other countries under consideration; Pakistan disputed territory with both India and China; and the other small states in the region have been in dispute with one or both of India and China. It must be noted that China and Burma, while they do not strictly fall within the customary

confines of the South Asian region, are nevertheless considered relevant to the study as states bordering the region and therefore either actually or potentially party to territorial disputes with South Asian states.<sup>41</sup>

This focus on South Asian territorial disputes, over a confined time period, as well as the requirements of testing the theoretical argument being made, make a qualitative case study based methodology most appropriate. While the geographically and temporally confined nature of the study means that the number of cases being addressed is simply not large enough to facilitate a quantitative approach to the testing of the theoretical argument, a qualitative approach rather than being just a default methodological option, offers some substantive benefits for this study.

First, as the theoretical framework offered here suggests not only independent variables which account for policy outcomes, but also specific causal mechanisms which capture the logic behind why particular values associated with the independent variables lead to specific outcomes, a qualitative method is best suited to test all aspects of the theory. The limited number and temporal scope of the cases themselves have merit in that they allow for the testing, through qualitative case studies, of not just correlations between the postulated variables, but also the accuracy and relative importance of the strategic and reputational mechanisms suggested.

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<sup>41</sup> The case of the Sino-Burmese territorial dispute is for example relevant also because of the shared characteristics between this dispute and that between China and India. Both disputes centred at least partly around the contested McMahon Line which both India and Burma claimed as the basis of their respective borders with China. Furthermore, both these states through their interactions during this period made themselves integral parts of the South Asian regional security calculus. Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). This prominent work of regional security, terms the dynamics of state interaction in the regional setting as a 'regional security complex.'

This end is served in this study by a combination of multiple ‘congruence’ case studies, and process tracing. The ‘congruence’ method seeks to establish whether the outcome of a case is consistent with a theory’s expectations by ascertaining if particular values of the independent variable(s) result in values of dependent variables that are in congruence with the theory proposed. According to George and Bennett, findings through congruence case studies which back up a theory’s claims allow the analyst to “entertain the possibility that a causal relationship may exist.” Process tracing, when combined with the congruence method, allows us to go further and test for whether the congruence found in cases studies is valid or merely spurious. It does so by testing for the validity of the intervening causal processes and variables which actually account for the congruence between independent and dependent variables.<sup>42</sup> Again, as George and Bennett describe it, process tracing involves an “attempt to identify a causal path (the causal chain) that depicts how the independent variable leads to the outcome of the dependent variable.”<sup>43</sup>

Second, the qualitative case study approach has merit for this dissertation due to a particular lacuna in the extant theoretical work on the subject being discussed. While much of the empirical work on South Asian territorial disputes is either atheoretical, or lacks any pretence to generalizability in focusing on individual cases, theory driven scholarship on territorial disputes in general, as well as the work on the reputational sources of state behaviour in territorial disputes, both discussed earlier, has largely been quantitative. This is

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<sup>42</sup> Henry E. Brady and David Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 12, Jack S. Levy, "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 1 (2008): 11-12.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew Bennett and Alexander L. George, "Case Studies and Process Tracing in History and Political Science: Similar Strokes for Different Foci," in *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations*, ed. Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 181-183.

understandable, and even advisable, for testing the validity and broader generalizability of the propositions being ventured in these studies. Nevertheless, such studies by either completely neglecting case studies, or providing only skimpy or anecdotal ones, do not go far beyond establishing congruence towards probing causality through an investigation of causal processes. Due to this preference for a particular method of inference, therefore, these works are able to tell us about variables that influence the likelihood of peace or war, for instance, but are unable to provide strong causal frameworks and mechanisms to account for why state leaders undertake particular policies, in particular cases, at particular points of time. There is often little, in other words, to account for variations in state policies and behaviour across time, and the incentives for political leaders that bring about such outcomes. This gap between quantitative and qualitative work on territorial disputes has been sought to be addressed in some recent scholarship<sup>44</sup>, but it still remains that the case study work on the topic remains limited, and South Asia in particular has received little theoretically sustained attention. This study, therefore, builds on the already established statistical findings that strategic and reputational concerns influence state behaviour in both inter and intra-state territorial disputes, by both refining the theoretical arguments as well as validating them more rigorously against the historical record.

Third, the cases studies offer us the requisite variation in both the independent and dependent variables, both across and within cases, to allow us to draw valuable theoretical insights. With regard to the independent variables, states involved in territorial disputes in the region have perceived varied amounts of threat from adversaries over the period under consideration. Balances of power amongst the participant states have also ranged from

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<sup>44</sup> Barbara Walter in her most recent work combines quantitative methods with several case study chapters to show the theory at work. Walter, *Reputation and Civil War*.

massive asymmetries, to relative parity, and been subject to mostly gradual, but also sometimes dramatic changes. Bargaining power over the specific area of dispute has similarly been characterized by varying levels of asymmetries, and subject to flux owing to the actions of the disputants, while the spectrum of adversarial actions states have been (perceptually) subject to range from no coercive or unilateralist measures being used, to minor probing actions, to outright unilateralist means including the initiation of war. Finally, the nature of the territories disputed have ranged from those of high salience, such as Kashmir, to territory with no ostensible value for at least one of the states, as was the case with India's claims to the Aksai Chin on the Sino-Indian frontier.

In terms of outcomes, that is compromise or intransigence, and their extent, the region has similarly offered immense variation. While some disputes such as the one over Kashmir and Sino-Indian frontier have remained intractable due to the failure of one or both parties to make large enough concessions, others such as China's disputes with the smaller neighbours were resolved successfully, with large concessions by China while the smaller neighbours proved largely intractable over their own claims despite their obvious weakness. There have additionally been instances of the use of force and attempts at military coercion, the most prominent of these being Pakistan's initiation of wars against India in 1947 and 1965, and the Chinese offensive against India of 1962. Variance in state policies and behaviour is moreover evident not only across cases, but also with them across time. In Kashmir, for instance, India first offered a plebiscite in 1947, and reiterated this offer as late as in 1953, only to withdraw it beginning in the mid-1950s.

Fourth, aside from their number, the nature of the case studies, in their being longitudinal in nature (i.e. their focus on variation in policies over time) has multiple methodological benefits. For one, such cases studies overcome some of the drawbacks of



small-*n* research, by multiplying the number of observable implications against which a theoretical approach (and its competition) can be tested.<sup>45</sup> Second, looking at both, for instance, Indian and Chinese policies across multiple cases, as well as over time in the same case, allows for more confidence in controlling for potentially confounding or omitted variables, which are expected to remain constant over time, and therefore inadequate in accounting for changes and variations in the dependent variable.<sup>46</sup> As Levy has correctly noted, the problem in case research of “identifying cases that are truly comparable...is often easier to approximate in longitudinal designs involving a single state over time – where political culture, history, rivalries, historical lessons, etc. change very slowly if at all – than in most cross-case designs.”<sup>47</sup>

Empirical data for the case studies have been accumulated from archival research, published collections of primary documents, historical works, memoirs, and other sources of primary and secondary material. The data is admittedly strongest for Indian policy deliberations owing to the fact that primary documentation for the early decades of independent India’s foreign policy has been most easily accessible for this researcher. Many of the declassified documents from this period have been published in the two series of the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*.<sup>48</sup> Other published documents for this period include White Papers released by the Government of India on Kashmir as well as the Sino-Indian frontier

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<sup>45</sup> Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 208-230.

<sup>46</sup> Harry Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," in *Handbook of Political Science: Strategies of Inquiry*, ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 79-137.

<sup>47</sup> Levy, "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference," 10.

<sup>48</sup> *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru: Second Series*, (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund: Distributed by Oxford University Press, 1984).

dispute. This material has been supplemented by archival research conducted at the National Archives of India (New Delhi) and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (New Delhi), involving perusal of the papers of Nehru and other prominent players in the realm of India foreign policy during this period. Given limitations of similar archival and primary data access for other countries, it is acknowledged that the case studies on India will be the most rigorous and empirically rich and novel, serving to most clearly elucidate the theoretical argument being proposed. For the other case studies there has been greater reliance on published primary documentation, and particularly on secondary sources, and historical works based on significant access to the respective countries' primary documentation. In all, the case studies should be able to provide sufficient confidence as to the validity of the argument, as well as its possible generalizability to other cases in the region and beyond.

## **Coming Up**

Following the next chapter, which addresses conceptual and theoretical issues, in the chapters three and four, I study Indian and Pakistani policies and behaviour in their dispute over Kashmir. A legacy of the hasty exit of British colonialism, Kashmir, a large territory at the acme of the Indian subcontinent with a Muslim majority population, quickly became a bone of contention between the two successor states to British India, and continues to be one to this day. In many ways indivisibility is argued to have been inevitable given the strategic and nationalist salience of the territory for both parties, and the two chapters seek to assess the validity of that claim and account for state behaviour during a period when the two states had on principle agreed to a potentially promising solution, a plebiscite of the people of Kashmir to determine their wishes and the future of their state.

The fifth and sixth chapters investigate Indian and Chinese policies and behaviour respectively, in the Sino-Indian territorial dispute. This dispute has most prominently revolved around two large chunks of territory in the eastern and western sectors of the frontier, of approximately 90,000 and 33,000 square kilometres in size respectively. This dispute, again a legacy of contested colonial frontiers, remained dormant for several years before erupting in the late 1950s, leading eventually to war in 1962. The two chapters seek to address why the dispute only broke out when it did, and not earlier, as well as the causes underlying Peking and New Delhi's policies and actions. Chapter 5 focuses particularly on explaining New Delhi's intransigence even with regard to territory in the western sector which was of patently little value to India, while chapter 6 accounts for China's continued willingness to make large concessions in the eastern sector, and the eventual resort to the use of force in 1962, most of the gains of which were puzzlingly relinquished immediately after.

The final set of case studies, in chapter 7, look at the asymmetric territorial disputes in the region featuring the large states (particularly China) and their smaller neighbours (Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, and Pakistan). All these disputes, barring the one with Bhutan<sup>49</sup>, were resolved in the early to mid-1960s, with the outcomes curiously reflecting for the most part the claims of the indisputably weaker party. The chapter considers these cases, and an additional case involving India and Bhutan, and tests whether the theoretical framework offered in this dissertation can account for the puzzling outcomes to these disputes. The concluding chapter summarizes the findings of the study, and explores its implications for the study of IR in general, as well as the applicability of the argument to intra-state territorial

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<sup>49</sup> The failure to resolve the dispute with Bhutan had less to do with Chinese intransigence and much to do with the fact, as discussed later, that India exercised complete control over Bhutan's external relations and the Indian leadership saw that territorial dispute as an extension of their own dispute with China.

disputes, and state behaviour beyond the geographical and temporal confines of the study, including contemporary developments in the disputes discussed in the case studies.

## **Theorizing State Behaviour in Territorial Disputes**

The South Asian neighbourhood has been the scene of several territorial disputes in the years following the end of colonialism, and the emergence of states in the region as independent entities. Some, most prominently the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, and the Sino-Indian border quarrel have remained intractable for decades, and a source of much conflict and debate. Others, however, such as those involving China and its smaller neighbours (Burma, Nepal, and Pakistan) as well as a dispute between India and Bhutan witnessed compromise and resolution, surprisingly on the weaker states' terms, once the larger party had acquiesced to negotiate.

Even in the cases of the more intractable disputes, while conflict has defined the relationship, the states involved have at various points demonstrated a willingness to make concessions on their original claims, to a greater or lesser extent. With regard to Kashmir for instance, the Indian leadership only adopted an intransigent position insistent on maintaining a favourable status quo after 1954, prior to when both contestants had agreed, in principle, on a plebiscite to resolve the status of the state. In the Sino-Indian case, similarly, after avoiding the issue in the initial years, and before eventually resorting to force in 1962, Peking had expressed a willingness to resolve the dispute through a 'package deal' involving compromise by both sides on territory of least importance to them, an offer that was rejected by New Delhi. What then explains when and why state leaders seek to address their territorial disputes through concessions or intransigence, and the extent to which they are willing to resort to either?

This chapter offers a theoretical framework to address these questions. In it, I posit the expectation that state leaders', finding themselves in an international environment plagued by uncertainty, base their decisions with regard to their territorial claims to a significant extent on their expectations of the potential long term security implications of their actions. Such assessments, I envisage, manifest themselves not only in a concern for the material or strategic implications of compromise, as traditionally influential IR perspectives suggest, but are likely to be equally apparent in decision makers' concern for the reputational consequences of their actions. Indeed, there is little reason, I argue, to theoretically privilege the material/strategic mechanism over the reputational one, as the latter concerns may sometimes overwhelm the former.

In the following discussion, I first highlight the basic assumptions that underlie the study, and justify particularly why a reputational logic is worthy of our attention. I particularly elaborate on how reputation has been conceptualized in the extant literature on IR and territorial disputes, and how this study both draws on and deviates from them. I then go on to develop a theoretical framework intended to account for state behaviour in territorial disputes, by hypothesizing conditions under which we can expect state leaders to be most and least concerned with the strategic and reputational costs associated with particular courses of action, how decision makers assess the probable reputational implications of their policy options, and finally how this calculus translates into the extent to which they are conciliatory or intransigent in their territorial disputes.

## Underlying Assumptions and Concepts

The basic simplifying assumption underlying this study is that states are unitary and rational actors. First, states are unitary in the sense that their leaders enjoy relative autonomy from both societal forces within the domestic environment, as well as from the external systemic environment. The interests of the state are furthermore autonomous from those of the individuals and groups that lead them, to the extent that the private and corporate interests of the latter can only be pursued if the interests of the former have first been secured.<sup>1</sup> The fundamental interests of the state are survival and security, and the maintenance of autonomy, and towards these ends national leaders seek to create policies and undertake actions, in the face of challenges from both external and internal sources.<sup>2</sup> This means that while domestic political pressures are not unimportant, policy preferences that state leaders develop and pursue cannot be reduced to the interests or preferences of particular individuals and groups within the state and society, even though policy outcomes may be shaped or filtered through domestic political mechanisms.<sup>3</sup> This basic assumption serves to clarify later in the study the role that purely systemic concerns, as opposed to domestic political pressures, play in decision making with regard to territorial disputes. To preview what is to come, I suggest that state leaders develop independent policy preferences

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> Steven R. David, *Choosing Sides: Alignment and Realignment in the Third World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), Steven R. David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991): 233-256, John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979).

<sup>3</sup> Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, eds., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Gideon Rose, "Review: Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998): 144-172.

based on the external context, and that rather than determining policy preferences, domestic political pressures only constrain, and sometimes reinforce, state leaders' pre-existing proclivities.

Second, state leaders are assumed to be instrumentally rational, as defined in the limited sense.<sup>4</sup> That is, policy makers make basic cost-benefit calculations as to the consequences of their actions based on the limited information that they possess, which is meant at a minimum to ensure that the any policies and actions pursued enhance rather than damage core state interests. A crucial assumption with regard to this cost-benefit calculus, from our perspective, is that decision makers assess not just the immediate consequences of their conflictual or cooperative actions, but also their long-term implications. This, as extant theoretical studies tell us, is likely to be the case for two contrary but related reasons. On the one hand, systemic 'anarchy' or the absence of an overarching authority to regulate state behaviour in the international system, means that another state's future intentions cannot be divined, and the possibility of an adversary reneging on prior commitments at a later point cannot be discounted.<sup>5</sup> Given these uncertainties and fears, state leaders make decisions in the present with an eye on the future, and constantly assess how power dynamics may evolve with time, and what that might mean for an adversary's intentions and behaviour.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the very conflictual dynamics that these concerns generate between states are

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<sup>4</sup> See Frank C. Zagare, "Rationality and Deterrence," *World Politics* 42, no. 2 (1990): 270-273.

<sup>5</sup> James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 379-414, Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Robert Powell, "War as a Commitment Problem," *International Organization* 60, no. 01 (2006): 169-203, Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

<sup>6</sup> For discussions of state assessments of long term power dynamics vis-à-vis potential adversaries, see Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).



themselves costly and dangerous. Not only do wars become more probable<sup>7</sup>, but given a large “shadow of the future,” the benefits of cooperation forgone in the long term due to conflict are also far from negligible, which again necessitates that state leaders carefully assess the long term implications of their decisions to cooperate or persist in individualistic and conflictual behaviour.<sup>8</sup>

This focus on the future, and the uncertainty about other states intentions, means that decision makers are conscious, as the traditional IR literature has pointed out, of the tangible material costs and benefits of their actions. For neo-realists, for instance, ‘anarchy’ results in a zero-sum focus on ‘relative gains,’ seeking to maximize material benefits from any interaction, for fear that any material concessions made now may be exploited by an adversary in the future.<sup>9</sup> This is particularly likely to be the case with regard to concessions on disputed territories, of course, because such territories often possess economic or strategic attributes which are easily fungible into military resources and advantage.<sup>10</sup> In addition to these material-strategic considerations, however, I assume that a concern with the

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<sup>7</sup> Even purely security seeking states, by this account, can inadvertently end up in a spiralling “security dilemma” because attempts by one state to improve its security often leads to an automatic decrease in the security of others, prompting similar responses. For discussions of the security dilemma see, Charles L. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics* 50, no. 1 (1997): 171-201, John H. Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 2, no. 2 (1950): 157-180, Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167-214, Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 58-113, Andrew H. Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> For the classic discussion of the “shadow of the future” and its implications for cooperation see, Robert M. Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

<sup>9</sup> Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 485-507, Robert Powell, "Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory," *The American Political Science Review* 85, no. 4 (1991): 1303-1320. At its extreme, this tendency leads to conscious expansionism on the part of state, within the bounds of minimal rationality. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

<sup>10</sup> Robert J. Art, "The Fungibility of Force," in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, ed. Robert J. Art and Kenneth Neal Waltz (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 6-14.

future also logically means that states care about what *reputational* signals their actions convey to potential adversaries. Realist accounts, I suggest, by failing to fully explicate the logic of their theories, often miss out on, or underemphasize, the importance of the reputational mechanism to how state leaders think about security. Since an adversary's impression of oneself as resolute, weak, generous, or expansionist and aggressive is just as likely to shape their behaviour, as is the material-strategic situation, there is no reason to expect that state leaders care any less about the reputational implications of their actions in a context of systemic uncertainties.<sup>11</sup> Policies and actions with regard to disputed territory are therefore expected here to be influenced not only by the material-strategic or symbolic importance of the land, but also by the desire of decision makers to signal their states' 'type' for reputational purposes.

Finally, while the long term strategic and reputational implications of policy and behaviour are expected to be important for all states at all times, I begin this study with the intuition that such concerns should be particularly intense in newly formed states, which are often vulnerable both internally and externally<sup>12</sup>, and most fearful about both their immediate and long term security and survival. As nascent states, these countries often play a fine balancing game between the demands of immediate survival, and the imperatives of ensuring long term security, and are likely to be particularly sensitive to how immediate incentives to buy peace through compromise might impact their long term security prospects. As new

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<sup>11</sup> As Snyder and Diesing comment on the centrality of uncertainty, "*if* states were quite clear about the magnitude of each other's interests (other than resolve reputation) in any crisis, there would be no need for concern about preserving a reputation for firmness. One would be expected to be as firm in any crisis as "justified" by one's known interests and capabilities..." Glenn Herald Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), 185.

<sup>12</sup> David, *Choosing Sides*, David, "Explaining Third World Alignment."

entrants to the regional and international state systems, leaders in these states are likely to not only seek a strategic position which is viable in the long term, but also be conscious that they are in a sense working with a reputational *tabula rasa*, and that how they shape it will determine the context within which they will function into the distant future. These dynamics should be particularly evident in the ultimate arena for the contest over security and survival, disputes over territory.

### **Reputation in International Relations**

By *reputation* is meant dispositional attributions that states make about one another, that is, judgements about the each other's character. Crucially, because such attributions about one are expected to influence a potential adversary's future intentions and behaviour, by shaping their expectations about one's own conduct in the future, state leaders are often particularly cognizant about the reputation that a policy or action may engender from others.<sup>13</sup> These attributions made by others may concern one's commitment to certain values and interests, behaviour when placed in specific situations and general tendency towards aggression and conflict or cooperation and reasonableness in international conduct. Scholars have, indeed, used the term in varied senses, depending on the issue at hand, indicating that states may hold multiple reputational objectives both within and across issue areas at the same time.<sup>14</sup> As one set of scholars has succinctly put it, reputational interests "have to do

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<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), 6-7.

<sup>14</sup> T. V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 25-32. Paul himself illustrates this existence of multiple reputational concerns (both in neoliberal institutionalist and deterrence sense) in the nuclear arena.

with effects of outcomes upon others' images of one's resolve, flexibility, trustworthiness, alliance reliability, predictability, etc..."<sup>15</sup>

In the IR literature, the more prominent conception of reputation has been the one developed in the works on deterrence theory, and adopted by scholars of territorial disputes. Such works have focussed on the building of reputations of resolve and credibility, as a means of deterring adversaries from threatening ones interests, in the belief that any indications of wavering from commitments by signalling a lack of resolve can engender a reputation of weakness and thereby likely encourage and invite further challenges.<sup>16</sup> As Jervis has cogently summarized this logic:

*statesmen are often less concerned with the substance of the issue they are facing than they are with the inferences about them that others will draw from their behaviour...the costs of not pushing as hard as one can extend beyond the loss of position on the issue at stake and encompass the danger*

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<sup>15</sup> Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations*, 183.

<sup>16</sup> The classic works exploring the importance of reputation in deterrence have been Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960). For more recent discussions on the issue see, Dale C. Copeland, "Do Reputations Matter?," *Security Studies* 7, no. 1 (1997): 33-71, Mark J. C. Crescenzi, "Reputation and Interstate Conflict," *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 2 (2007): 382-396, Paul K. Huth, "Reputations and Deterrence: A Theoretical and Empirical Assessment," *Security Studies* 7, no. 1 (1997): 72-99, Shiping Tang, "Reputation, Cult of Reputation, and International Conflict," *Security Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 34-62, Scott Wolford, "The Turnover Trap: New Leaders, Reputation, and International Conflict," *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 4 (2007): 772-778. For applications of this reputational logic to inter and intra-state territorial disputes see Monica Duffy Toft, "Indivisible Territory, Geographic Concentration, and Ethnic War," *Security Studies* 12, no. 2 (2002): 82-119, Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), Barbara F. Walter, "Building Reputation: Why Governments Fight Some Separatists but Not Others," *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 2 (2006): 313-330, Barbara F. Walter, "Explaining the Intractability of Territorial Conflict," *International Studies Review* 5, no. 4 (2003): 137-153, Barbara F. Walter, *Reputation and Civil War: Why Separatist Conflicts Are So Violent* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

*that others will see the state as unable to stand up for its interests. Losses then will tend to snowball.*<sup>17</sup>

Alternatively, other scholars have highlighted the incentives that exist for states to build more benign reputations in their external relations so as to reap the long term benefits of cooperation, and avoid the immense costs associated with others developing the impression that one is dispositionally aggressive, revisionist, or untrustworthy. Particularly, as neoliberal institutionalist scholars have pointed out, building and maintaining a reputation for cooperation, and of adhering to, and not cheating on commitments, is integral to cooperation under conditions of anarchy, and in the presence of a long “shadow of the future.”<sup>18</sup> Compliance is therefore encouraged because policy makers fear that “any evidence of unreliability will damage their current cooperative relationships and lead other states to reduce their willingness to enter into future agreements.”<sup>19</sup> In territorial disputes, Huth has observed, this concern means that state leaders have strong incentives to adhere to, and not renege on a territorial settlement, once reached.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Jervis, "Security Regimes," *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (1982): 367. Since states know little about each other's true interests (owing to informational asymmetries, which states have incentives to maintain. See Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War.") they draw inferences about the other's resolve from “*behaviour* in previous encounters.” Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations*, 186.

<sup>18</sup> Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*. Also see, Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 105-108, Beth A. Simmons, "International Law and State Behavior: Commitment and Compliance in International Monetary Affairs," *The American Political Science Review* 94, no. 4 (2000): 819-835.

<sup>19</sup> George W. Downs and Michael A. Jones, "Reputation, Compliance, and International Law," *The Journal of Legal Studies* 31, no. S1 (2002): S96.

<sup>20</sup> Paul K. Huth, "Why Are Territorial Disputes between States a Central Cause of International Conflict?," in *What Do We Know About War?*, ed. John A. Vasquez (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 2000), 104-105.

While deterrence theory has been found lacking in its claims about reputational attribution, and particularly in its assumption that all actions generate reputations, or dispositional attributions<sup>21</sup>, as Snyder and Diesing observed in a classic work, “what stands out is the discrepancy between the little evidence that statesmen *do* infer an opponent’s resolve from his behaviour in previous cases and the massive evidence that decision makers *think* such inferences are made.”<sup>22</sup> Given these issues with the extant understandings of how decision makers do, and should, think about their reputation, this dissertation seeks to revisit the question of how state leaders actually think about their reputation and its formation, by positing that decision makers do indeed think about reputations in more simplistic ways than they possibly should, but also in more complex and nuanced ways than extant reputation based studies of state behaviour in territorial disputes would have us believe.

State leaders, I expect, make more muted distinctions between the prospects of dispositional or situational attributions, and often see reputations forming even in cases where adversaries are likely to ascribe behaviour to the situation rather than character. Especially when decision makers have reason to believe that a similar context or situation may be repeated in the future, they are likely to expect the two situations to be interdependent, and therefore believe that their conduct in the present will generate a reputation. In Mercer’s terms, this is a *specific*, as opposed to *general* reputation, which “applies

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<sup>21</sup> Mercer argues instead that in fact many or most actions only generate situational attributions, where action is attributed not to character but to the situation, ensuring thereby that reputations often do not form. Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics*, 6-8; 14-43, Jonathan Mercer, "Reputation and Rational Deterrence Theory," *Security Studies* 7, no. 1 (1997): 100-113. For a similar critique of the deterrence theory expectation that reputations form easily see Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), Daryl G. Press, "The Credibility of Power: Assessing Threats During the “Appeasement” Crises of the 1930s," *International Security* 29, no. 3 (2005): 136-169.

<sup>22</sup> Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations*, 187. Why states assign more importance to reputation than warranted is attributed to the basic anarchic nature of the international system which encourages dealing with uncertainty conservatively, i.e. by thinking of the future in “worst case” terms. *Ibid.*, 188.

not across types of situations, but within specific types of situations...”<sup>23</sup> Alternatively put, reputational concerns are likely to be most salient when dealing with “the same geographical area or the same type of issue...”<sup>24</sup> Therefore, even when making territorial concessions due to situational factors such military weakness, or low salience, policy makers may often believe that there are potential long term reputational implications associated with such action. This expectation, that decision makers believe that reputations form more often and easily than they actually do, is also intuitively appealing given the frequency with which leaders themselves seem to refer to the reputational objectives underlying policy decisions.

Having said this, the prevalent deterrence logic is also posited to understate the complexity of how decision makers think about their own reputations and their formation. For works in this vein, situational specifics or context are immaterial, because all actions generate reputational attributions, and more specifically all acts of compromise signal weakness. I argue, in contrast, that situational or contextual factors do influence policy makers’ assessments of the reputational implications of their actions, by shaping both to what extent reputation building is even considered important, as well as the evaluation of what kind of reputation, if any, particular actions might breed. This means that decision makers are unlikely to consider any compromise, just because it involves a concession on a prior stated commitment<sup>25</sup>, to necessarily engender a reputation of weakness, or adopting firm and intransigent postures to always and necessarily convey resolve. Rather, the *bargaining*

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<sup>23</sup> Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics*, 37.

<sup>24</sup> Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations*, 185, 187.

<sup>25</sup> Any compromise on territory, by this account, is reputationally costly because it conveys information that one is not serious or resolute about territorial claims, and might encourage or provoke further territorial challenges. Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, Walter, *Reputation and Civil War*.

*context* surrounding a commitment is likely to be perceived by state leaders to both shape the kind of reputation attributed to them, as well as sometimes mitigate, and at other times exacerbate such reputational incentives. Concessions made from positions of bargaining weakness or in response to coercion, therefore, are likely to be believed by policy makers to have drastically different (and negative) reputational consequences, in comparison to compromise from positions of undisputed strength, or when prior coercion by an adversary is either absent, or has been resolutely reversed. Indeed concessions in the latter case may even be viewed by the ones making them to serve as a signal of generosity rather than weakness, and therefore promise a favourable reputation. As Jervis has colourfully observed, state leaders may recognize that “the [adversary’s] appetite does not always grow with the eating. It partly depends on how one gains the meal and what suits one’s taste.”<sup>26</sup>

This focus on context, and not just on commitments, helps avoid some of the major pitfalls of existing reputational arguments in deterrence theory and in works on territorial disputes. First, it reduces expectations of *indivisibility*, which the argument as currently conceptualized logically leads to, because context can mitigate reputational fears and thereby facilitate compromise even when decision makers care about building a reputation for resolve. Second, and relatedly, an emphasis on context also relaxes the assumption of *interdependence of commitments* in existing works, an assumption that minimizes the prospect of compromise by treating all commitments as equal and interrelated.<sup>27</sup> In the case of territorial disputes, such an assumption has led to the assertion that states facing multiple territorial

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<sup>26</sup> Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 90.

<sup>27</sup> For critiques of the interdependence of commitment assumptions in deterrence theory see Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985). See, in particular, Patrick M. Morgan, "Saving Face for the Sake of Deterrence," in *Psychology and Deterrence*, ed. Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 125-152.



challenges are unlikely to make any compromises at all in any one of them because all commitments are interrelated, and all concessions convey the same signal of weakness.<sup>28</sup> By making concessions in different contexts, over different pieces of territory, have potentially varied reputational effects, the acknowledgment of contextual factors allows for the possibility that commitments might sometimes be viewed as independent rather than interdependent.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly from our perspective, taking context into account allows for states (and us) to conceptualize reputation in a more complex, nuanced and ultimately accurate manner. No longer are only two forms of reputation possible or important, a negative one of weakness and a positive one of resolve, making conflict endemic and cooperation all but impossible. On the contrary, concessions may sometimes, as when made from strength, be expected by decision makers to have a positive implication of signalling generosity and cooperation, a reputation which security seeking states, cognizant of the benefits of long term cooperation, should logically be as interested in as they are in avoiding reputations of weakness, or building reputations of resolve and firmness. Conversely, state leaders may recognize that firmness and intransigence may not always engender a positive reputation of resolve, and may sometimes, particularly in a context of dominant bargaining strength, be read by the other in a negative sense as a signal of one's aggressive and overbearing character. This more nuanced understanding of how states conceive of their own reputations therefore allows us to build in the intuitive expectation, captured in the liberal institutionalist works, that states seek a positive reputation of not only credibility and resolve, but also of reasonableness and cooperation, and aim to avoid a

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<sup>28</sup> Walter, "Explaining the Intractability of Territorial Conflict," 13-14, Walter, *Reputation and Civil War*, 149-150.

negative reputation of not only weakness of resolve, but also that of being aggressive and overbearing.<sup>29</sup>

### **States and Territorial Disputes: Insuring the Future**

If states are concerned as much about the future as they are about the present, how does this affect their behaviour when it comes to territorial disputes to which they are a party? Decisions to compromise or fight over territory are, after all, likely to be especially difficult for state leaders. While on the one hand territory is integral to core state interests of physical security and survival, and therefore not surprisingly the issue over which states are most likely to go to war<sup>30</sup>, on the other hand, this very amenability of territorial disputes to military conflict makes them highly costly endeavours. Wars and military conflicts in general, not only have obvious material and human costs, which may often be prohibitively high for new and vulnerable states with scarce resources, but also hold the prospect of major political punishment for leaders, especially in the case of long drawn out, costly, or unsuccessful wars.

Given these risks associated with both compromise and conflict, in the absence of any significant threats or costs associated with the maintenance or assertion of territorial claims, and no foreseeable decline in their bargaining position over disputed lands, state leaders, not surprisingly, often have little incentive to deal with the issue with any urgency,

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<sup>29</sup> This is in keeping with, for instance, Paul's finding that nuclear weapon states seek both a reputation for resolve as well as a more positive one of abiding by the 'tradition of non-use.' Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons*.

<sup>30</sup> Paul F. Diehl, ed., *A Road Map to War: Territorial Dimensions of International Conflict*, 1st ed. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1999), Paul K. Huth, *Standing Your Ground: Territorial Disputes and International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), Paul Domenic Senese and John A. Vasquez, *The Steps to War: An Empirical Study* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), John A. Vasquez, ed., *What Do We Know About War?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 2000).

and indeed are likely to develop a preference to pursue the materially and politically safe option of delay or deferment.<sup>31</sup> However, once direct or indirect threats to territorial integrity and the political and strategic costs of maintaining territorial claims mount, more proactive policy measures, involving the choice between compromise and conflict, become necessary. The question then becomes one of how, when faced with the immediate costs of territorial disagreements, states resolve the dilemma of adopting more or less conciliatory or intransigent and conflictive postures with regard to their territorial claims. Why, in certain cases and at certain times do decision makers chose the path of great compromise, while in other cases adopting the path of firmness and intractability?

This dissertation begins with the simple assertion that in such a context of threats and costs, state leaders seek to judiciously balance the immediate costs of conflict (and the benefits of buying peace), against the potential long term costs and benefits of compromise. The higher the longer term costs of compromise are perceived to be, the less likely decision makers will see value in the short term benefits of avoiding conflict and buying peace. On the other hand, when the longer term costs or dangers of compromise are perceived to be negligible, the benefits of buying peace through compromise are likely to become increasingly attractive for decision makers. How exactly leaders of states assess these long term implications of their actions, is in turn suggested to be a function, as discussed in detail next, of the credibility that can be attached to an adversary's commitments, and the bargaining context within which the territorial dispute is played out. Crucially, for our purposes, it is argued that these factors affect the calculus of decision makers often through a

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<sup>31</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, "Regime Insecurity and International Cooperation: Explaining China's Compromises in Territorial Disputes," *International Security* 30, no. 2 (2005): 46-83, M. Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation : Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008).

reputational mechanism, and not only the strategic-material logic emphasized by extant works.

### **Commitment Problems and Territorial Disputes**

If the long term implications of their actions are of concern to state leaders, the initial question to be tackled is that of under what conditions decision makers are likely to worry most, or least, about the potential long term costs and dangers associated with compromise on disputed territory? In keeping with prior works, I suggest that fears about the costs of compromise are higher the more intense the *commitment problem* for an adversary, that is the lesser the credibility a state can attach to the commitments and promises made by a potential adversary in the present. Where I differ from extant discussions is in terms of the mechanisms through which such commitment problems influence decision making.

To recapitulate and build on the discussion in the previous chapter, *commitment problem* refers to the dilemma that given the uncertainty enveloping the intentions of states<sup>32</sup>, and in the absence of overarching authority capable of and willing to regulate state behaviour in the international system, states can never credibly commit to adhering to prior agreements, even if they have every intention of doing so.<sup>33</sup> In the context of territorial disputes specifically this means that state leaders are never able or willing to unquestioningly believe that an adversary's commitment to a territorial agreement at one period of time will stick, and not be violated in the future.

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<sup>32</sup> States indeed have strong incentives to mask their motives, intentions and interests, which is said to generate 'informational asymmetries.' Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War."

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Powell, "War as a Commitment Problem."

The intensity of commitment problems can be conceived of in terms of how easy state leaders perceive it will be for an adversary to renege on a territorial agreement in the future. The less costly decision makers expect renegeing on prior commitment to be for an adversary, the more worried they are likely to be about the potential costs of compromise on territory for fear that concessions in the present would only encourage or facilitate further claims and challenges by the other in the future. On the other hand, the lesser the ease (or higher the costs) for an adversary in renegeing on a territorial agreement, or alternatively the easier (less costly) decision makers expect it to be for them to fight off future challenges from the adversary, the less troubling the potential consequences of compromise on territory become.

Such prospects are assessed by policy makers, at the most basic level based on a simple calculus of *relative military capabilities*, and its likely evolution into the future.<sup>34</sup> The greater the gap in military capabilities between a state and the rival, to the latter's advantage, the more intense commitment related concerns are likely to be. Even if the adversary is viewed to currently lack such an advantage, the expectation that it is likely do so in the future is sufficient to activate commitment related concerns. In this sense, the relative gap in *potential power* between oneself and an adversary is likely to be an important consideration for state leaders thinking about the long term. As Copeland defines it, potential power "includes all the capital and resources, both physical and human, that could be eventually translated into measurable economic output...such things as population size, raw material reserves, technological levels, educational development, and unused fertile territory," all of which form

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<sup>34</sup> The classic expressions of neo-realist balance of power theory are found in Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

the basis for military growth.<sup>35</sup> In the absence of an actual or expected gap in military capabilities in an adversary's favour, or when such an advantage obtains in one's own favour, however, the diminished prospect of a future military challenge makes commitment problems negligible or non-existent.

Beyond material capabilities, there are likely to be additional factors which either mitigate or exacerbate commitment concerns. Geographic characteristics of border regions may sometimes significantly overwhelm a purely capability based calculus by altering the *offense-defence balance*, that is the relative ease with which offensive or defensive military actions can be undertaken.<sup>36</sup> Certain physical features such as rivers, seas, oceans<sup>37</sup>, or mountain ranges separating states, by making offensive actions difficult and costly, can mitigate the threat of offensive action by a rival. In the absence of such geographical barriers to prevent an adversary from rapidly moving military forces and equipment, on the other hand, commitment related concerns continue to persist. Indeed, where an adversary possesses a distinct geographical-strategic advantage, even nominally weaker military forces can be transformed into menacing threats.

One final factor influencing decision maker assessments of the intensity of commitment problems is expected to be their perceptions of other states' intentions. While the basic uncertainties engendered by the international system make state leaders sceptical about other states' intentions in the first place, other factors such as understandings of

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<sup>35</sup> Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*, 6. In Mearsheimer's terms this is a state's 'latent power.' Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 60-61. That states think about future trajectories in considering relative military capabilities is also well articulated in the power transition literature, the classic expression of which can be found in Organski and Kugler, *The War Ledger*.

<sup>36</sup> Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma.", Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

<sup>37</sup> Mearsheimer for instance talks about the stopping power of water as a limitation to his offensive realist theory. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

shared history, previous interactions, and similarities or differences in political and economic ideologies and systems, are likely to give more concrete shape to assessments of a potential adversary's long term intentions. Indeed, prior attribution of a reputation to the adversary (as cooperative and reasonable or potentially aggressive and expansionist) based on the shared history and previous interactions may shape decision maker's perceptions about the former's long term intentions. Importantly, these perceptions may be accurate or completely incorrect, but they matter nonetheless.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, when a territorial challenger is believed to possess relatively benign intentions, and is not perceived to have any long term expansionist ambitions threatening one's territorial integrity beyond the issue in dispute, the commitment problem is mitigated to an extent.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, fears that an adversary will renege on a territorial agreement are exacerbated when the adversary is perceived to be intensely hostile or possess potentially unlimited revisionist or expansionist intentions, which may find expression in the future. Such hostile intentions may indeed make a nominally weaker adversary appear more menacing than a purely capability based calculus would suggest.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 58-113, Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations*, 254-255, 297-310, Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*.

<sup>39</sup> It must be noted that the basic uncertainty underlying the system means that the future intentions of a state cannot be assumed or predicted. Therefore states are likely to be cautious in attributing benign intentions to the other, and for the most part we can expect such perceptions to only mitigate rather than completely overwhelm the more material aspects of the commitment problem calculus.

<sup>40</sup> After all, weaker powers have been known to initiate, and win, wars against significantly stronger adversaries. In these cases, weaker powers have been known to compensate for their military shortcomings by exhibiting greater resolve, a willingness to assume greater costs, and strategic innovation. Ivan Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security* 26, no. 1 (2001): 93-128, Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics* 27, no. 2 (1975): 175-200, T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Steven Rosen, "War, Power and the Willingness to Suffer," in *Peace, War, and Numbers*, ed. Bruce M. Russett (Beverly Hills Calif.: Sage Publications, 1972).

## The Reputational Calculus





For the extant work on commitment problems, the *strategic* value of territory and implications of compromise assume great importance for state leaders, influencing decision making. Because territories with strategic value (either physical or economic) impart the holder with distinct advantages, either offensive or defensive, and have the effect of increasing the possessor's overall bargaining strength, state leaders are likely to fear that concessions on territory of high material-strategic value, made to an adversary that cannot credibly commit to adhering to its promises, may be exploited by the other at a later point.<sup>41</sup> It may indeed be that a certain piece of territory is viewed as so strategically important that conceding it, or parts of it, would so alter the two sides' relative strength as to generate a commitment problem where none existed before. Conversely, for such an account, when who holds the disputed territory has little strategic implication, concessions become easier because they neither create nor exacerbate commitment problems, meaning that there are no long term costs or disadvantages associated with the act.

The strategic logic, however, is only one mechanism through which commitment related concerns may manifest themselves in the thinking of state leaders. It is moreover insufficient in that it cannot account for why states sometimes adopt intransigent postures with regard to territories with little strategic value. A second mechanism, I argue, which may supplement in some cases, and overwhelm in others, the more prominent strategic-material logic, is a *reputational* one. When faced with commitment related concerns, I suggest that state leaders are likely to be equally concerned about the reputational signals compromise might

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<sup>41</sup> Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism.", Huth, *Standing Your Ground*, Powell, "War as a Commitment Problem."



	 <b>Comm. Problem</b>	 <b>Comm. Problem</b>
 <b>Strategic Costs</b>	Intransigence	Depends on whether strategic costs will transform CP to higher intensity.
 <b>Strategic Costs</b>	Compromise	Compromise

**Table 2.1: Commitment Problem (Strategic logic)**

convey. The more intense the perception that an adversary can easily renege on its commitments at a future date, therefore, the more eager decision makers are expected to be to avoid concessions which may earn them a reputation of weakness, which in turn will be feared to encourage the rival into presenting further challenges, something the latter is viewed as having both the capability and intention to do.

When a commitment problem exists, therefore, leaders are likely to be very wary of making concessions, rendering meaningful compromise only viable under conditions where they are expected to not generate a negative reputation for weakness and lack of resolve, or better still when they are likely to be read by the adversary as a demonstration of generosity and reasonableness. On the other hand, when the prospects of an adversary renegeing on its commitments in the future are considered low, fears of there being reputational costs to compromise become negligible, leaving states less concerned about the dangers of appearing

weak or irresolute. This makes compromise on territorial claims that much easier, and even more so if leaders believe that the concessions they make may even have positive reputational implications in demonstrating to the other ones generosity and reasonableness.

	↑ <b>Comm. Problem</b>	↓ <b>Comm. Problem</b>
↑ <b>Reput. Costs</b>	Intransigence	Depends on whether reputational costs will transform CP to higher intensity.
↓ <b>Reput. Costs</b>	Compromise	Compromise

**Table 2.2: Commitment Problems (Reputational logic)**

The assessment of whether (and what amount of) compromise will convey weakness, and what will not, therefore assumes great importance in the decisional calculus of state leaders addressing the threats and costs associated with territorial claims and disputes. How these questions are answered indeed shape crucially whether, and the extent to which, states decide to pursue the path of compromise or intransigence. The previous discussion however, while it tells us something about why reputation features in state calculus, and the general tendencies of states to be conciliatory or firm for reputational reasons, remains inadequate in understanding how states evaluate the reputational costs and benefits of their policy options. In other words, we know little about when leaders view the reputational implications of more

or less compromise or intransigence to be positive or negative. If the costs and benefits, in reputational terms, are important to the policy calculus, we need to understand how such assessments are made.

This is crucial, because only once we know the content of such assessments can we conclude whether, particularly in cases involving commitment problems, states are likely to be more prone to intransigence, or alternatively will be comfortable with making concessions. Extant works, on the other hand, assume not just that compromise becomes less likely, but that *any* territorial concessions become impossible when states fear betraying weakness. Territory becomes effectively indivisible in such cases because decision makers fear that any concessions will signal a general lack of serious commitment to stated interests, and hence weakness, thereby signalling that future challenges will be similarly accommodated. This indivisibility necessarily breeds intransigence, and leads to a preference for costly conflict over conciliatory solutions to territorial disputes.<sup>42</sup>

Such an argument however is unsatisfactory because in essence it denies the prospect of leaders concerned about reputation ever making concessions on their state's territorial claims. The claim is both empirically difficult to sustain - states do often relent on at least some of their territorial claims even under conditions where they are expected to engage in reputation building - as well as theoretically problematic. It assumes not only that all concessions will convey weakness, but also that the only reputations states care about are those of a positive one of resolve, and its opposite, a negative one of weakness. In reality however states are likely engaged at all times, as discussed earlier, in a cost-benefit calculus, weighing the reputational costs and benefits of compromise against the reputational

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<sup>42</sup> Duffy Toft, "Indivisible Territory, Geographic Concentration, and Ethnic War.", Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, Walter, "Explaining the Intractability of Territorial Conflict.", Walter, *Reputation and Civil War*.

implications of choosing the path of firmness, and potentially conflict or war. As one pair of scholars have succinctly put it, “whether to be firm and tough toward an adversary, in order to deter him, but at the risk of provoking his anger or fear, or to conciliate him in the hope of reducing sources of conflict, but at the risk of strengthening him and causing him to miscalculate one’s own resolve, is a perennial and central dilemma of international relations.”<sup>43</sup>

Getting a better handle of how leaders think about their reputations therefore has to perform a move away from the limited way in which extant works view the issue, involving a positive reputation of resolve, and a negative one of weakness, to a more nuanced one which builds in the alternative positive reputation of generosity and reasonableness, and negative one of being aggressive and overbearing – two sets of reputational possibilities that state leaders are likely to be equally cognizant about. This of course necessitates that we better theorize the conditions under which state leaders believe their policies and actions may lead to them being attributed one or the other of the reputations.

Conceptualizing these issues better also offers the benefit of being able to estimate not just the content of policy (compromise or not) but also the extent of each. So, while an assessment that compromise will be seen by an adversary as weakness, and firmness as evidence of resolve, may provoke intransigence, the absence of any reputational implications may engender a willingness to make moderate compromises, while an expectation that concessions will only be registered by the other as a manifestation of one’s generosity and

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<sup>43</sup> Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations*, 254. For another classic exposition of this issue see Jervis’s discussion of ‘spiral’ vs. ‘deterrence’ models of international conflict and cooperation. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 58-113. In the case of developing countries this dilemma is magnified given the multiple threats they often face at home and abroad, and the limited resources they usually possess in attempting to address them. Conflict and war in the cases of these states can be potentially disastrous in ensuring security and territorial integrity in the long term.

reasonableness may lead to compromises which are extensive and even beyond what is necessary. Such an account therefore is likely to help explain policy behaviour which may be puzzling on first look – cases where states stay firm on claims over territory with little symbolic or strategic importance, at considerable risk to themselves; instances of compromise on strategic territory even when states face commitment problems; and finally cases of large compromises by states on disputed territory even when they have dominant bargaining strength.

The next sections therefore posit an argument as to how states in fact assess the potential reputational consequences of their actions. The focus is on how contextual factors associated with the bargaining context play in to the actual reputational, as opposed to strategic calculus that states makes, thereby shaping policies and behaviour with regard to disputed territorial claims in ways different to what the prevailing wisdom in the study of international politics would have us believe.

### **Bargaining Strength**

When engaged in reputational cost-benefit assessments, I suggest that contextual factors surrounding a territorial dispute matter, and may serve to either mitigate or exacerbate reputational fears, thereby making compromise easier or more difficult for policy makers. Leaders, it is expected, assess the reputational consequences of their actions not only based on the extent to which they represent adherence to stated commitments, but also on the context and circumstances under which their actions are actuated. Policies and actions therefore are viewed by leaders to signal not just information about commitment, but also about conditions under which compromise or intransigence will be resorted to. This means

that all concessions are not in fact viewed to convey the same reputational signal, and depending on the context, compromise may indeed be viable and acceptable to state leaders, even when they are concerned about betraying weakness.

The first contextual factor that I suggest matters, thereby making compromise more or less likely, is a state's *bargaining strength* in the territorial dispute. Bargaining strength is here defined in a minimal sense, in terms of the amount of physical control a state's leaders believe they can exercise over a disputed piece of territory.<sup>44</sup> Taylor Fravel has elegantly articulated this conception in the context territorial disputes as follows:

*A state's bargaining power in a dispute reflects its ability to control the land that it claims.*

*This bargaining power is formed by two components. The first is the amount of contested territory that a state occupies. The greater the proportion of disputed land that a state holds, the stronger its relative position given the costs for the opposing side to change the territorial status quo with force. The second component is the state's ability to project its military power against its opponent over all contested areas, including those that it claims but does not control. Even if a state holds only a small portion of the disputed land, it may still be able to project power over*

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<sup>44</sup> Alternative conceptions of *bargaining strength* define it in terms of not just relative military capabilities, but also relative “interests” engaged which determine the parties’ relative resolve. Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations*, 189-195. This is perfectly reasonable logic in conceptualizing how state leaders think about their *bargaining strength*, but is eschewed here for three reasons: (a) As the most obvious and transparent indicator, relative military power projection capabilities in the disputed territory are likely to be viewed by state leaders as central to their *bargaining strength*; (b) This is likely to be even more so the case because “interests” and “resolve” are only useful to the extent that one has at least minimal capabilities to fight the adversary in the disputed region, and even more so due to the fundamental uncertainty in assessing relative “interests” due to problems associated with asymmetries of information, and the incentives to misrepresent ones “interests”; (c) Finally, defining *bargaining strength* in minimalist terms here makes sense because the strategic and reputational “interests” of states have been theorized and accounted for separately in this chapter.

*all contested areas and beyond. In this context, power projection refers to the local military balance, not a state's overall position in the international system.*<sup>45</sup>

I expect greater bargaining strength, thus defined, to lead to both a greater willingness to negotiate a compromise solution, as well as make larger concessions in doing so. The first expectation, that states with greater bargaining power will be willing to negotiate, is contrary to conventional realist arguments which would lead us to expect that the stronger a state's bargaining position, the less inclined its leaders should be negotiate, let alone compromise in their disputes. Greater bargaining power after all means fewer costs associated with the resort to unilateral and forceful means of enforcing or fulfilling the entirety of ones claims.<sup>46</sup>

It can be argued, however, that there is every logical reason to expect a stronger power to seek a negotiated, compromise solution to any dispute. From a rationalist perspective, assuming that negotiated outcomes reflect for the most part the relative bargaining strength of the contestants<sup>47</sup>, stronger bargaining power ensures that states can achieve favourable outcomes reflecting their interests through diplomacy, without resort to costly conflict.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, even when an adversary poses a commitment problem and the disputed territory is of strategic salience, state leaders may expect their stronger bargaining strength to allow them to negotiate a settlement that preserves their strategic interests. Conversely, for the same reasons, states with weaker bargaining strength are expected to be largely unenthusiastic about negotiations which would deny them much of the disputed territory.

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<sup>45</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, "Power Shifts and Escalation: Explaining China's Use of Force in Territorial Disputes," *International Security* 32, no. 3 (2008): 48-49.

<sup>46</sup> Huth, *Standing Your Ground*, 53-54.

<sup>47</sup> Which is found by to be largely the case in Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations*, 193, 248, 256-262.

<sup>48</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 28-29, Paul K. Huth and Todd L. Allee, *The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 61.





Weak states might of course have no choice but to engage in negotiations, given the absence of alternatives, but are unlikely to accept relative bargaining strength as the basis for a settlement. This will be especially the case when an adversary poses a long term threat, and territorial concessions are anticipated to surrender strategic advantages.

What is more, and importantly, the framework offered here suggests that we can expect strong bargaining strength to make leaders of states more willing to not just enter negotiations, but also sometimes to make larger concessions than their dominant bargaining strength requires, by influencing the reputational calculus. This again is contrary to conventional expectations wherein the stronger party is expected to always demand a lion's share of the disputed property with little incentive to compromise given its power, while the opposite constraints leave a weaker party with no choice but to succumb. Counter intuitively, however, the very bargaining strength that makes it easier for decision makers to resort to unilateral measures, or impose a favourable solution on an adversary relatively costlessly, also makes large concessions more viable, as compromise in such a context is transparently not a result of succumbing to an adversary's greater strength, and therefore presents no danger for state leaders of signalling weakness with the attendant negative reputational costs. Rather, state leaders are likely to believe that the larger the concessions made in such a context, the more generous (as opposed to weak) they are likely to appear to the adversary, and so if a reputation did form as a result it is likely to be one of generosity or reasonableness.

Furthermore, when occupying such a position of dominant bargaining strength, state leaders are expected to be cognisant of the fact that the pursuit of intransigence and even more so the forceful imposition of a solution on the weaker adversary is liable to be reputationally costly. Firmness in such a context may not necessarily serve as a



demonstration of ones resolve, but rather of a tendency to be domineering and unreasonable when strong. There is likely to be recognition therefore of the possibility that excessive firmness from a dominant position may engender a negative reputation prompting greater hostility from a threatened and fearful adversary. Consequently, even when faced with an adversary that poses a commitment problem, necessitating reputation building, territorial concessions (and more of them) may be viewed as not troubling by state leaders negotiating from a position of dominant bargaining strength, in the expectation that while avoiding a reputation of weakness and thereby potentially aggravating the adversary’s challenge, compromise might even mitigate an adversary’s hostility by signalling ones benignity.<sup>49</sup> When commitment problems do not exist, this dynamic may even encourage a tendency to go beyond the mere willingness to make concessions, to compromises that are larger and more generous than what a state might have been willing to make otherwise, for reputational reasons.

	 <b>Compromise</b>	 <b>Intransigence (incl. use of force)</b>
 <b>Bargaining Context</b>	Generous/Reasonable (Positive)	Aggressive/Unreasonable (Negative)
 <b>Bargaining Context</b>	Weak/Irresolute (Negative)	Firm/Resolute (Positive)

**Table 2.3: State calculus/expectations about reputation formation**

<sup>49</sup> As a French minister would argue to the German Ambassador in 1894: “What makes us sensitive and touchy as you say, is mainly the idea that we are thought to be weak...The stronger we shall be the less distrustful we shall be.” Quoted in Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 81.

Conversely, by the same logic, when lacking bargaining strength, state leaders are likely to be wary not just of entering negotiations, but even more so of making large and substantial concessions, because doing so risks conveying an impression to the adversary of a tendency to succumb supinely to greater strength, spawning thereby a reputation for weakness. Such a reputation in turn, will be feared by decision makers to further encourage adversaries, particularly those who pose commitment problems and enjoy bargaining advantages in other areas, to initiate additional territorial and other challenges. Indeed such a reputation may even contribute to an exacerbation of commitment problems<sup>50</sup>, by encouraging potential challengers to undertake unilateral political and military initiatives intended to strengthen their bargaining positions in areas of potential dispute, in the expectation that doing so would facilitate more effective future challenges. What this means is that, in essence, the same amount of compromise is likely to be viewed very differently by state leaders, depending on whether it is made from a position of bargaining strength or weakness. When bargaining for an inferior position, concessions will be feared by decision makers to convey not some generosity or reasonableness, but fear of greater strength and a weakness of constitution. Firmness, and even the willingness to engage in military conflict, on the other hand, will be expected to signal not a disposition towards aggression, but rather a positive impression of resolve in the face of threats posed by stronger adversaries.

States with weak bargaining power in a territorial dispute are therefore expected to prefer delay if they anticipate an improvement in their bargaining position.<sup>51</sup> However, if no such prospect exists, they are expected to display more intransigence on their territorial

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<sup>50</sup> According to Herman Kahn, concessions are often dangerous because they can give rise to, or exacerbate an adversary's acquisitive instincts making them more untrustworthy than they were to start with. Herman Kahn, *Thinking About the Unthinkable* (New York: Horizon Press, 1962), 29.

<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of delaying strategies in territorial disputes see Fravel, *Strong Borders*.

claims, to the extent of risking military conflict, than their weaker bargaining position would suggest. Only compromise outcomes which offer significantly more of the disputed territory than what their bargaining power suggests they should receive should be acceptable for leaders in these states, because such an outcome is likely to both be strategically viable, and reputationally acceptable, by serving as a demonstration of a willingness to resist, be firm, and bargain hard when faced with a more capable adversary. In the absence of such a favourable outcome, intransigence, and if possible, even a resort to force might be preferable, so as to both improve bargaining position and demonstrate resolve, in a bid to at the least deter the adversary from seeking to exploit its bargaining advantages, and at best convince the other into making greater concessions towards a territorial settlement.

Counter intuitively, this discussion suggests that when dealing with potentially costly territorial disputes, states in a weaker bargaining position might be more intransigent and conflictual with regard to their claims than might be wise, while states in more advantageous positions can be expected to be more conciliatory than they need to be, owing to the divergent strategic and reputational implications of compromise. Such an expectation helps account for the surprising finding in Huth's influential study that "powerful challengers...[often] did not exploit a decisive advantage in military capabilities to overturn the territorial status quo," and that weaker states often mounted challenges despite the lack of military capabilities.<sup>52</sup>

The expectation is also in keeping with what Zartman and Rubin have identified as the 'structural paradox,' the surprising fact that while logically, "expecting to lose, a weaker party would want to avoid negotiation with a stronger party at all costs; a stronger party would have no need to negotiate since it could simply take what it wants...Yet weak parties not

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<sup>52</sup> Huth, *Standing Your Ground*, 86-88.

only take on stronger ones in negotiation, they often emerge with sizable – even better than expected – results.”<sup>53</sup> A reputational logic may indeed help account for the related finding in the same text that “contrary to received knowledge and experimentation...perceived asymmetry is the more productive condition for negotiation...”<sup>54</sup> Because in asymmetric disputes weaker states’ incentives to remain firm for reputational reasons are matched by contrary reputational incentives for a stronger power to demonstrate generosity, the discovery that asymmetry often generates more effective negotiation outcomes, acceptable to all concerned, is not wholly unexpected.

### **Bargaining Tactics**

Just as bargaining power functions as a contextual variable shaping reputational expectations of decision makers from particular policy options, the bargaining tactics resorted to by an adversary can similarly play into the reputational calculus in territorial disputes. The utilization of coercive or unilateral bargaining tactics by an adversary is expected to make state leaders more wary about making concessions on their territorial claims, owing not only to the obvious material changes such tactics may bring about to the relative bargaining strengths of the disputants, but also for fear that concessions in response to coercive tactics will carry reputational costs.

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<sup>53</sup> I. William Zartman and Jeffrey Z. Rubin, "The Study of Power and the Practice of Negotiation," in *Power and Negotiation*, ed. I. William Zartman and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>54</sup> I. William Zartman and Jeffrey Z. Rubin, "Symmetry and Asymmetry in Negotiation," in *Power and Negotiation*, ed. I. William Zartman and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 271-272.

In a broad sense coercion can be defined as acts “asserting firmness, making threats and warnings, and exerting pressure in various ways to influence the other party to accept one’s will...”<sup>55</sup> Such threats, or actual resort to force, can serve deterrent (dissuading the adversary from doing something), or compellent (persuading the adversary to do something which they might not otherwise do) purposes.<sup>56</sup> In the case of territorial disputes specifically coercive acts are furthermore any acts of the adversary perceived to have, or sought to have, unilaterally altered the status quo in the disputed territory in an effort to present a *fait accompli* or increase bargaining leverage. Such acts may be more or less characterized by the use of military force and violence. They may involve, on the one hand, (attempts at) actual acquisition of the land in question, which was previously not in one’s control, unilaterally through the use of force. Alternatively, where a state already controls part or all of the territory under dispute, acts seeking to unilaterally extend or reinforce military and/or political control may be similarly viewed by the adversary as being of a coercive or unilateral nature.

Whatever be the case, this perceived use of unilateral or coercive tactics on the part of the adversary, particularly when they involve explicit threats or use of military force in the aid of fulfilling demands through imposition, can make concessions on territory problematic. On the one hand, the opposition’s use of coercive tactics can make compromise less viable for decision makers by changing the pre-existing status quo, in an adversary’s favour. As discussed earlier, weaker bargaining strength is expected to make compromise less likely, and to the extent that unilateral acts by an adversary change bargaining strength to one’s

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<sup>55</sup> Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations*, 195.

<sup>56</sup> For the classic discussion of these issues see, Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 79-80, Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 21-52. Also see, Robert J. Art, "To What Ends Military Power?," *International Security* 4, no. 4 (1980): 3-35.

detriment, they also reduce the scope for concessions. On the other hand, the resort to coercive tactics, and especially the blatant use of force by an adversary, also raises its own reputational implications for state leaders.





First, coercive acts by signalling the adversary's intentions as being actively hostile, and by demonstrating its willingness to resort to unilateralism, are likely to exacerbate and reinforce any pre-existing commitment problems, or fears about the prospect of the rival renegeing on a territorial agreement at a future date. In doing so such acts increase the importance decision makers attach to avoiding being attributed a reputation for weakness. Second, and relatedly, the fact of an adversary having resorted to what are viewed as coercive means is expected to lead to concerns amongst the target leadership that any concessions made in such a context would appear as surrender to such means, and generate an attendant reputation of weakness in the face of force. As Jervis has noted, "concessions that are wrenched from the state by dire threats are more apt to lead to an image of it as weak than are concessions that appear to be freely given."<sup>57</sup> Such a reputation in turn, state leaders will believe, can only encourage the adversary into repeated resort to coercive measures, and posing further challenges on territorial issues and elsewhere, especially when the latter is already viewed to present a commitment problem. Developing such a reputation of weakness when faced with coercion is likely to be viewed as dangerous, furthermore, in that it may embolden expansionist tendencies in the challenger, thereby intensifying the commitment problem when it may have earlier been only low or moderate.

The perception that one has been victim to unilateral or coercive acts on the part of an adversary is therefore likely to exacerbate reputational fears in states, making territorial

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<sup>57</sup> Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 90. For a more detailed discussion of this issue see Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 139-224.

concessions less likely. Compromise is only expected to be acceptable in such cases under conditions which unambiguously both reverse gains made by an adversary through such means, and punish the adversary for its transgressions. Doing so ensures that any concessions are only pursuant on a demonstration of firmness through punishment of the perpetrator, and thereby do not carry the troublesome reputational implications that they otherwise would.<sup>58</sup> When unable to reverse or punish aggression, however, state leaders are expected to prefer intransigence, and if possible even resort to use of force themselves so as to both physically rectify any losses in bargaining leverage, as well as firmly signal to the adversary that aggression will not be tolerated and must be reversed and atoned for before any conciliatory actions can be contemplated.

	 <b>Barg. Strength</b>	 <b>Barg. Strength</b>
 <b>Adversary Coercive Tactics</b>	Large compromise - conditional on coercion reversal (Conditional Rep)	High Intransigence/Minimal compromise if coercion reversed (Negative Rep)
 <b>Adversary Coercive Tactics</b>	Generous concessions (Positive Rep)	Intransigence/Minimal compromise (Negative Rep)

**Table 2.4: State behavioural tendencies (reputational expectations)**

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<sup>58</sup> As Snyder and Diesing put it “to negotiate while an opponent’s threat is outstanding is to acquiesce in his assertion of superior power, which by its effect on the adversary’s expectations actually does enhance his bargaining power...the target of threat [therefore] demands its removal as a condition for the continuance or initiation of substantive bargaining.” Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations*, 279.

## **The Reputational Dimensions of Salience**

The discussion above has suggested an argument for how strategic and particularly reputational considerations influence state decisions to pursue the path of compromise or intransigence, and the extent of each, in territorial disputes. What does all this mean for the salience that territories are undoubtedly endowed with, and, as discussed in the introductory chapter, is central to conventional understandings of state behaviour in territorial disputes? The framework presented here suggests essentially that salience (or its absence) as currently conceptualized, while important, may in itself be insufficient in accounting for how decision makers address their state's claims in territorial disputes. Particularly crucial is the assertion made here that high salience of territory does not make it necessarily indivisible, whereas patently unimportant territory can often acquire characteristics of indivisibility, owing to what state leaders perceive to be the reputational consequences of their action within particular contexts. Territory may therefore acquire a reputational salience, distinct from the kind of symbolic-nationalist, economic, and strategic value that are usually argued to drive how states act vis-à-vis contested territorial claims.

The strategic, economic, or symbolic-nationalist value of the disputed territory however may be conceptualized to influence the reputational calculus offered in this dissertation. One could expect that the more valuable a piece of territory, the stronger state leaders will expect the reputational implications of their actions with regard to it to be, because the signalling effects of salient territory are likely to be more potent. Therefore in situations where intense commitment related fears, and a disadvantageous bargaining context make for fears that concessions on territory will have reputational costs, such concerns are likely to be only exacerbated if the disputed territory is of high value. Decision makers are



likely to believe in such cases that making easy concessions on territory of most value to them will only convey to the adversary that such concessions would be even easier to come by with other territories of less importance. Indeed, in such a context states are likely to be highly resistant to concessions on even territory of low salience so as to clearly signal that if concessions were not forthcoming for less important territory they will be even less likely with regard to more salient land.<sup>59</sup>

Conversely, when facing few commitment related fears, and placed in a position of dominant bargaining strength, state leaders are likely to expect the positive reputational effects of compromise to be more starkly highlighted if the territory under dispute is of greater value. Large concessions in such cases, which go beyond what is necessary, may be viewed by decision makers as even more likely to be read by the other as demonstrations of the depth of one's generosity and reasonableness. To make concessions on highly valuable territory after all is as strong a signal can be that far from being threatening and potentially expansionist, one is willing to make genuine and substantive concessions in the interest of peace. The prior value of territory therefore may enter the decision making calculus as reinforcement for the pre-existing sense amongst the political leadership of a state about the reputational implications of their policy options.

### **Domestic Politics, Reputation and Territorial Disputes**

Finally, what of domestic political pressures as a determinant of state behaviour in territorial disputes? After all, it can be argued, leaders of state's are as driven by the desire to stay in power domestically as they are by the desire to maximize their state's interests. They

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 186.

are therefore naturally subject to reputation building not just externally, but also domestically, and this is particularly likely to be the case on issues related to territorial integrity by virtue of their high degree of visibility to, and resonance with, domestic publics. Not surprisingly therefore, many theoretical and empirical accounts of territorial disputes, their salience, and discussions of indivisibility, rely on domestic political variables.<sup>60</sup>

The argument made here does not deny the fact that domestic political considerations shape state behaviour, and that state leaders are to a greater or lesser extent constrained by a domestic reputational imperative. What is contested however is the assertion of the domestic mechanism as the primary driver of decision making in territorial disputes. It is expected that state leaders develop incentives to compromise or intransigence independent of domestic politics, in accordance with the logic described above, and that domestic political factors shape state behaviour by reinforcing or constraining pre-existing tendencies in leaders. In this sense the argument privileges systemic factors as prior determinants of leadership attitudes, with domestic political serving a mediating role in shaping state behaviour.<sup>61</sup>

Domestic publics are expected, for the most part, to be most suitable for mobilization against compromise under the exact conditions where state leaders have already developed incentives to be firm owing to strategic and reputational considerations. That is,

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<sup>60</sup> Giacomo Chiozza and Ajin Choi, "Guess Who Did What: Political Leaders and the Management of Territorial Disputes, 1950-1990," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47, no. 3 (2003): 251-278, James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): 577-592, Huth, *Standing Your Ground*, Huth and Allee, *The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century*.

<sup>61</sup> This is in keeping with the neo-classical realist approach to explaining foreign policy behaviour. Mark R. Brawley, *Political Economy and Grand Strategy: A Neoclassical Realist View* (London: Routledge, 2010), Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro, eds., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, Rose, "Review: Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.", Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 2006).

domestic publics are most expected to demand intransigence from their leaders in territorial disputes when the adversary is perceived to pose a potential long term threat to territorial integrity, and where concessions would be made to a rival possessing greater bargaining power, or one that has resorted to coercive and unilateralist bargaining tactics. Compromise under such conditions is likely to be viewed domestically as an expression of weakness, and a demonstration of the leadership being unfit to handle the reins of the state. On the other hand, when such strategic and reputational concerns are minimal, domestic public opinion is also likely to be more pliable to state leaders 'selling' compromise. When an adversary is not viewed by domestic publics to pose future threat, one's own bargaining power is high, and one has not been subject to blatant coercive pressures, compromise on even domestically salient disputed territory is expected to be easier to sell for state leaders, because it can be presented domestically as a demonstration of generosity rather than weakness.

In essence then, the conditions under which state leaders are expected to find compromise problematic for strategic and reputational reasons are also the conditions under which domestic publics are most likely to pressure governments towards intransigence or conflict. At an empirical level, if this expectation is correct, we should see state leaders thinking about territorial disputes independently, along the more systemic lines specified earlier. Domestic pressures however might mediate in policy making process by reinforcing such tendencies, by for instance pushing policy makers who already have developed positions favouring intransigence or firmness into more conflictual directions than they might wish. On the other hand, when systemic incentives for intransigence are absent for state leaders, we should see them be more able and willing to resist domestic pressures, with public opinion itself more likely to be malleable.

Regime type (democratic or authoritarian), or the ideological proclivities of the leadership, should similarly matter to a lesser extent than commonly suggested, if the above expectations are correct. Empirically therefore, when in power, we should see leaders across the political spectrum address territorial claims in a largely similar manner when placed in similar situations. The fact that, for instance, in the Kashmir dispute neither regime type nor political ideology has been in general a very good predictor of Indian or Pakistani policy hints that this might indeed be the case. In India's case, the liberal-secular Nehru government showed both its conciliatory and intransigent qualities in the early years, whereas in the contemporary period one of the most concerted efforts at compromise came from the Hindu nationalist (and patently anti-Pakistan) Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in New Delhi in the late 1990s. In Pakistan, similarly, combativeness on Kashmir has been a characteristic of both military and democratic regimes, but in recent years both democratic (1998) and military (2004-2007) regimes have pursued what seemed like potentially fruitful efforts at a compromise solution.

Domestic politics and public opinion may therefore not be pushing political leaders dealing with territorial disputes in directions too far from their own prior preferences, and at least not in a diametrically different direction, as is often suggested, preferences that are themselves shaped to significant degree according to the logic outlined in this chapter. Indeed, it may even sometimes be the case that these domestic pressures owe their origins to state leaders seeing merit in mobilizing their populations so as to bind their own hands, in order to establish the credibility of their intransigence and elicit more concessions from the adversary.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> The classic expression of this logic is by Schelling, who notes that such a strategic risks "establishing an immovable position that goes beyond the ability of the other to concede, and thereby provokes the likelihood of stalemate or breakdown." Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 28. Also see the

## Conclusion

This chapter has offered a theoretical framework to account for why, when faced with the costs of conflict over contested territorial claims, state leaders choose to compromise in certain instances, and adopt intransigent postures at other times, and the extent to which one or the other is resorted to. Concerned as they are with the long term, and not just the immediate implications of their actions, it is hypothesized that central to the decision making of state leaders are their assessments of the strategic and reputational implications of their decisions.

The extent to which state leaders are worried about the costs of compromise is suggested to be associated with the intensity of the commitment problem. The greater the concern that that an adversary's commitment to a territorial agreement is likely to lack credibility, the more difficult territorial concessions are expected to become for state leaders, and the more wary they are likely to be about not just the potential strategic, but also reputational costs of compromise. Compromise in such circumstance becomes possible only to the extent that decision makers believe that not only are the exploitable strategic properties of the territory to be conceded minimal, but additionally that the reputational implications of such concessions are relatively benign.

How state leaders assess the reputational implications of compromise is suggested to be a function of their bargaining position in the territory under dispute, and the extent to which they have been subject to unilateralism or coercion on the part of the adversary. A

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more recent work on the implications of "audience costs" in bargaining. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes.", James D. Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sinking Costs," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 1 (1997): 68-80, Kenneth A. Schultz, "Looking for Audience Costs," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 1 (2001): 32-60.

favourable bargaining context, wherein bargaining strength is high, and the resort to coercive tactics by an adversary low encourages concessions and more of them, in conditions of both high and low commitment problem, by leading to expectations in the party making concessions that compromise will demonstrate generosity and not weakness to the adversary. Conversely however, the weaker a state's bargaining position and the more intense the resort by an adversary to coercive and unilateral means to alter the bargaining context in the dispute, the more problematic the reputational implications of territorial concessions become. State leaders then are liable to fear, particularly in the presence of intense commitment problems, that any concessions made will signal weakness, and so would only encourage further challenges from the adversary in the future, making compromise progressively less likely.

In summary then, compromise and more of it in territorial disputes is most likely, even when states are faced with only minimal threat or costs in asserting territorial claims, when an adversary presents no long term commitment problem, one has dominant bargaining strength in the theatre of disagreement, and has either not been subject to, or has convincingly repelled or punished the enemy's attempts at resort to unilateral or coercive methods in dealing with the dispute. Compromise, however, becomes progressively less attractive for state leaders as the intensity of commitment related concerns increase, the weaker one's bargaining position in the disputed territory is, and the more subject one has been to successful attempts by the enemy to alter the bargaining position through resort to unilateralism and coercion.

In the following chapters I probe history for how leaders in South Asia thought and acted with regard to their territorial disputes in the decade and a half after their emergence as new nation states. I expect to find that existing accounts, which often rely on the salience

(particularly nationalist) of territory are inadequate in presenting a comprehensive story, and that considerations highlighted in the chapter, both strategic and reputational, played a significant role in explaining varying state policies and behaviours over time and across cases. As newly emergent states, these concerns are expected to have been particularly pertinent to, and find explicit expression in, the thoughts and actions of state leaders dealing with territorial disputes with their neighbours. A discovery that reputational concerns played an independent role in state leaders' calculus, and occasionally overwhelmed in importance even strategic concerns, would especially strengthen the validity of the more novel elements of the argument proposed in the discussion above. To this end, the next two empirical chapters deal with Indian and Pakistani policies respectively with regard to Kashmir, the following two do the same with Indian and Chinese policies in the Sino-Indian territorial dispute, and the final empirical chapter assesses state policies in the asymmetric territorial disputes involving the large and small states of the region.

## India and Kashmir: The Nehru Years

India's dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir has been one of the most intractable of territorial disputes, which continues unresolved to this day. For much of the scholarly work on the dispute this has been an unsurprising outcome given the fundamental salience that the territory possesses for each of the contestants. Strategically, economically, and perhaps most importantly for reasons associated with national identity, Kashmir's salience has been suggested to have generated a zero-sum contest between the two nations, rendering the territory indivisible.<sup>1</sup> Geographically, situated as it is in the Himalayas bordering two of the largest and most influential states in the international system, China and the Soviet Union, the intrinsic strategic importance of the territory has been undoubted. Add to this the fact that river systems central to agriculture in northern India and Pakistan originate in the state, and the economic and strategic implications of control over Kashmir become even more apparent. Perhaps most importantly, however, Kashmir has been seen to symbolize a post-partition struggle over the very validity of the contesting national identities of India and

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<sup>1</sup> For comprehensive overviews of the history and salience of Kashmir for India and Pakistan see Michael Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), Sumit Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia: The Indo-Pakistani Conflicts since 1947* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), Sisir Gupta, *Kashmir: A Study in India-Pakistan Relations* (Bombay, India: Indian Council of World Affairs, 1967), Josef Korbel, *Danger in Kashmir* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), Alastair Lamb, *Crisis in Kashmir, 1947-1966* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1966), Alastair Lamb, *Incomplete Partition: The Genesis of the Kashmir Dispute, 1947-1948* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), Alastair Lamb, *The Kashmir Problem: A Historical Survey* (New York: Praeger, 1967), Alastair Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy, 1846-1990* (Hertfordshire, England: Roxford Books, 1991), T. V. Paul, *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unfinished War* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2000), Robert Wirsing, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute: On Regional Conflict and Its Resolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).



Pakistan, the former having adopted a secular nationalism which stands as a complete anti-thesis to the conception of Pakistan as the home of the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. As a Muslim majority state up for grabs in the immediate post-independence period, Kashmir in a sense represented an immediate test of the relative validity of these two conceptions of nationhood.<sup>2</sup>

India's approach to Kashmir in the early and most dynamic period of the dispute renders, I suggest, a sole reliance on the strategic, economic and nationalist salience of the state unsatisfactory in accounting for state behaviour. The Nehru government's thinking and policies with regard to Kashmir and Pakistan during the first decade and half of the dispute showed more variation and flexibility than such a focus would suggest possible. Indeed, rather than treating the territory as indivisible, the Indian leadership, in the early years, proposed several conciliatory proposals which ostensibly left open the possibility of a significant chunk, if not all of the disputed territory, becoming part of Pakistan – be it through the Maharaja acceding to the latter, or through the mechanisms of plebiscite and/or partition. It was only by the mid-1950s that New Delhi would begin to adopt an increasingly intransigent position vis-à-vis the disputed state, eventually abandoning the plebiscite option. This, I show, was a result not of some fundamental insincerity or pig-headedness on the part of the Indian leadership. Rather, this chapter demonstrates that, in keeping with the theoretical framework proposed in this dissertation, the intensity of commitment related concerns, perceptions of the bargaining context, and the attendant strategic and reputational concerns, independently shaped Indian decision making in the first two decades after independence. These factors help account for the variations Indian policy underwent,

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<sup>2</sup> Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*.

correcting for and supplementing thereby some of the gaps in the more common and intuitive accounts of India's role in the intractability of the dispute over Kashmir.

### **Kashmir's Saliency for India and its Explanatory Limitations**

As partition and freedom from British rule approached for India and Pakistan in 1947, an issue of immediate concern for all concerned was the fate of the more than 500 princely states in the subcontinent, and whether with the lapse of British paramountcy, these states would join the two newly formed dominions of India and Pakistan, or remain independent. By the time of independence, fortuitously, thanks to the persuasive skills of Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of British India, nearly all states had agreed to accede to one or the other dominion, abandoning the prospect of remaining independent.<sup>3</sup> Kashmir was one of three prominent princely states (Hyderabad and Junagadh being the other two) which had their fates yet to be resolved as the British left India for good on 15 August 1947. All three cases were contentious owing to the fact that the princely ruler was of a religion different from the majority population. In Junagadh and Hyderabad, the ruler was Muslim with the majority population being Hindu, while in the case of Kashmir the opposite situation prevailed, with the majority Muslim population subject to the Hindu Maharaja. Kashmir, however, would become the crux of the territorial dispute between the two newly emerged states owing partly to its sheer size and saliency, but more importantly because it met one basic condition that the other two territories did not: while Kashmir was

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<sup>3</sup> For the definitive Indian account of this story, see V. P. Menon, *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1956). Also see, Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, 1st ed. (London: Macmillan, 2007), 36-58.

geographically contiguous to both the successor states, neither Hyderabad nor Junagadh shared a frontier with Pakistan.

The importance of Kashmir for India has been attributed most often to its nationalist salience, with the territory viewed as less a cause of conflict than a symptom of the contest over nationalisms. For India, the successful and peaceful integration of Kashmir into the Indian union would be a clear vindication of its secular national identity, invalidating thereby what is viewed as an archaic and regressive Muslim nationalism underpinning the idea of Pakistan.<sup>4</sup> Not only was the two-nation theory contrary to the philosophical proclivities of Nehru, but its acceptance in Kashmir was also expected to have potentially severe repercussions on the continued stability of the Indian body-politic.<sup>5</sup> Were Kashmir to go to Pakistan, it was argued, the safety of Muslims in India would have been endangered, and this in a country which even after partition was home to the third largest population of Muslims in the world, numbering around 40 million. “If Kashmir went,” Nehru would write to Stafford Cripps<sup>6</sup> in December 1948, “the position of the Muslims in India would become more difficult.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Kashmir gave India “an example of communal unity and cooperation” which would be jeopardized by the loss of Kashmir.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 53. For noteworthy discussions of contesting ideological underpinnings of the Indian and Pakistani nationalist movements see Paul R. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*.

<sup>5</sup> *Kashmir and Indo-Pakistan Relations* (M. Brecher’s interviews with Nehru), Information Service of India: New Delhi, June 13, 1956.

<sup>6</sup> Member of the 1946 Cabinet Mission to plan for Indian independence, and Chancellor of Exchequer from November 1947.

<sup>7</sup> Nehru to Stafford Cripps (18 December 1948), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru. Second Series* (Hereafter *SWJN-SS*), Vol. 7, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 338.

<sup>8</sup> Nehru to Sri Prakasa (25 November 1947), *Swjn-Ss*. Vol. 4, 346.

While the nationalist salience of Kashmir to the Indian leadership was indisputable, the strategic importance of the territory was no less important. Kashmir's crucial strategic location had been acknowledged during the British colonial period as one that could serve as a buffer against threats to the sub-continent from the direction of Russia, China and Afghanistan.<sup>9</sup> The Indian leadership would soon after the tribal invasion of Kashmir in October 1947 (to be discussed subsequently) explain the strategic importance of Kashmir in similar terms. To British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, Nehru would write that the fact that Kashmir shared boundaries with those three countries made the state vital to Indian security, and "helping Kashmir, therefore, is an obligation of national interest to India."<sup>10</sup> In presenting India's case at the United Nations (UN), Gopaldaswami Ayyangar would similarly point to the geographical location of the state as salient to the security and international contacts of India.<sup>11</sup> As Brecher has observed, when speaking thus of the strategic importance of Kashmir, the Indian leadership seemed to be suggesting less the possibility of a direct military-security threat to India, and was rather more concerned with the fact that without Kashmir India would occupy less of a prominent position in the geo-politics of the Central Asian region.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, the direct security implications of losing Kashmir were certainly not negligible. Kashmir also mattered strategically to India to the extent that possession of the territory by Pakistan could threaten northern India. Early on such concerns were less about a

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<sup>9</sup> Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> Nehru to Atlee (25 October 1947), *Swjn-Ss*. Vol. 4, 274-275.

<sup>11</sup> *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, ed. M.S. Deora and R. Grover (New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 1991), 82-83.

<sup>12</sup> Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 46.

direct Pakistani threat and more in the nature of indirect fears that were Kashmir to go to Pakistan it was likely to become a “kind of colony of foreign interests.” Pakistan itself was expected to become a foreign ‘colony’ by Nehru, if it survived at all, and was therefore expected to allow “foreign vested interests to exploit Kashmir directly for a substantial consideration.”<sup>13</sup> With time, as Pakistan survived the perilous early months and continued to contest India in Kashmir, a more direct perception of threat emerged in New Delhi. In a candid letter to Sheikh Abdullah in August 1952, Nehru would express these fears in stating that if Kashmir “went to Pakistan, it would be a danger to the north of India,” making the loss of Kashmir highly undesirable.<sup>14</sup>



**Map 3.1: The Disputed Area of Kashmir**

(Source: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/kashmir\\_disputed\\_2002.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/kashmir_disputed_2002.jpg))

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Nehru to Sheikh Abdullah (10 October 1947), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 4, 270.

<sup>14</sup> “Impracticability of an Independent Kashmir” (25 August 1952), *ibid.* Vol. 19, 326.

While there is little doubt then that Kashmir was important to India, a sole reliance on salience to account for Indian behaviour comes up against some theoretical and empirical pitfalls. Theoretically, to view salience as determinant suggests that territory with such high salience as Kashmir would have been viewed as indivisible by the Indian leadership. Compromise of any meaningful kind which alienated any significant portion of the territory would have been unacceptable, and rather, New Delhi should have shown willingness to assume great costs, including the resort to force, in order to usurp the territory. Furthermore, and by extension, there should have been little variation in India's policies vis-à-vis Kashmir and Pakistan given that the inherent value of Kashmir for India did not change in any way during the entirety of the dispute.

In fact, however, while the dispute over Kashmir itself was frustratingly intractable over the period of enquiry (as it remained thereafter), the Nehru government's policies were not as zero-sum as the territory's high salience would suggest. Indeed, a surprising flexibility in India's approach to the Kashmir imbroglio is evident during this period, and Indian policies demonstrate the sort of variation which renders the expectation that high salience would render Kashmir indivisible, flawed. In the lead up to partition, as the fate of Kashmir was open to contestation, New Delhi would express its willingness to begrudgingly acquiesce if the Maharaja decided to accede to Pakistan. More clearly, following the tribal invasion and Kashmir's accession to India, New Delhi voluntarily made the accession conditional on its confirmation through a reference to the people of the state. From that point on till 1954, despite apprehensions about the practicability of a plebiscite, Nehru appeared committed in principle to a plebiscite being held in the state under UN auspices. Crucially, this was so not only during periods when New Delhi was confident of a favourable verdict in a plebiscite,

but also at a time when there was a precipitous drop in Kashmir of public support for union with India.

Only after 1954 would the Indian government begin to adopt a clearly intransigent position on Kashmir, backing out on the plebiscite option which Nehru had pushed for in as late as 1953, and assert that the dispute could only be resolved in keeping with the existing status quo, which left India with two thirds of the disputed territory, including importantly the Kashmir valley. These variations in Indian policies cannot be accounted for by the salience of Kashmir alone. Rather, the central task of a study of India's policy in Kashmir becomes one of explaining these variations, and in particular accounting for both India's role in the failure of the plebiscite option till 1953, as well as the summary withdrawal of the plebiscite offer beginning in 1954. In what follows, I demonstrate how the theoretical framework offered in this dissertation and the strategic and reputational mechanisms proposed, help answer these questions.

### **Approaching Independence and the Tribal Invasion**

Even before the tribal invasion from Pakistan of Kashmir in October 1947, the Indian leadership was acutely conscious of the potential costs of conflict over the state. After all, as important as Kashmir was for India, it was also understood in New Delhi that the state was as, if not more, salient to a "tottering" Pakistan. Kashmir, Nehru felt, was viewed in Karachi as a means to stability, and raising resources "by giving special privileges, leases etc. for development there to Americans,"<sup>15</sup> but also, and perhaps more importantly, was crucial to the very ideological basis of Pakistan, which would crumble were the latter to fail in

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<sup>15</sup> Nehru to P.C. Mahajan (21 October 1947), *ibid.* Vol. 4, 272.

Kashmir.<sup>16</sup> Pakistan's resolve in Kashmir, therefore, and the costs for a resource poor India of conflict over the territory, were assumed to be prohibitively high in New Delhi. As Nehru would acknowledge, while war was sure to lead to defeat and destruction for Pakistan, "at the same time it may well mean ruin of India also for a considerable time."<sup>17</sup> India, moreover, was not just not ready for war at present, but was also unlikely to be able to devote the resources to do so in the foreseeable future, because as Nehru saw it "if we spend too much on maintaining an army and too little on the development of industry and science, we do not add to the wealth of the nation and our resources shrivel up and we cannot even maintain that army."<sup>18</sup>

While the prospective costs of conflict and war were undisputedly high for India, the costs of compromise in Kashmir were not prohibitively high, owing primarily to the minimal commitment problem that Pakistan presented in the immediate aftermath of independence. The decision to partition the subcontinent had no doubt created a deep impression of hostility on both sides, and in India, the new Pakistani state was expected to persist with the pre-partition hostility of the Muslim League, and seek to undermine India's security and stability where possible. Developing disputes over the princely states, as well as intense disagreements over the distribution of financial, military and administrative resources only reinforced this perception in the Indian government.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, this belief in Delhi of Pakistan's immutable hostility was balanced by strong scepticism in the Nehru government

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<sup>16</sup> "The War of Ideologies," (14 Nov 1948), *ibid.* Vol. 7, 83.

<sup>17</sup> "Solution by Referendum" (1 October 1947), *ibid.* Vol. 4, 427.

<sup>18</sup> "Nationalization of the Armed Forces" (16 September 1947), *ibid.* Vol. 4, 484.

<sup>19</sup> Surjit Mansingh, "Nehru and Pakistan," *Legacy of Nehru: A Centennial Celebration, 1989* (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1990), 7. As Mansingh puts it, Pakistan was seen as "an entity with an inferiority complex, lacking a progressive platform but willing to stir mass emotion, and seeking parity of power and status through the imperial arbiter."



about whether Pakistan would even survive, let alone be able to significantly challenge or threaten India.<sup>20</sup> Nehru would therefore write to Sheikh Abdullah that given Pakistan's financial bankruptcy, grave shortage in trained administrative personnel, and other immense burdens, he doubted "very much if it [Pakistan] can survive at all."<sup>21</sup> Such an evaluation was certainly not unreasonable, and was in fact even feared and shared by the leadership of the new Pakistani state, who were gravely concerned about prospects of surviving even the first few months of independence given their lacking in even the basic essentials for administrative and defence purposes. Particularly with regard to the latter, even British strategists had concluded before partition that Pakistan's prospects in the post-independence period would be grim at best.<sup>22</sup>

Given this, not only in the short term but even with regard to the long term, there was little reason in the approach to partition for the Indian leadership to expect any substantial threat from Pakistan that they would have trouble repelling. Consequently, fears that concessions may involve strategic or reputational costs which could be exploited by Pakistan in the future were generally negligible. In Kashmir, this meant that the adoption of a conciliatory posture was eminently viable for the Indian leadership, despite the symbolic-nationalist importance that Kashmir held for India, as well as the territory's strategic location at the apex of the Indian subcontinent. The high costs of potential conflict, and the relative absence of fear that concessions (or even the loss of Kashmir) would fundamentally imperil Indian security in the long term, ensured this. Central to this conciliatory attitude would be

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<sup>20</sup> Judith M. Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 266.

<sup>21</sup> Nehru to Sheikh Abdullah (10 October 1947), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 4, 269.

<sup>22</sup> Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 25-48.

New Delhi's expressed willingness, both before and after independence, to abide by the wishes of the Muslim majority population of Jammu and Kashmir, even if this meant losing the state to Pakistan.

The 12 May 1946 *Cabinet Mission Memorandum*, and following that the *Indian Independence Act* of 1947 had addressed the issue of the constitutional future of the princely states once British paramountcy had lapsed. In strict terms, all rights surrendered to Britain were to revert to the princely states, allowing them the freedom to accede to either dominion or remain independent. In accepting these documents, the Indian National Congress was only sceptical and averse to the provision for the princes to declare independence if they so wished. The prospect of several of these states remaining independent after all created the very real possibility of the 'balkanization' of India, a concern shared by the British as well.<sup>23</sup> Nehru would therefore contend that while the right of the States to accede to one or the other dominion was undisputed, the independence option would be resisted by the Indian Congress leadership.<sup>24</sup> This fear of balkanization also led, furthermore, to an emphasis by India on geographical compulsions being respected by the states in their decision to join one or the other dominion. Where they were geographically integrally linked to one dominion and not the other, it was expected that the states would have no choice but to accede to the former. For, as one observer put it, "India could live if its Moslem limbs in the north, west and northeast were amputated, but could it live without its midriff?"<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For Mountbatten, the problem of islands of foreign territory being left within the newly independent dominions was of "far greater magnitude with the Dominion of India than it is with Pakistan." Quoted in Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 20. British PM Atlee hoped "that all States will, in due course, find their appropriate place within one or the other of the new Dominions..." Quoted in Gupta, *Kashmir*, 77.

<sup>24</sup> Menon, *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States*, 81.

<sup>25</sup> Sir Reginald Coupland, quoted in Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 20.

In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, this Indian approach would manifest in Nehru's advice to the Maharaja that independence for the state was unwise because "in the world today such small independent entities have no place, more especially in the frontier regions between two great States."<sup>26</sup> Barring this stipulation preventing independence however, the Indian leadership would express their acquiescence to the state acceding to either India or Pakistan. In contrast to Junagadh, and particularly Hyderabad, the other princely states whose fates become an issue of contention between the two dominions, Kashmir did not pose a 'balkanization' problem, being contiguous to both India and Pakistan. Indeed, Mountbatten, Nehru, and Sardar Patel all seemed to agree that an outcome where Kashmir acceded to Pakistan was preferable to the Maharaja allowing paramountcy to lapse, and pushing the fate of Kashmir into a dangerous state of limbo. In trying to ensure that the latter scenario did not eventuate, further, the viceroy was intent to make sure that there was no undue pressure placed on Kashmir from the Indian Congress leadership.<sup>27</sup>

Accordingly, in recognition of the complications the lapse of paramountcy would create, and the Maharaja's apparent inclination to remain independent, during a visit to Kashmir Mountbatten would attempt to convince the Maharaja otherwise, stating that he did not mind if the state acceded to Pakistan or India. Indeed he would convey an assurance from the Indian leadership, particularly Sardar Patel<sup>28</sup> that "if Kashmir decided to accede to Pakistan, we will be perfectly friendly about it."<sup>29</sup> Gen. Sir Roy Bucher has corroborated this

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<sup>26</sup> Nehru to the Maharaja, *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 3, 253.

<sup>27</sup> See H. V. Hodson, *The Great Divide: Britain-India-Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 443.

<sup>28</sup> Independent India's first Minister of Home Affairs, and therefore the individual most responsible for resolving the Princely States issue.

<sup>29</sup> Lord Mountbatten Oral Transcript – recorded by BR Nanda – NMML Oral History Project (26 July 1967), 43. As V.P. Menon has recounted, Mountbatten "went so far as to tell the Maharaja that,

view in stating that in his opinion, India would have accepted the accession of Kashmir to Pakistan prior to the tribal invasion, if that were to happen.<sup>30</sup> For Mountbatten, and the Indian leadership, in fact, the only decision the Maharaja could have taken that would have been troublesome was that of non-accession to either dominion, the exact policy that the Maharaja eventually followed.<sup>31</sup> In the Indian government, not only was independence for the states unacceptable as a principle, it was also feared that were the Maharaja to fail to resolve the status of Kashmir before paramountcy lapsed, Pakistan would seek military conquest of the state once winter had set in. Nehru would therefore further argue for the wisdom of the Maharaja acceding to India, if the latter wished to avoid his state being swallowed up by Pakistan in disregard of his and his peoples wishes.<sup>32</sup>

The prospect of Kashmir acceding to Pakistan was particularly acceptable to the Indian leadership were the act to reflect the wishes of the Kashmiri population. The Indian Congress had always expressed discomfiture with the idea implicit in the *Indian Independence*

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if he acceded to Pakistan, India would not take it amiss and that he had a firm assurance on this from Sardar Patel himself.” Menon, *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States*, 394. This is corroborated by Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten* (London: Hale, 1951), 223. Campbell-Johnson states that the States Ministry, under Patel, had sought to ensure that nothing was done which could be seen as forcing Kashmir to accede to India, and “to give assurances that accession to Pakistan would not be taken amiss by India.” According to Brines, there is little reason to doubt the testimony of Menon and others because “Nehru, his compatriots and the Indian nation were far more idealistic than the later events permitted them to be. Pressures to acquire the state were comparatively feeble within an India preoccupied with other problems.” Russell Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968), 80.

<sup>30</sup> British officer, who served as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. Gen. Sir Roy Bucher Oral Transcript – recorded by BR Nanda - NMML Oral History Project (11 May 1970), 3.

<sup>31</sup> Mountbatten quoted in Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 22.

<sup>32</sup> Nehru would write to Patel that if there was delay in accession “Pakistan will go ahead without much fear of consequences, specially when the winter isolates Kashmir.” Nehru to Patel (27 September 1947), *Smjn-Ss*. Vol. 4, 264. Dwarkanath Kachru, of the All-India States People’s States Peoples’ Conference would similarly suggest that unless the Congress was able to get the Maharaja to accede to India, Kashmir would be “doomed and there will be nothing to prevent the conquest of Kashmir by the Muslim League leaders and private armies.” Quoted in Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 44.

*Act* that with the lapse of paramountcy the Princes would have exclusive liberty to determine the future of their states, particularly in cases such as Kashmir where the religion of the ruler was different from that of the majority population.<sup>33</sup> “Ascertain the wishes of your people by any means and join whichever Dominion your people wish to join by August 14 this year,” was therefore Mountbatten’s urging to the Maharaja on behalf of the India government in July 1948.<sup>34</sup> During and following his visit to Kashmir, Gandhi would similarly make clear that regardless of the wishes of rulers, the fate of Kashmir had to be determined in accordance with the wishes of the people.<sup>35</sup>

Having articulated this principle, the Indian government adhered to it, and there seems to have been little pressure from New Delhi, even as Indian leaders, in particular Gandhi and Patel, did seek to persuade the Maharaja as to the merits of accession to India. Indeed, even as the Maharaja began gravitating towards joining India, Nehru would be firm that accession would only be considered if it were seen to emanate from the people of the Kashmir, and therefore that political reforms in the state were an absolute necessity as a precursor to any accession. This position of Nehru’s was of course assumed at the potential risk of infuriating the Maharaja, delaying the issue of accession, and leaving Kashmir exposed to the feared invasion from Pakistan. The Indian government would accordingly first delay a standstill agreement with the state, and then from September 1947 when the Maharaja began repeatedly offering to accede to India, would refuse the offer unless it was accompanied by serious democratic reforms in the state, even in the face of the tribal invasion which

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<sup>33</sup> Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 20.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Gupta, *Kashmir*, 92.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 91, 97.

threatened to deprive India of Kashmir by force.<sup>36</sup> As Nehru would write to Patel, the Maharaja had no choice but to release from imprisonment Sheikh Abdullah and the National Conference (NC) leaders, and make serious and sincere political concessions to them, before declaring adhesion to India.<sup>37</sup>

On 22 October the state of limbo in the state was shattered as Pathan tribesmen from the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan invaded Kashmir, according to the Maharaja and the Indian government's contention, with the connivance and support of Karachi.<sup>38</sup> As the invaders, including Pakistani army personnel in plain clothes, first captured Muzaffarabad and then descended towards Srinagar, the capital of the state, the Maharaja sought immediate military help from India to repel the swiftly progressing offensive. New Delhi would, however, express an unwillingness to take such an action without possessing the legal authority to do so in the form of an official accession of the state to the Indian union.<sup>39</sup> Accession in turn could only be accepted, Nehru would insist, with requisite political reforms, as a first step towards which Sheikh Abdullah, head of the NC, and widely acknowledged to be the popular leader in Kashmir, would need to be integrated into the Maharaja's government. Only once this was done, would the Nehru government be willing to accept Kashmir's instrument of accession, and send Indian troops to Kashmir, on the

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<sup>36</sup> Prem Shankar Jha, *Origins of a Dispute: Kashmir 1947* (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 45-51. Jha deals in detail with Nehru's refusals of the Maharaja's offers of accession.

<sup>37</sup> Nehru to Patel (27 September 1947), *Swjn-Ss*. Vol. 4, 264.

<sup>38</sup> The invasion and the Pakistani role in it are discussed later in this chapter, and in more detail in the next chapter.

<sup>39</sup> This again would be on Nehru's insistence, who in keeping with Mountbatten's advice and in contrast to Patel would argue that India would only intervene once it had an instrument of accession from the Maharaja. Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 9-10, Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 107.

request of both the Maharaja as well as Abdullah.<sup>40</sup> According to Jha, were it not for Nehru's obstinacy on this count, "Kashmir would have acceded to India well before the raiders invaded the State...Nehru was prepared to lose the Valley and Srinagar to the raiders and take it back later, if this was necessary to force the Maharaja to take Abdullah into the government."<sup>41</sup>

Even in accepting the instrument of accession on behalf of the Government of India, however, Lord Mountbatten would inform the Maharaja that "in consistence with their policy that in the case of any State where the issue of accession has been the subject of dispute, the question of accession should be decided in accordance with the wishes of the people of the state, it is my Government's wish that as soon as law and order have been restored in Kashmir and her soil cleared of the invader the question of the State's accession should be settled by a reference to the people."<sup>42</sup> Nehru would similarly write to Pakistan confirming the principle that accession would be subject to the final decision of the people of the state, and further that there should be an acceptance by both parties of the principle that wherever the ruler belonged to a religious community different from the majority population, the decision of accession would be subject to the will of the people.<sup>43</sup> Once the dispute entered the domain of the UN in the following months, the Indian representative would let it be known that despite Kashmir's importance to India, the latter had never

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<sup>40</sup> Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 52-53.

<sup>41</sup> Jha, *Origins of a Dispute: Kashmir 1947*, 49.

<sup>42</sup> Lord Mountbatten to the Maharaja (27 Oct 1947), *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, Vol. 1, 16.

<sup>43</sup> Nehru to Liaquat (28 October 1947), *ibid.* Vol. 1, 21; Nehru to Liaquat (8 Nov 1947), *ibid.* Vol. 1, 39.

sought to pressure Kashmir into accession, and his government would adhere now to the commitment that the future status of Kashmir be determined by the people of the state.<sup>44</sup>

For the Indian leadership then, despite the high salience that Kashmir represented, the territory was far from indivisible at this early stage. Indeed, there were practical reasons for strictly adhering to the principle of referring the issue of accession to the people in cases where the religion of the ruler and the majority population differed, even if this meant that Kashmir went to Pakistan. After all, to not do so risked legitimizing the wishes of the Muslim rulers of Hindu majority Junagadh and Hyderabad to either declare independence or accede to Pakistan, and thereby contribute to the balkanization of India.<sup>45</sup> In Junagadh in fact, the ruler had already decided to accede to Pakistan with the lapse of paramountcy, the acceptance of which, the Indian leadership feared, would set a reputational precedent encouraging Hyderabad to act likewise, and Pakistan to engage in other acts of aggression. So, reputational requirements in part demanded that a principle be found to resolve these issues in a manner that would not result in Indian capitulation.<sup>46</sup> Letting the people of the states decide was one such principle on which a resolution of the status of these princely states could be reached.

While a plebiscite therefore offered itself to the Indian leadership as an obvious and eminently suitable method for settling the Kashmir dispute, it would be over the terms and conditions under which such a plebiscite could be held that the mechanism would flounder. These terms and conditions in turn, I suggest, were a consequence of both strategic and

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<sup>44</sup> “Representative of India’s Address to the President of the UNSC” (1 Jan 1948), *ibid.*, Vol. 1, 82-83, 103.

<sup>45</sup> Gupta, *Kashmir*, 79-82.

<sup>46</sup> Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 33.



reputational considerations in New Delhi, and not some insincerity on the part of the Indian leadership as critics have often contended.

### **Indian Commitment to the Plebiscite Option**

To suggest that other considerations shaped India's terms for holding a plebiscite, one must first demonstrate that it was not some essential insincerity on part of the Indian leadership which scuttled the option during this period (1947-1953). Critics have often asserted that Nehru never really accepted the possibility of losing Kashmir to Pakistan, and rather used the promise as a delaying tactic to cement India's military and political stranglehold over the state, with the intention of only holding a plebiscite under conditions that would ensure India's retention of the territory. Pakistan's first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan would express such a sentiment early on in accusing India of intending to "complete their occupation of Jammu and Kashmir and get entire control over its territory under superficial attractive slogan that ultimately the fate of Kashmir will be decided by people of Kashmir...After Indian Government have established complete mastery over territory of Jammu and Kashmir the holding of a plebiscite or referendum will be purely a farce."<sup>47</sup>

Scholars have made a similar case by pointing to Nehru's expression of hesitation to his officials about both the wisdom of conducting a plebiscite, as well as his scepticism about the practical possibility of such a vote being held. Noorani, for instance, has pointed to a 25 August 1952 missive from Nehru to Sheikh Abdullah, in which the Indian PM admitted to having "ruled out the plebiscite for all practical purposes," a view he claimed to have held since 1948. Nehru would conclude the note in the hope that as India grew in strength, "a

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<sup>47</sup> Liaquat to Atlee (4 November 1947, *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 32.

time will come when, through sheer force of circumstance, it [Pakistan] will be in a mood to accept a settlement which we consider fair, whether in Kashmir or elsewhere.”<sup>48</sup>

Such an argument moreover implies that the Indian leadership were only interested in a plebiscite to the extent that victory was guaranteed. Hence the early enthusiasm for a plebiscite, and insistence on maintaining the Abdullah administration in the state, in the belief that India had both Abdullah’s and the Kashmiri population’s favour.<sup>49</sup> Hence also the loss of interest for a vote in the state by 1954, as support for India both with Abdullah and generally amongst Kashmiri public opinion dropped precipitously.<sup>50</sup> Such discontent had progressively risen in response to increasing evidence of Hindu communalism, during the Bengal refugee crisis in 1950 and the Praja Parishad movement in Jammu beginning in late 1951<sup>51</sup>, and reached fever pitch in the lead up to, and the aftermath of, Sheikh Abdullah’s removal from power and imprisonment in Kashmir in August 1953.<sup>52</sup> By this account, then,

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<sup>48</sup> Nehru to Sheikh Abdullah (25 August 1952), *Snjn-Ss*. Vol. 19, 322-330. See also A. G. Noorani, "Review: How and Why Nehru and Abdullah Fell Out," *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 5 (1999): 269.

<sup>49</sup> Nehru would write to Mountbatten that “the normal and obvious course appears to be for Kashmir to join the Constituent Assembly of India,” because it would fulfil both the Maharaja’s demand, and the population’s wish. Nehru to Mountbatten (17 June 1947), *Snjn-Ss*. Vol. 3, 229. To Patel, Nehru would recount Sheikh Abdullah’s repeated “assurances of wishing to cooperate [with India] and of being opposed to Pakistan.” Nehru to Patel (27 September 1947), *ibid.* Vol. 4, 265.

<sup>50</sup> For accounts of these developments see, Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol. 2* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 117-127, Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 77-93.

<sup>51</sup> Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 188. GS Bajpai would communicate to Vijayalakshmi Pandit (Nehru’s sister and India’s ambassador to Washington) during this period that the relationship with Sheikh Abdullah had become increasingly estranged, leading him to “wonder why with this certainty in front of us, we continue to pour out our treasure and risk war.” GS Bajpai to Vijayalakshmi Pandit (17 May 1950), *VL Pandit Papers First Instalment*, Subject file 56; GS Bajpai to V. Pandit (20 July 1950), *VL Pandit Papers First Instalment*, Subject file 56, 4.

<sup>52</sup> By this time Nehru would note that Abdullah had “become very angry,” adopting an increasingly anti-India and pro-independence stance. Nehru to Abdul Kalam Azad (25 April 1952), *Snjn-Ss*. Vol. 18, 389. By July 1953, Sheikh Abdullah’s attitude towards India had degenerated to such an extent that he would reject as useless a meeting with Nehru in Delhi, and discourage even written correspondence. Nehru to Abdul Kalam Azad (19 July 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 23, 290.

Indian pre-conditions for the conduct of a plebiscite are only further evidence that New Delhi was solely and deliberately seeking to either avoid a plebiscite altogether, or at the least create conditions for a plebiscite so as to manufacture a decision in India's favour.

I argue to the contrary that historical evidence from this period points strongly to an Indian government acceptant of the principle that the people of the Kashmir decide their state's future. This was true of course in the first few years when Nehru, convinced that public opinion in Kashmir was with India, would "welcome a plebiscite...as early as possible," in order to "put an end to this business of the doubt of others."<sup>53</sup> Consequently, despite Abdullah and the Maharaja insisting that accession was already complete, Nehru would convince and reassure both as to the desirability of the Indian government adhering to its commitment to a plebiscite.<sup>54</sup> Even the creation of the Constituent Assembly (CA) in Kashmir in 1950 had somewhat disconcerted a Nehru fearful of being accused of having violated Indian commitments.<sup>55</sup> While relenting on the issue to Abdullah however, Nehru would publicly reassert that the act did not detract from any of India's promises to the Kashmiri people, and even seek to prevent the new CA from passing any resolutions confirming accession to India, despite Abdullah's desire to do so.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> "Kashmir and Other Issues" (3 November 1951), *ibid.* Vol. 17, 424.

<sup>54</sup> Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 117.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>56</sup> Nehru to Rajendra Prasad (19 June 1952), *Smyrn-Ss.* Vol. 18, 404. Nehru would claim to have "repeatedly emphasized to Sheikh Abdullah and other Ministers in Kashmir that it would be a wrong approach for the constituent assembly even to discuss such subjects as accession." "Status of Kashmir Constituent Assembly" (18 September 1951), *ibid.* Vol. 16, Part II, 296. Mookerjee would confirm this in a later letter where he would convey to Nehru that he "was told by Sheikh Abdullah that he and his colleagues were willing to adopt this procedure (passing a resolution in the CA in favour of accession to India)," but Nehru had refused to approve of such an action. Nehru to Syama P. Mookerjee (10 January 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 21, 179.

Indeed, as Noorani (one of Nehru's prominent critics on territorial issues) has elucidated, based on the research of Australian scholar Major William Alan Reid, the Indian government had shown particular enthusiasm, "great interest" as Dixon<sup>57</sup> described it, for the latter's proposed plan of 1950 which envisaged a plebiscite for the Kashmir valley, with the rest of the state to be partitioned between India and Pakistan.<sup>58</sup> As Nehru himself would later confirm to US Ambassador Chester Bowles, "India had always been interested in partition possibility as outlined in Dixon Report."<sup>59</sup> Nehru's apparent ruling out of a plebiscite as a practical option at this stage therefore had less to do with insincerity, and more to do with his belief that the conditions under which a plebiscite was acceptable to India might never emerge.<sup>60</sup>

The more striking evidence for the fact that the Indian offer of a plebiscite was not just an insincere delaying tactic, lay in the Indian government's serious revival of the option in late 1953, when by Nehru's own admission both Abdullah and public opinion in Kashmir had turned decidedly anti-India.<sup>61</sup> By June 1953, Nehru would confess that were a plebiscite to be held in the state, India was sure to lose. Having lost the goodwill of the Kashmiri people, and with public cries for the withdrawal of the Indian Army, New Delhi could not

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<sup>57</sup> Sir Owen Dixon, Australian judge and diplomat, served as the UN mediator from May to October 1950.

<sup>58</sup> Jammu was to be split between the two countries, while Buddhist Ladakh would remain with India, and the Northern Areas and 'Azad' Kashmir continue with Pakistan. A. G. Noorani, "The Dixon Plan," *Frontline*, 12-25 October 2002.

<sup>59</sup> *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 18, 430.

<sup>60</sup> Nehru to Sheikh Abdullah (25 August 1952), *ibid.* Vol. 19, 323, 326. In this note, Nehru would nevertheless assert that "if the people of Kashmir clearly and definitely wish to part company from India, there the matter ends, however we may dislike it or however disadvantageous it may be to India... If the Constituent Assembly told us to get out of Kashmir, we would get out..."

<sup>61</sup> Gopal, *Nehru* 2, 130.

seek to hold on to Kashmir “at the point of a bayonet.”<sup>62</sup> President Rajendra Prasad would also inform Nehru now that Sheikh Abdullah believed that India was certain to lose a plebiscite in his state.<sup>63</sup>

Prasad would go on to suggest that with India likely to lose all of Jammu and Kashmir in an overall plebiscite, a solution along the existing ceasefire line was ideal for India, but failing that New Delhi could suggest to Karachi either zonal plebiscites or a plebiscite restricted to the Valley, which would likely mean losing Kashmir, but at least leave Jammu with India.<sup>64</sup> In accordance with this advice, Nehru would offer a regional plebiscite to Pakistan in meetings with the Pakistani Governor-General and Prime Minister, and explain the decision to the soon to be head of the Kashmir administration, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, by stating that while India’s efforts in Kashmir had been in vain, “even so we have to behave decently and honourably, adhering to what we have stood for.”<sup>65</sup>

Even with the dismissal of Abdullah soon after, and the consequent worsening of public mood in Kashmir, Nehru would write to Prasad that his government’s policy would remain the same.<sup>66</sup> Despite what he acknowledged to be a major swing in public opinion against India and in favour of Pakistan in Kashmir, Nehru would now broach with Bakshi the idea of a plebiscite for the state, but on a regional basis, it being “obvious that some parts

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<sup>62</sup> Nehru to B.C. Roy (29 June 1953), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 22, 203; To JP Narayan, Nehru would similarly write that India could not indefinitely hold on to Kashmir without the consent of the people, and that for the first time he felt “very doubtful about the future,” Nehru To JP Narayan (29 July 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 22, 300.

<sup>63</sup> Noorani, "Review: How and Why Nehru and Abdullah Fell Out," 270.

<sup>64</sup> Footnote in Nehru to Rajendra Prasad (15 July 1953), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 23, 288.

<sup>65</sup> Nehru to Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad (30 July 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 23, 301-303.

<sup>66</sup> Nehru to Rajendra Prasad (9 August 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 23, 316.

of the state will plump for India; other parts for Pakistan.”<sup>67</sup> The proposal would be raised officially during talks with the Pakistani leadership in August 1953, with Nehru prefacing the offer with the assertion that the “only way left was to cast the responsibility for the settlement on the people of Kashmir themselves.” The Indian PM would also recommend now a “different approach” to the disposition of Indian and Pakistani forces in the state, an issue that had so far plagued talks on the prerequisites to a plebiscite, so as to not unnecessarily retard the holding of a vote.<sup>68</sup> The Indian government would only demand during these talks that the plebiscite administrator not be from one of the major powers, so as to avoid embroiling the dispute again in great power politics.<sup>69</sup>

To be noted is the fact that these terms were initiated and offered by Nehru, rather than imposed upon him, and were moreover made despite initial opposition from the new leadership in Kashmir.<sup>70</sup> That the Indian government was willing to do so makes problematic arguments about Indian insincerity. If New Delhi had sought to avoid a plebiscite all along, or only desired it under conditions where a positive outcome was assured, we should have seen at this point vigorous attempts to delay or derail any talk of a plebiscite, rather than a voluntary and public reassertion by the Indian leadership of its commitments to the Kashmiri people and Pakistan. Nehru, however, would write to the Pakistan PM that “we are not going to settle this problem by mere cleverness or trying to overreach each other. We are also not going to settle it by coercive processes, whether they are of the nature of war or some other. Nor can it be settled by coercion exercised on the people of Kashmir or any

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<sup>67</sup> Nehru to Bakshi Ghulam Mohd (15 August 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 23, 328-329.

<sup>68</sup> “Conversations with Mohd. Ali” (17 August 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 23, 331-337.

<sup>69</sup> “Conversations with Mohd. Ali” (20 August 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 23, 343.

<sup>70</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 2*, 182.

large section thereof.”<sup>71</sup> As Rizvi has correctly concluded about this period, “it is one of the great ironies of history that just when India appeared to be willing to settle the Kashmir dispute, the prime minister of Pakistan allowed the opportunity to be frittered away.”<sup>72</sup>

### **India and the Failure of the Plebiscite Option**

While the Indian government’s commitment to deciding the state’s future based on the wishes of the people was sincere, the conditions under which a plebiscite was acceptable to New Delhi became an almost immediate bone of contention. Two primary issues would plague the debate in the UN and outside over the prerequisites to a reference to the people: one, the quantum of forces that each party could maintain in the state under their control, and second with regard to the political dispensation in Kashmir in the lead up to, and during the conduct of a vote.<sup>73</sup> Underlying India’s demands on these issues lay the basic stipulation that Pakistan play no part in the administration and defence of the state, or the organization and conduct of the plebiscite.<sup>74</sup>

Specifically, New Delhi would insist first on the affirmation of the state administration’s sovereignty over its territory by complete demilitarization by Pakistan (including the tribal and ‘Azad’ Kashmir forces) of the territory under its control, which

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<sup>71</sup> Nehru to Mohd. Ali (3 September 1953), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 23, 367.

<sup>72</sup> Gowher Rizvi, "Nehru and the Indo-Pakistan Rivalry over Kashmir 1947-64," *Contemporary South Asia* 4, no. 1 (1995): 85.

<sup>73</sup> Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 53-66; 144, Gupta, *Kashmir*. For documents from the proceedings of the Security Council see, *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*.

<sup>74</sup> Nehru to Josef Korbel (20 August 1948), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 7, 303; Michael Brecher, "Kashmir: A Case Study in United Nations Mediation," *Pacific Affairs* 26, no. 3 (1953): 204-207.

would be accompanied by the withdrawal of the ‘bulk’ of Indian forces in Kashmir.<sup>75</sup> For Nehru, the consideration of the Kashmir issue had to “proceed on the recognition of the sovereignty of Jammu and Kashmir over the entire territory of that State, of the fact that this state, by virtue of accession of India, became a part of the territory of the Indian Union,” and consequently “that all armed forces should be removed from the Pakistan side of the ceasefire line and that Pakistan should exercise no authority over the area which it invaded.”<sup>76</sup>

Following this demilitarization, the Indian leadership would insist as a second condition, for the conduct of a plebiscite under the authority of the existing administration in the state, albeit under the ‘auspices’ of the UN. Rejecting demands by Pakistan and others that an ‘impartial’ administration, ostensibly under the authority of a UN appointed Plebiscite Administrator (PA), be created prior to a plebiscite, Nehru would state that his government could not accept proposals “for any other administration to be imposed on Jammu and Kashmir,” which constituted interference in the internal affairs of India and Kashmir.<sup>77</sup> For India, therefore, while the UN was welcome to supervise a plebiscite, the handing over by the Kashmiri administration of any governmental functions to a UN appointed individual or body was unacceptable.<sup>78</sup> As one of the Indian government’s representatives at the UN debates, Gopaldaswami Ayyangar would make clear initially, New Delhi would only entertain UN advice and guidance, and observers to monitor the conduct

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<sup>75</sup> Nehru to the Indian Delegation at the UN (9 January 1953), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 21, 230.

<sup>76</sup> Nehru to V. Pandit (10 November 1952), *ibid.* Vol. 20, 381.

<sup>77</sup> Nehru to Gopaldaswami Ayyangar (19 January 1948), *ibid.* Vol. 5, 194.

<sup>78</sup> Nehru to Patel (30 October 1948), *ibid.* Vol. 5, 43.



of the vote.<sup>79</sup> These terms would be relaxed shortly after with the Indian government's offer to undertake measures seeking to eliminate any influence of the Abdullah administration in a plebiscite, by allowing appointees of the UN Security Council (UNSC) to organize and conduct the plebiscite, under the stipulation that the latter's authority would be seen to derive from the Kashmiri administration. Beyond this, the Indian leadership was unwilling to go.<sup>80</sup>

From the early debates at the UN, to the entry into the subcontinent of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) in 1948, and then on to the McNaughton<sup>81</sup> Proposals and Dixon mediation in 1950, followed by the Graham<sup>82</sup> missions from 1951-53, as also in the interspersed bilateral talks between the two disputants, New Delhi's position on these issues would constitute the primary Indian obstacle to a plebiscite.<sup>83</sup> As argued above, however, such pre-conditions were not part of an elaborate Indian effort to forestall the very possibility of a plebiscite being held in Kashmir. Rather, I suggest that Indian prerequisites to a plebiscite were influenced to a significant degree by the commitment problem Pakistan posed in the Kashmir theatre specifically. Given this, and Pakistan's logistical advantages in Kashmir, as well the Indian administration's conviction that the tribal invasion had been orchestrated by Karachi, a failure to stipulate these

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<sup>79</sup> Speech by Gopalaswami Ayyangar at Security Council meeting 243 (10 February 1948), *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 267.

<sup>80</sup> General Assembly Meeting 269 (18 March 1948), *ibid.* Vol. 2, 339.

<sup>81</sup> Gen. A. G. L. McNaughton, Canadian soldier and diplomat.

<sup>82</sup> Frank P. Graham, a former president of the University of North Carolina and US senator, served as UN mediator from 1951 through to 1957.

<sup>83</sup> For an extensive discussion of the Kashmir dispute in the UN in the early years see, Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 89-146.

conditions, in accordance with what they saw as their legal rights in the state, was viewed by Indian officials in New Delhi to carry prohibitive strategic and reputational costs.

### **Commitment Problem in the Kashmir Theatre**

In Indian perceptions in the early years, while the prospect of Pakistan reneging on an overall territorial settlement was negligible, the situation in the theatre of conflict itself was far less sanguinary. In Kashmir, Pakistan presented a potent challenge primarily because of the relative ease, in comparison with India, with which it could project itself militarily in the state. Despite lacking physical control of the disputed territory, or the military capabilities to match India's, Pakistan's year-long logistical access to Kashmir was far superior. The two major land routes that had connected Kashmir to British India passed through Pakistan, in addition to which the Indus river valley linked the northern region of Gilgit with Pakistan. Aggravating this situation, from the Indian perspective, was the fact that the only all-weather road linking Kashmir to the outside world connected Srinagar to Rawalpindi in Pakistan, leaving India with practically no over land access to the state in the winter months.<sup>84</sup> Before the tribal invasion, therefore, Nehru would acknowledge with fear the ease with which Pakistani troops could enter the state "when the winter isolates Kashmir."<sup>85</sup> Once the invasion came, Indian concerns naturally turned on the fact that Pakistan's logistical advantages meant that the longer military conflict persisted the more costly it would be for India, given its poor lines of communication with the state, as compared to Karachi which

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<sup>84</sup> Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 66-67, Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37.

<sup>85</sup> Nehru to Patel (27 September 1947), *Sujin-Ss*. Vol. 4, 264.

would bear minimal costs.<sup>86</sup> As Mountbatten would articulate this thinking, “for every crore that it [military conflict in Kashmir] cost India, undoubtedly Pakistan would hardly have to spend a lack.”<sup>87</sup>



**Map 3.2: Road Links to Kashmir**  
 (Source: <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/kashmir.pdf>)

<sup>86</sup> “A Note on Kashmir” (19 December 1947), *ibid.* Vol. 4, 377; “Conditions for carrying on military operations in Kashmir State,” Nehru would complain “are not favourable to us chiefly because our lines of communications are bad and limited, while Pakistan can just walk in whenever it likes.” Nehru to M.C. Setalvad (20 December 1947), *ibid.* Vol. 4, 379.

<sup>87</sup> In the Indian sub-continental numbering system, a ‘lack’ or ‘lakh’ refers to a hundred thousand, whereas a ‘crore’ refers to ten million. Mountbatten’s notes on discussion with Nehru (30 March 1948), *ibid.* Vol. 5, 261.

In addition to these strategic advantages Pakistan enjoyed in Kashmir, reducing even further for New Delhi the credibility of any protestations of benign intentions on the part of Karachi was a strong perception of latter's hostility. Pakistan's early stand on the general issue of the princely states had betrayed for the Indian leadership the former's intent of balkanizing India, prompting Nehru to comment on Pakistan's "utter lack of bona fides and its venom and enmity against India."<sup>88</sup> At a more immediate level Pakistan's hostile intentions were starkly demonstrated for New Delhi in its sponsorship and participation in the tribal assault on Kashmir. Soon after the invasion, Nehru would assert to Liaquat his government's conviction that Pakistan Army officers were central to the planning and execution of the tribal invasion.<sup>89</sup> At the UN, India's case would be that the tribal invaders had derived "all manner of help – men, arms, ammunition, other supplies, motor and other transport, bases of operation, transit facilities, gasoline – from or through Pakistan territory," in all of which the Pakistan government was complicit.<sup>90</sup> Kashmiri leaders would further accuse Karachi of insincerity in demanding self-determination for the people of Kashmir now, having rejected the principle prior to the invasion.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Nehru to GS Bajpai (5 December 1948), *ibid.* Vol. 7, 69. With regard to Hyderabad Nehru would say he had "little doubt that Hyderabad has been hand in glove with Pakistan and it is Pakistan that has prevented them from coming into line with us." Gopal, *Nehru* 2, 40. With regard to Junagadh and Hyderabad, also see Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 171-174.

<sup>89</sup> Nehru to Liaquat (31 October, 1947), *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 20.; Nehru to Liaquat (21 November 1947), *ibid.*, 46.; In the *White Paper on Jammu and Kashmir*, released in March 1948, India would claim sufficient evidence to suggest Pakistan's complicity in the invasion. Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 30.

<sup>90</sup> Speech by Indian Representative at SC meeting 285 (19 April 1948), *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 3*, ed. M.S. Deora and R. Grover (New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 1991), 7.

<sup>91</sup> Ghulam Mohd. Sadiq quoted in statement by Indian representative Setalvad in the SC (23 Jan 1948), *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 2*, ed. M.S. Deora and R. Grover (New Delhi: Discovery

All this made for a severe dearth of confidence in New Delhi that Pakistan would adhere to any of its stated commitments. GS Bajpai, Secretary General of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), would encapsulate this scepticism about Pakistan in the Indian government, in conveying his sense that the extreme hate for India in Pakistan meant that any settlement (on Kashmir or any other issue) was unlikely to be “sincere or enduring.”<sup>92</sup> While compromise based on a plebiscite and/or partition therefore continued to be acceptable to India, this intense commitment problem that the Indian leadership faced in the Kashmir theatre engendered strategic and reputational concerns in New Delhi, which manifested themselves in Indian firmness with regard to the conditions under which a plebiscite could be held in the state.

### **The Strategic Calculus**

The strategic imperative was most pertinent to Indian demands with regard to the quantum of forces. For Nehru, even with an end to the fighting in Kashmir, there was “no surety of good behaviour on the Pakistan side and even less on the part of the tribes.”<sup>93</sup> With such little faith in Pakistani bona fides, a complete withdrawal of Indian troops (as demanded by Pakistan) was out of the question for fear that as soon as Indian troops had withdrawn the raiders would resume the invasion of the state.<sup>94</sup> Given Pakistan’s logistical advantages,

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Publishing House, 1991), 28, 57-59.; and Sheikh Abdullah’s statement in SC meeting 241 (5 February 1948), *ibid.*, 215.

<sup>92</sup> GS Bajpai to V Pandit (9 March 1951), *VL Pandit Papers First Instalment*, Subject File 56.

<sup>93</sup> Nehru to the Maharaja of Kashmir (1 December 1947), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 4, 350.

<sup>94</sup> Nehru to Gopalaswami Ayyangar (25 January 1948), *ibid.* Vol. 5, 202; Nehru to Roy Bucher (23 December 1948), *PN Haksar Papers Third Instalment*, Subject File 422, 15; Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 117.

and its “neurotic mood and hostile actions,” an “insurance against such recurrence of aggression” was viewed as imperative.<sup>95</sup> The prospect of Pakistani military presence in the plebiscite area, as the Owen Dixon proposals would suggest, was therefore even less acceptable.<sup>96</sup> As Dixon would conclude, for New Delhi the “possibility either of incursions by marauders, a possibility which, with the experience that India had of what occurred in the autumn of 1947, cannot but be regarded as real, or of Pakistan, with her better lines of communications, herself staging another invasion,” meant that nothing but their own recommendations with regard to demilitarization of Kashmir were acceptable to the Indian government.<sup>97</sup>

Mounting concerns in India over the next few years with regard to both increasing bellicosity in Pakistan, as well as the strengthening of (pro) Pakistani military presence and capabilities in Kashmir, would only serve to exacerbate these fears. By 1951, tensions over the formation of the Kashmir CA as well as communal developments in Bengal were perceived to have generated a strong mood of *jihad* within even the highest echelons in Pakistan.<sup>98</sup> Liaquat Ali Khan’s assassination in October 1951 only intensified fears in New Delhi that the leadership of Pakistan might pass to “wild men” whose first target would be India.<sup>99</sup> There were indeed good reasons for such concern, especially with the discovery of the Rawalpindi conspiracy earlier in the year, involving a planned coup by Pakistan Army officers seeking more assertive policies with regard to Kashmir. In New Delhi, such

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<sup>95</sup> Nehru To Krishna Menon (18 August 1948), *Smyth-Ss*. Vol. 7, 299.

<sup>96</sup> Notes on Nehru’s meeting with Dixon (20 August 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15, Part I, 214.

<sup>97</sup> “Owen Dixon’s Report” (30 September 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15, Part I, 236.

<sup>98</sup> Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 119-126.

<sup>99</sup> Bajpai quoted in Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 216.

developments reflected increasing radical ferment in Pakistan's domestic politics<sup>100</sup>, which compounded by rising political and economic instability, and public discontent, were expected to incentivise diversionary tactics in the Pakistan government, and encourage adventurism in Kashmir.<sup>101</sup> As Nehru would colourfully observe, the government in Pakistan was "like someone riding a bicycle. They feel the moment they return to normalcy the bicycle stops and they fall down."<sup>102</sup> Political developments in Kashmir were only expected to add fuel to this fire, with the formation of the CA likely to be viewed in Pakistan as "the final nail in the coffin as far as Kashmir was concerned," possibly prompting Karachi to a resort to force.<sup>103</sup>

The strategic risks for New Delhi of relenting on their demilitarization demands were further compounded by the progressive strengthening of the 'Azad Kashmir' forces which, even the UN Commission would note "makes the withdrawal of forces, particularly those of India, a far more difficult matter to arrange..."<sup>104</sup> By early 1953, Nehru would contend that the 'Azad' forces had become stronger, better trained, and equipped with Pakistan's assistance, to the extent that they could be considered as effective as, and practically integrated with, Pakistan's regular army. The fact that these troops were backed up by regular Pakistani concentrations at a distance of around 20-25 miles from the ceasefire line only magnified the threat for the Indian government. All this, in turn, was seen in India to

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<sup>100</sup> Cable from Nehru to B.N. Rau (25 March 1951), *Svijn-Ss*. Vol. 16, Part I, 368.

<sup>101</sup> Cable from Nehru to GS Bajpai (9 February 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 21, 238; B. N. Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: 1948-1964* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1972), 80.

<sup>102</sup> "Impracticability of an Independent Kashmir" – Letter from Nehru to Sheikh Abdullah (25 August 1952), *Svijn-Ss*. Vol. 19, 325.

<sup>103</sup> Nehru to Krishna Menon (22 July 1951), *ibid.* Vol. 16, Part II, 323.

<sup>104</sup> Quoted in Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 102.

necessitate significant Indian military presence in Kashmir to secure the state prior to and during a plebiscite. Only “if all Pakistan troops were withdrawn from ‘Azad’ area and ‘Azad’ forces disarmed and disbanded” would the risks be somewhat reduced, allowing India to substantially reduce its own presence, as already committed.<sup>105</sup>

While substantive concessions on the quantum of forces issue were feared in New Delhi to present Pakistan with exploitable military-strategic advantages, compromises with regard to the political administration of the state were regarded as similarly dangerous. Such concessions, by diminishing Indian sovereignty over Kashmir, and yielding to Pakistan’s claims for parity in the state, would have provided Karachi with a legitimate political vantage from which to pose further challenges. Indian representatives at the UN would therefore insist that Kashmir’s accession to India was final and valid until a plebiscite was held, and went against India. Until that point, Pakistan had no constitutional position in the state, and therefore could play no role in the preparations and conduct of a plebiscite.<sup>106</sup> The acceptance of a ceasefire in Kashmir in 1949, it was feared in New Delhi, had itself “been interpreted to mean as if Pakistan has not only acquired some kind of political right over the territory under its present control but had also a right to interfere in the other part of the Kashmir territory.”<sup>107</sup> The demand for an ‘impartial’ administration by Karachi was now

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<sup>105</sup> “Assessment of Military Situation,” Cable from Nehru to GS Bajpai (8 February 1953) *Snjn-Ss*. Vol. 21, 236.

<sup>106</sup> Statement by Gopalaswami Ayyangar in SC meeting 285 (19 April 1948), *Documents on Kashmir Problem*, Vol. 3, 17.

<sup>107</sup> “Foreign Policy” (28 March 1951), *Snjn-Ss*. Vol. 16, Part I, 518; “Kashmir – Integral Part of India” – Statement made in Parliament (March 28, 1951), *Kashmir 1947-56: Excerpts from Prime Minister Nehru’s Speeches*. (Information Service of India: New Delhi, 1956), 25; To Bajpai Nehru would write that Pakistan’s position with regard to the ‘Azad’ forces was a ploy “to justify their occupation of that territory and to equate them with India on the other side of ceasefire line.” Cable from Nehru to G.S. Bajpai (16 February 1953), *SWJN-Ss*. Vol. 21, 241.



viewed to only further that same purpose, which if conceded would surely have been exploited by Pakistan.

What could be more advantageous to Pakistan, Nehru would consequently ask Dixon, than to be able to say that they had “kicked out the Kashmir Government and the India Government from Kashmir... [that would be] patently ninety per cent of victory for Pakistan then and there, quite apart from the plebiscite.”<sup>108</sup> The predominant fear in the Indian administration had always been that whatever concessions they made, Pakistan would take advantage of by using them as a launching point for further demands.<sup>109</sup> India’s experience had demonstrated that vague formulas and commitments were dangerous with an “amazingly unscrupulous” Pakistan, with whom “sometimes it almost appears that unscrupulousness pays.”<sup>110</sup> As Mountbatten would encapsulate Nehru’s thinking, “the more concessions that we gave, the more Sir Zafrullah Khan<sup>111</sup> would dig his toes in and insist on further concessions.”<sup>112</sup> In this scenario, any major concessions were expected to only present Pakistan with a military-strategic or political position from which to make further, more extensive, demands in Kashmir. This was a prospect the India leadership was unwilling to facilitate.

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<sup>108</sup> “Mediation by Owen Dixon” (24 August 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15, Part I, 227.

<sup>109</sup> Cable from Nehru to B.N. Rau (11 February 1951), *ibid.* Vol. 15, Part II, 293.

<sup>110</sup> Nehru to V Pandit (17 May 1949), *VL Pandit Papers First Instalment*, Subject File 60.

<sup>111</sup> Pakistan’s first Foreign Minister and voice at the UN.

<sup>112</sup> Mountbatten notes on discussion with Nehru (30 March 1948), *Sujn-Ss.* Vol. 5, 261.

## The Reputational Imperative in Indian Decision Making

For the Indian government, the potential reputational implications of their actions were not of negligible concern. In addressing Junagadh's accession to Pakistan, Raghavan has noted that "concerns over reputation played an important role," given the implications for Hyderabad.<sup>113</sup> As Nehru would insist then, tolerating Junagadh's accession, by damaging the "prestige of the Government of India," was likely to encourage Pakistani aggression, however small, in other areas.<sup>114</sup>

With regard to Kashmir, as discussed earlier, in the early days the Indian leadership had attached few reputational costs to compromise itself, which ostensibly could have led to Pakistan's acquisition of the state, if the people so wished. Indeed, in New Delhi, compromise from such strength was viewed as an expression of Indian generosity and benevolence, rather than weakness.<sup>115</sup> Nehru would emphasize this point in an early exchange with Liaquat, contending that had his government really desired to gain Kashmir by any means, they could have done so easily without waiting until large chunks of the state had been invaded by the tribal raiders.<sup>116</sup> In offering a plebiscite, therefore, despite Kashmir

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<sup>113</sup> Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 33. Patel would contend that "if India did not now support the popular demand of the people of Junagadh, there was a danger that Hyderabad would decide to accede to Pakistan," 44.

<sup>114</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 48.

<sup>115</sup> That Nehru viewed such generosity as wise is clear from his thoughts on Hyderabad, where once India's political aims were achieved, Nehru felt India could "afford to be generous," whereas a vengeful and overbearing attitude would only create an animus against India and Indian interests in Hyderabad and abroad. "The Hyderabad Situation" (17 September 1948), *Smyj-Ss*. Vol. 7, 251.

<sup>116</sup> In the process they could have also avoided domestic criticism for being 'dilatatory.' Nehru to Liaquat (31 October 1947), *ibid.* Vol. 4, 297.

having legally acceded to them, the Indian leadership “had already gone far further than they need have done... [even though] there was no necessity for them to have done this.”<sup>117</sup>

The commitment problem that Pakistan posed within the Kashmir theatre itself, its better logistical position to project itself militarily in the state, and maybe most importantly Karachi’s complicity in the tribal invasions, however, made the *terms and conditions* under which compromise, and particularly a plebiscite, was to be given effect to of great reputational import to the Indian leadership. Indeed, underlying Nehru’s fear that whatever suggestions India made, Pakistan would take advantage of and ask for more,<sup>118</sup> was a strong reputational logic. Accordingly, not only was there a desire in New Delhi to avoid concessions which altered the military-strategic or political context in Pakistan’s favour, but also an insistence that no concessions be made which might signal weakness, for fear of encouraging further challenges by Karachi in Kashmir and beyond. Indian firmness that a certain basic set of conditions be met before a plebiscite could be held was therefore, to a good degree, motivated by this imperative for reputation building.<sup>119</sup>

Soon after the tribal invasion, Nehru would argue that the mere desire for peace with Pakistan, and concessions to that end, was ironically more likely to precipitate war. “Any surrender” by India to “this kind of aggression would lead to continuing aggressions elsewhere... [and] war would become inevitable between India and Pakistan.”<sup>120</sup> The stakes

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<sup>117</sup> “Meeting with Mountbatten” (8 December 1947), *ibid.* Vol. 4, 365.

<sup>118</sup> Nehru to Krishna Menon (8 September 1949), *ibid.* Vol. 13, 218.

<sup>119</sup> According to Brines, this issue of ‘face’ (both vis-à-vis Pakistan, and internally) meant that “the Indians could give up the state through plebiscite, but they could not be placed in the position of being forced out. New Delhi could not forget that the initial attacks had come largely from the area incorporated into Azad Kashmir.” Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 92.

<sup>120</sup> Nehru to Lord Mountbatten (26 December 1947), *Smyrn-Ss.* Vol. 4, 400; Campbell-Johnson would note that some Indian leaders saw Pakistan’s activities in Kashmir as part of wider plot which

for Pakistan, after all, were seen to be not limited to Kashmir alone, given “wild” calls in Pakistan for securing not just Kashmir, but in fact to move further south through East Punjab all the way to Delhi. Pakistan’s failure to formally agree to a plebiscite, two months after it had been offered by India, was therefore viewed in New Delhi as a clear indication that peace was only possible if India resisted aggression firmly, since “that is the only way Pakistan seems to understand.”<sup>121</sup> Consequently, in resisting early military recommendations to evacuate Poonch, Nehru would express his fear that doing so, by undermining the prestige of the Indian government at a crucial time, would encourage the adversary to persist with aggression.<sup>122</sup>

Moreover, on legal and moral grounds, the Indian leadership considered their case to be strong, while Pakistan stood undisputedly condemned. To succumb to aggression on policies which were “consider[ed] on both moral and practical grounds to be perfectly justifiable,” was therefore viewed as even more reputationally damaging, and therefore unacceptable.<sup>123</sup> Peace, after all, Nehru would contend, could not be achieved were it to be based on “untruth, immorality and acceptance of brutal aggression.”<sup>124</sup> Pakistan’s whole policy, as that of the Muslim league before it, had been premised on the efficacy of “threat and bullying,” where “appeasement only leads to more bullying.”<sup>125</sup> This perception

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involved destabilizing Hyderabad, followed by a march across the Punjab border to Delhi. Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, 252.

<sup>121</sup> Nehru to Lord Mountbatten (26 December 1947), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 4, 401; “Arthur Henderson’s Report” (9 January 1948), *ibid.* Vol. 5, 182; Gopal, *Nehru* 2, 22.

<sup>122</sup> Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 120.

<sup>123</sup> Nehru to V. Pandit (2 July 1949), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 11, 330.

<sup>124</sup> “Integration of Kashmir” (21 May 1949), *ibid.* Vol. 11, 124.

<sup>125</sup> “Foreign Policy Regarding Pakistan and Afghanistan” (15 June 1949), *ibid.* Vol. 11, 370.

necessitated, from the Indian perspective, a clear stance of not submitting to coercion, and New Delhi's preconditions to a plebiscite, therefore, in insisting on first rectifying Pakistani aggression and denying Karachi any standing in the state, sought to serve this very end. Any other approach would have meant that "aggression stands justified and will be repeated as in the past."<sup>126</sup>

In keeping with this posture, New Delhi would also repeatedly make clear that if Pakistan continued to resort to military means, the plebiscite offer was subject to withdrawal. Indeed, even to the minimal extent that India was ready to alter the Kashmiri administration, by offering the possibility of a coalition government in the state including pro-Pakistan Muslim Conference leaders who had not gone over to the 'Azad' Kashmir side, Bajpai would suggest that the suggestion come from abroad, for fear that offering such concessions directly would signal weakness to Karachi.<sup>127</sup>

Criticism of India at the UN was seen, furthermore, as patently unfair not only because it ignored legal and moral considerations, but perhaps more importantly, owing to the failure of the great powers to acknowledge that "acceptance of any aggression at any time and more especially in the present circumstances, means encouraging it for the future and has very far-reaching consequences."<sup>128</sup> For the leadership in New Delhi, therefore, India had no choice but to take up a firm position and limit the number of concessions made to

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<sup>126</sup> Nehru to Krishna Menon (11 September 1949), *ibid.* Vol. 13, 226.

<sup>127</sup> Bajpai quoted in Raghavan Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 129, 135.

<sup>128</sup> "Kashmir and the US" (10 August 1949), *Smyth-Ss.* Vol. 11, 340-342. For much of this period there was a strong sense in India that the great powers were putting inordinate and unjustified pressure on India to accede to terms unacceptable to her, which would generate even more combativeness in India. Gupta, *Kashmir*, 207-209.

Pakistan<sup>129</sup>, to signal not only to Pakistan that “gangster tactics” would not work, but also to the great powers that India would not succumb to their “bullying,” even if this meant defying the UN.<sup>130</sup>

Consequently, in response to Dixon’s proposal for a partition-cum-plebiscite approach to the dispute, a solution which was generally acceptable to Nehru<sup>131</sup>, the latter would express his disapproval for any proposal including a change of government in the state, or the presence of Pakistani troops in Kashmir, which would have amounted to surrendering some sovereignty to Pakistan in the face of aggression.<sup>132</sup> For the Indian PM, it was extraordinary that despite India’s generous concessions, “gradually the aggressor wants equality with us in everything, and a step further, it wants predominance in everything.”<sup>133</sup> Any further compromise by India, it was felt, would signal that Pakistan had succeeded in aggression “with all the psychological and other consequences that flow from it.”<sup>134</sup>

The Indian approach to the Kashmir dispute was essentially conceived in New Delhi as one “in which firmness is tempered by reason and restraint.”<sup>135</sup> Being overly

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<sup>129</sup> Mountbatten notes on discussion with Nehru (30 March 1948), *SNJN-SS*. Vol. 5, 261; Cable from Nehru to Ayyangar (1 April 1948), *ibid.* Vol. 5, 264.

<sup>130</sup> Note by Nehru on Kashmir (20 February 1948), *ibid.* Vol. 5, 224.

<sup>131</sup> Gopal, *Nehru* 2, 90, Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 130-138.

<sup>132</sup> Nehru. *SNJN-SS*. Vol. 15, Part I, 213.

<sup>133</sup> “Mediation by Owen Dixon” (24 August 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15, Part I, 220.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. 15, Part I, 224.

<sup>135</sup> GS Bajpai to V Pandit (22 March 1950), *VL Pandit Papers First Instalment*, Subject File 56. Reflecting similar reputational concerns, Nehru would later, on a different issue of a common defence with Pakistan, caution his ambassador in Pakistan to avoid raising the issue for fear that “Pakistan is likely to think that we are weakening and are afraid of them and the result might be a more aggressive attitude than now on the part of Pakistan.” Nehru to Mohan Sinha Mehta (20 September 1952), *SNJN-SS*. Vol. 19, 604.

accommodative was seen as unwise, and the appeal by others for ‘greatness’ on India’s part as hardly appropriate, because it was precisely such a logic that led in fact to appeasement, with all its negative implications.<sup>136</sup> This firm stand at the UN, in turn was seen to have “shut many people’s mouth,” further evidence that critics would only pay the attention Indian claims deserved when faced with firmness.<sup>137</sup>

Throughout this period (1947-1953) then, the plebiscite option floundered on the Indian end due to pre-conditions which were motivated not by insincere intentions, but rather by New Delhi’s strategic and reputational fears vis-à-vis Pakistan in the Kashmir theatre. Even while resuscitating the plebiscite option in 1953, therefore, fully aware that India would likely lose Kashmir in the process, Nehru would continue to insist that his government’s basic preconditions be met, even if in a slightly relaxed form, before a plebiscite could take place in the state.<sup>138</sup> To compromise on these terms was viewed as too costly, strategically and reputationally, for an Indian government to be willing to accept.

### **Taking the Plebiscite Option off the Table: India and Kashmir, 1954-1964**

The hopes for a concerted push towards plebiscite in Kashmir, which the late 1953 bilateral talks had evoked, would soon be crushed with India’s abrupt withdrawal of the plebiscite offer. The wishes of the people of Kashmir, which till recently had held priority for Nehru, were now seemingly side-lined. By 1954, the Indian PM would confess that despite Karachi seeming “anxious to have a settlement and is prepared to go some distance for it,”

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<sup>136</sup> V Pandit to GS Bajpai (24 May 1951), *VL Pandit Papers First Instalment*, Subject File 56

<sup>137</sup> V Pandit to GS Bajpai (10 May 1951), *VL Pandit Papers First Instalment*, Subject File 56

<sup>138</sup> Nehru to Mohd. Ali (3 September 1953), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 23, 364-367.

he himself saw “no way out except a recognition by both parties of the status quo, subject to minor modifications.”<sup>139</sup> In response to Pakistani requests for talks in 1955, Nehru would ask his envoy in Karachi to attempt to delay what were sure to be fruitless talks<sup>140</sup>, and further “not refer to the question of plebiscite” in any talks with his Pakistani interlocutors.<sup>141</sup>

Reluctantly, Nehru would eventually acquiesce to talks, held in May 1955, but would make clear from the beginning that despite his desire to stand by previous commitments, it had become progressively difficult to do so, and that the “only practical and safe way of dealing with it [Kashmir] was to accept present conditions as they were, that is, the status quo, and then proceed on that basis.”<sup>142</sup> The maximum the Indian government was willing concede now, that too reluctantly, was a transfer of Mirpur and parts of the Poonch area under Indian control to Pakistan as part of a final settlement along the status quo.<sup>143</sup> At the end of the expectedly fruitless talks, Nehru would be led to conclude that the two countries were “apparently further away from each other than they had been at any time during the last seven or eight years.”<sup>144</sup>

Indian leaders would now increasingly speak in terms of the old basis for resolving the Kashmir dispute having become impractical. The Indian Home Minister, G.B. Pant,

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<sup>139</sup> Nehru to CC Desai (27 Feb 1955), *ibid.* Vol. 28, 235; Nehru to MS Mehta (24 December 1954), *ibid.* Vol. 27, 179.

<sup>140</sup> Cable from Nehru to CC Desai (3 March 1955), *ibid.* Vol. 28, 236.

<sup>141</sup> Cable from Nehru to CC Desai (8 March 1955), *ibid.* Vol. 28, 238.

<sup>142</sup> “Talks with Mohd. Ali and Iskander Mirza – I” (14 May 1955), *ibid.* Vol. 28, 249-252

<sup>143</sup> “Talks with Mohd. Ali and Iskander Mirza – II” (15 May 1955), *ibid.* Vol. 28, 253-254; “Talks with Mohd. Ali and Iskander Mirza – IV” (17 May 1955), *ibid.* Vol. 28, 260-262.

<sup>144</sup> “Talks with Mohd. Ali and Iskander Mirza – IV” (17 May 1955), *ibid.* Vol. 28, 261.



would publicly state during a July 1955 visit to Kashmir that the “tide cannot be turned”<sup>145</sup>, and Nehru again ruled out a plebiscite in talks with Pakistani leaders in 1956, despite indications that Karachi was now willing accept Nehru’s 1953 proposal of a plebiscite along regional lines.<sup>146</sup> Nehru would further assert that his government was no longer bound by prior commitments due to recent developments<sup>147</sup>, and even dismiss a plea by J.P. Narayan<sup>148</sup> that India adhere to the people’s wishes in Kashmir, where according to Narayan 95% of Muslims no longer wished to remain part of India.<sup>149</sup>

The crucial development to trigger this drastic reversal of policy by India was the US-Pakistan Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement of 1954, whereby Pakistan agreed to enter into a defence relationship with the US, in return for substantial military aid. Even before the 1953 India-Pakistan talks, there had been concern in New Delhi about reports in the American and Pakistani presses of an impending military pact, as well as talk of Pakistan joining the Middle East Defence Organization (MEDO).<sup>150</sup> Through Chester Bowles New

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<sup>145</sup> GB Pant in Srinagar, 8 July 1955, *TN Kaul Papers: I-III Instalments*, Subject File 12, 14; At a conference of the heads of Indian missions abroad, Nehru would unambiguously assert: “I do not say that we shall no longer talk, but I say that we can no longer talk on the old basis,” in “Indo-Pakistan Relations- Conference of Heads of Indian Missions” (24 March – 3 April 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 32, 432.

<sup>146</sup> Nehru to Bakshi Ghulam Mohd. (12 July 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 32, 213; Record of Nehru’s talks with Mohd. Ali (5 July 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 32, 376-77. In these talks, according to Nehru, the Pak PM would point out “that his own position in Pakistan was obviously not one which would enable him to impose any decision. My position was much more stronger and if I decided to do something, I could put it through.”

<sup>147</sup> “Instructions to Indian Missions Abroad” (27 February 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 37, 402; Nehru to Bakshi Ghulam Mohd. (13 March 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 37, 411

<sup>148</sup> Prominent Indian politician, and leader of the Socialist Party in India.

<sup>149</sup> Nehru to JP Narayan (3 May 1956), *Smyrn-Ss.* Vol. 33, 377.

<sup>150</sup> As early as in November 1952 there were troubling reports in both the *New York Times* and the influential Pakistani daily *Dawn* about the prospects of defence agreement which would see the US strengthening Pakistani military capability and acquiring basing rights in the country. Cable from Nehru to V. Pandit (13 November 1952), *ibid.* Vol. 20, 348. The talk of Pakistan joining the Middle East Defence Organization (MEDO) in early 1953 also had India paying close attention, given the

Delhi had also been aware that Pakistan had been applying pressure on the US for military aid since the spring of 1952, citing Kashmir explicitly as the reason for the request.<sup>151</sup>

Soon after the 1953 talks, as the prospect of the US-Pakistan pact began to concretize, Nehru warned Karachi that they had a choice between winning Kashmir through plebiscite, and entering a military alliance with the US.<sup>152</sup> He would emphasize that the conclusion of a military pact would engender so severe a change in the Kashmir context, particularly with regard to the demilitarization issue, that it would necessitate a reappraisal of India's attitude towards a plebiscite.<sup>153</sup> Prior discussions had taken place, the Indian leader would assert, in "a particular context which existed then, and which exists, if you like even today," but would change drastically "when one of the greatest powers of the world sponsors military aid to Pakistan,"<sup>154</sup> meaning that all "problems will be seen in a new light."<sup>155</sup> Nehru would therefore demand that the Pakistani leadership make their intentions clear.<sup>156</sup>

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prospect of such a development potentially changing drastically the existing equilibrium with regard to military capabilities. "Pakistan and MEDO" (15 January 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 21, 491.

<sup>151</sup> V Pandit to Nehru (1 December 1953), *VL Pandit Papers First Instalment*, Subject File 48.

<sup>152</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 2*, 184. Till as late as early March 1954 Nehru would remind the Pakistani PM that while India remained bound by her commitment to a plebiscite, the failure to agree on India's pre-conditions and now talk of a military pact was delaying the actual carrying out of a plebiscite. Nehru to Mohd. Ali (5 March 1954), *Sujn-Ss.* Vol. 25, 321. On 14 February 1954, in a letter of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, now PM of Jammu and Kashmir State, Nehru would assert that India government would not unilaterally end its commitments made to Pakistan and the United Nations even as on 6 February the Constituent Assembly of J&K ratified the accession of the state to India. Nehru to Bakshi Ghulam Mohd. (14 February 1954), *ibid.* Vol. 25, 313. Similarly, to Ali Yavar Jung, then India's ambassador to Egypt, Nehru would write only four days before the US-Pakistan pact was finalized that "so far as the Government of India are concerned, we hold on to those [plebiscite] assurances." Nehru to Ali Yavar Jung (15 May 1954), *ibid.* Vol. 25, 328.

<sup>153</sup> Nehru to Mohd. Ali (18 December 1953), *Sujn-Ss.* Vol. 24, 409.

<sup>154</sup> "Major Issues of Foreign Policy" (23 December 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 24, 567.

<sup>155</sup> Nehru to Mohd. Ali (10 November 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 24, 416.

<sup>156</sup> Nehru to Mohd. Ali (18 January 1954), *ibid.* Vol. 24, 451.

Importantly, in the hope and expectation that Karachi would react favourably to his warnings, the Indian PM would at the same time instruct the Kashmir administration to function on the basis that the 1953 plan was still on track.<sup>157</sup>

Once the US-Pakistan pact was officially concluded, New Delhi would unsurprisingly reverse its position on the plebiscite as promised. As Pakistan's Prime Minister would later acknowledge, the sole reason for the dramatic change in India's position appeared to be the introduction of American military aid to Pakistan, rather than any other domestic developments or considerations.<sup>158</sup> By fundamentally changing expectations about Pakistan's military capabilities and bargaining strength in Kashmir, the pact heightened the intensity of the commitment problem Pakistan presented to India, and therefore the potential strategic and reputational costs attendant on compromise along old lines. In response, the Indian leadership assumed a position of increasing firmness, key to which was a refusal to any longer contemplate a plebiscite in Kashmir, and insist instead on a solution along the prevailing status quo.

### **The Strategic Logic**

From a strategic perspective, the US-Pakistan pact promised to so change the military balance in the subcontinent, that a plebiscite and the prospect of losing Kashmir, both of which had so far been acceptable to the Indian leadership, became immediately problematic. In the Kashmir theatre specifically, the pact was seen in New Delhi to only further complicate the already contentious issue of the quantum of forces, which now required a

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<sup>157</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 2*, 186.

<sup>158</sup> Record of Nehru's talks with Mohd. Ali (5 July 1956), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 34, 377.

complete reconsideration.<sup>159</sup> As Nehru saw it, with their progressively augmented military capabilities added to their pre-existing logistical advantages, even Pakistani troops moving 20 or 30 miles behind the cease fire line, would have done very little to mitigate the strategic quandary that India faced.<sup>160</sup> It had consequently become “absurd to talk of demilitarization,”<sup>161</sup> and given the aggressive rhetoric emanating from the Pakistani leadership directly linking the military aid to Kashmir, it was felt that India had to “retain full liberty to keep such forces and military equipment in Kashmir” as was seen fit in New Delhi.<sup>162</sup> Any major withdrawal from Kashmir based on third party assurances, Indian officials now concluded, was inconceivable given the ease with which an aggressive Pakistan could resort to force in the state.<sup>163</sup> With a satisfactory demilitarization formula unlikely to be found, the pursuit of a plebiscite also lost any practical meaning for the Indian leadership. Indeed, such was the vehemence of the latter’s protestations, that the Pakistani PM would be forced to conclude that an agreement on the question of demilitarization had become impossible, requiring that the question revert once again to the UN Security Council.<sup>164</sup>

Beyond the specificities of the Kashmir theatre and the plebiscite, moreover, the military pact also meant that the prospect of losing Kashmir itself, which had been reluctantly acceptable to the Indian leadership earlier, now presented unacceptably high

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<sup>159</sup> “US Military Aid to Pakistan” – Statement made in Parliament (1 March 1954), *Kashmir 1947-56: Excerpts from Prime Minister Nehru’s Speeches*. (Information Service of India: New Delhi), 1956, 38-42.

<sup>160</sup> “Practical Solution” – Speech made at a public meeting in Delhi (13 April 1956), *ibid.*, 45-46.

<sup>161</sup> Nehru to Mohd. Ali (9 December 1953), *Snjn-Ss*. Vol. 24, 436.

<sup>162</sup> Nehru to Mohd. Ali (5 March 1954), *ibid.* Vol. 25, 320.

<sup>163</sup> V Pandit to J Nehru (22 March 1956), *VL Pandit Papers First Instalment*, Subject File 59.

<sup>164</sup> Footnote in Nehru’s note to Mohd. Ali (29 September 1954), *Snjn-Ss*. Vol. 26, 475.

strategic costs.<sup>165</sup> “It is not merely the Kashmir question that has become much more difficult,” Nehru declared, “but a serious threat has arisen to India’s security.”<sup>166</sup> The military aid to Pakistan was expected to both “facilitate and encourage aggression,”<sup>167</sup> and regardless of American assurances, Nehru would express his conviction that once advanced weapons were made available to Pakistan, they would be out of Washington’s control.<sup>168</sup>

Based on such fears, by early 1954 Nehru began to raise serious concerns about military preparedness, seeking from his officials reasonable estimates of when a major threat to India might emerge.<sup>169</sup> He would conclude that “the possibility of immediate danger or danger in the near future cannot be provided for by some long distance programme of production” and the purchase of aircraft, including from the Soviet Union, ought to be explored.<sup>170</sup> Within a year or two Pakistan was expected to be in a position to initiate war against India, a fact which was seemingly not lost in Pakistan where anti-India sentiment and talk of war had perceptibly spiralled as a result.<sup>171</sup> For Nehru, who had all along emphasized the importance of economic and industrial development as a foundation for military strength

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<sup>165</sup> Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life*, 267.

<sup>166</sup> Nehru to Mohd. Ali (5 March 1954), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 25, 320.

<sup>167</sup> “India and Military Aid” (1 March 1954), *ibid.* Vol. 25, 351.

<sup>168</sup> Chester Bowles Oral Transcript – recorded by BR Nanda - NMML Oral History Project (9 March 1971), 15.

<sup>169</sup> Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: 1948-1964*, 114-115.

<sup>170</sup> “Manufacture and Purchase of Aircrafts” (21 February 1954), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 25, 295.

<sup>171</sup> Message from Nehru to Anthony Eden (2 December 1955), *ibid.* Vol. 31, 386; By March 1956 Nehru would be expressing concern to Eden that given the flow of military aid Pakistan now already possessed better military equipment than India did, and with consistent flow of such aid Pakistan’s military position would be superior to that of India, particularly with regard to arms and aircraft, with a consequent exacerbation in hostile rhetoric emerging from Pakistan. Cable from Nehru to Anthony Eden (23 March 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 32, 290.

in the future, the trade-offs between immediate and long term security had become increasingly apparent. Discussions with John Foster Dulles, the US Secretary of State, in 1956 only added credence to these fears. During these talks Dulles indicated that the Pakistan Army would soon be the size of the Indian Army, in response to which Nehru added that in such a case Pakistan would also be equipped with qualitatively superior military equipment.<sup>172</sup> Indeed, by this time, both the Pakistan Air Force as well as the Army's mechanized wing were considered in the Indian government to be already superior in many ways to those of India's, posing a serious threat to Indian security.<sup>173</sup>

Political developments in Pakistan only exacerbated fears that any concessions made by India, which presented Karachi with a strategic advantage in Kashmir, or gave up Kashmir itself, would be exploited for further imperilling Indian security. With the military acquiring political supremacy across the border, Nehru felt that Pakistan's government "did not have a political or economic purpose or background, but was moved by a mentality which was adventurous and military..."<sup>174</sup> A government that had used the bogey of an Indian threat to divert attention domestically from poor governance, could only be expected to become even more adventurous with the generous military aid it was receiving.<sup>175</sup> The increasing incidence of border violations by Pakistan added credence to the belief in India that a strong military was intended in Pakistan not for defence, but for aggressive

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<sup>172</sup> Nehru's conversation with Pineau (11 March 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 32, 394; By January 1957, Nehru in a letter to Krishna Menon would anticipate that Pakistan would soon acquire parity with India with better military equipment, and according to military opinion would need six months to a year to be able to use such equipment effectively. Cable from Nehru to Krishna Menon (30 January 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 36, 358.

<sup>173</sup> Nehru to Birla (2 April 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 37, 391.

<sup>174</sup> Nehru's conversation with Pineau (11 March 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 32, 394.

<sup>175</sup> "Need for Non-Violent Defence Techniques" (4 May 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 38, 434.

purposes.<sup>176</sup> “So far as the external danger to India is concerned,” Nehru would conclude, “the only possible danger is from Pakistan.”<sup>177</sup> To lose territory as large and strategic as Kashmir to an increasingly stronger and more rabidly anti-India Pakistan had become inconceivable.

Finally, compounding even further the strategic risks for New Delhi of losing Kashmir was the fact of American participation in Pakistan’s strengthening.<sup>178</sup> For the Indian leadership, by extending their Cold War alliance into Pakistan, the US sought to “bring India to her knees,” and force a reconsideration of non-alignment.<sup>179</sup> The pact had in effect made Pakistan an American base, and it was “a matter of little consequence” for Nehru “how much that aid is; it is the sponsoring of aid that makes all the difference in the world.”<sup>180</sup> In this pursuit of bases, moreover, Kashmir particularly was expected in New Delhi to be the location of choice for the Americans, with Gilgit understood to have already been picked for one such base.<sup>181</sup> This increasing American involvement in India’s neighbourhood, accompanied by statements in Baghdad Pact meetings condemning neutral attitudes to the Cold War, were therefore seen in India as expressions of hostility on the part of the alliance

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<sup>176</sup> “A Survey of Foreign Affairs” (20 March 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 32, 506.

<sup>177</sup> “World Scenario and National Security” (13 March 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 32, 497.

<sup>178</sup> Nehru to T.T. Krishnamachari (25 January 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 24, 434; Also Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: 1948-1964*, 107.

<sup>179</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 2*, 185.

<sup>180</sup> “Major Issues of Foreign Policy” (23 December 1953), *Sujn-Ss.* Vol. 24, 567.

<sup>181</sup> Nehru to CC Desai (27 Feb 1955), *ibid.* Vol. 28, 235. By 1952 US officials were evidently thinking along these lines, noting the “large number of excellent airfields and air base sites (notably in West Pakistan) within medium and heavy bomber range...” of targets in the Soviet Union and communist China. See, Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 98.

system Pakistan had embroiled itself in.<sup>182</sup> Pakistan's membership in both the Middle East Defence Organisation (MEDO) and the South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO), left India "threatened on both sides by these alliances which, though said to be defensive in character, have an obvious aggressive implication to India."<sup>183</sup>

### **The US-Pakistan Military Pact and Reputational Considerations**

Beyond the strategic calculus, the more intense Pakistani commitment problem made reputation building even more necessary for New Delhi. Given the prior experience of use of force by Pakistan, and now the newer context of Pakistan's increasing military capabilities, intransigence with regard to Kashmir, including the rejection of a plebiscite, became a means of demonstrating firmness on India's part.

For Nehru, it was apparent that in Pakistan the belief now prevailed that faced with greater strength, India would have no choice but to relent on Kashmir. Pakistan was seemingly engulfed in talk of *jehad*, with open boasts that having built up military strength, Karachi would speak to India from a position of strength.<sup>184</sup> This increasing confidence in Pakistan manifested itself in extensive demands during the 1955 talks, which to Nehru were

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<sup>182</sup> "India and the Baghdad Pact" (27 November 1955), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 31, 383. Talk of Pakistan being part of an Eisenhower Doctrine for the Middle East, was seen as further "evidence of some definite policy against India," on the part of the US. "US Policy towards Pakistan" (8 April 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 37, 500.

<sup>183</sup> Message from Nehru to Anthony Eden (9 March 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 32, 337; To Nehru then, "US military aid to Pakistan and Pakistan's membership of military pacts such as the SEATO and the Baghdad Pact has destroyed the roots and foundations of the plebiscite proposal in Kashmir." "Practical Solution" – Speech made at a public meeting in Delhi (13 April 1956), *Kashmir 1947-56: Excerpts from Prime Minister Nehru's Speeches*. (Information Service of India: New Delhi, 1956), 46.

<sup>184</sup> Nehru to Lady Mountbatten (5 December 1955), *SWJN-SS*, Vol. 31, 333.



terms reminiscent of those dictated by a victor to the surrendering enemy.<sup>185</sup> Following the failure those talks, the Pakistan PM had also allegedly made clear, reflecting growing confidence that time was on his country's side, that he was no longer "going to seek interview with Nehru but if Nehru wants discussions on Kashmir" they could meet, provided the venue was Karachi.<sup>186</sup> By 1957, the new Pakistan PM, Huseyn Suhrawardy would publicly claim that India's stranglehold over Kashmir was breaking, and that Pakistan's involvement in the western alliance had made "a favourable turn in the Kashmir dispute possible."<sup>187</sup> As Nehru would note, unstable political conditions in Pakistan only further encouraged such adventurism with even responsible people talking "with some glee of what they would do about a year hence."<sup>188</sup> Increasing border violations added to the concern in India that the Pakistani leadership sought to "settle disputes with India from what is called a position of strength."<sup>189</sup>

India's response, Nehru would now determine, was to demonstrate even greater firmness on Kashmir so as to leave no room for doubt in Pakistan that India would not concede ground in the face of military threats, and Pakistan's increasing bargaining strength. Hence the insistence now that the status quo was the maximum New Delhi was willing to concede in Kashmir, and Nehru's dismissal of Pakistan's rejection of the proposal by stating

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<sup>185</sup> "Talks with Mohd. Ali and Iskander Mirza – IV" (17 May 1955), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 28, 262.

<sup>186</sup> Cable from Nehru to Krishna Menon (2 December 1955), *ibid.* Vol. 31, 373.

<sup>187</sup> Quoted in Talk with Gunnar Jarring (27 March 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 37, 432.

<sup>188</sup> Conversation with Selwyn Lloyd – II (4 March 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 32, 372; "The International Situation" (3 December 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 36, 428; Nehru to Mountbatten (2 April 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 37, 563. To Mountbatten, Nehru would write, "Meanwhile, Pakistan disintegrates also at a rapid pace, both in the West and in the East, politically and economically. Therein lies the danger of military adventures." Also Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: 1948-1964*, 111.

<sup>189</sup> "A Survey of Foreign Affairs" (20 March 1956), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 32, 506.

that even that offer had lapsed<sup>190</sup>, and instructing his officials that the “question of partition does not arise now and must not be raised.”<sup>191</sup> The Indian leadership were determined to not weaken in any way, or even suggest that they were willing to discuss or make alternative proposals,<sup>192</sup> which might be treated as commitments, until India’s “honour as a country is not vindicated.”<sup>193</sup> At the UN, New Delhi did not “wish to get entangled any more in such procedures,”<sup>194</sup> and sought to avoid discussions which would put India in the position of “discussing compromises or appearing intransigent.”<sup>195</sup>

To succumb now to the bullying and threatening of Pakistan or her allies was unacceptable to Indian decision makers, and equally absurd were others asking India to make “generous gestures” in the interests of peace, gestures which would smack more of surrender than anything else.<sup>196</sup> “I am quite sure,” Nehru would now conclude “that if the Kashmir issue was settled even to the satisfaction of Pakistan, our troubles with Pakistan will continue. The issue is a much deeper one.”<sup>197</sup> India could not therefore afford to submit to

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<sup>190</sup> Nehru to Subhadra Joshi (27 May 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 33, 384.

<sup>191</sup> “A Holding Resolution on Kashmir” (16 February 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 36, 400.

<sup>192</sup> Cable from Nehru to Krishna Menon (21 February 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 36, 406; Indeed, in response to former Indian Army Commander –in- Chief K.M. Cariappa’s report from a visit to Pakistan which would suggest that the Pakistani leadership were being assertive in suggesting they would accept nothing less than a regional plebiscite, Nehru would express concern that the meeting would be interpreted as having happened at the Indian leaderships instance, which was patently not the case. “K.M. Cariappa’s Visit to Pakistan” (8 September 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 39, 642.

<sup>193</sup> Cable from Nehru to V. Pandit (8 February 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 36, 367.

<sup>194</sup> Cable from Nehru to Krishna Menon (4 February 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 36, 362.

<sup>195</sup> Cable from Nehru to Krishna Menon (29 December 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 36, 335.

<sup>196</sup> Nehru to Mountbatten (11 February 1957), *V/L Pandit Papers First Instalment*, Subject File 61.

<sup>197</sup> Nehru to Lord Mountbatten (11 February 1957), *Swjin-Ss.* Vol. 36, 383-384.

aggression, and if this attitude had guided New Delhi's policies earlier, the changed context had only solidified that attitude.<sup>198</sup>

Indeed, Nehru was now willing to admit in hindsight that his government had earlier been too "reasonable" and "decent" in the interest of peace.<sup>199</sup> "In the past we made a mistake in being too accommodating to Pakistan," Nehru would confess, and those earlier concessions were now being held against India as commitments.<sup>200</sup> "It may well be" Nehru would also now acknowledge "that if we had adopted a somewhat more rigid policy right from the beginning...we might have been in a better position to deal with this question now...As usual, those who want a settlement are always at a slight disadvantage as compared to those who do not want it except on their own basis, that is, surrender by the other party."<sup>201</sup> With this recognition, Nehru would conclude that in response to an increasingly stronger Pakistan and its backers' attempts to bully and frighten India, his government would only respond by adopting an even firmer stance.<sup>202</sup> As he would now elucidate to UN Secretary General Gunnar Jarring, India's past experience meant that his government was no longer willing to try any methods which would be exploited yet again. The plebiscite proposal had been "picked up and misused by Pakistan as plebiscite commitment" and similar misuse was bound to occur again.<sup>203</sup> Indeed such firmness seemed to Nehru to be having a salutary on effect on a hostile Security Council.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> "International Situation –I" (2 September 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 39, 522.

<sup>199</sup> "On Discussions in the Security Council" (20 March 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 37, 422.

<sup>200</sup> Nehru to V. Pandit (11 February 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 36, 385.

<sup>201</sup> Nehru to V. Pandit (12 February 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 36, 390.

<sup>202</sup> Nehru to V. Pandit (12 February 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 36, 392; V Pandit to Nehru – Memorandum of Talk with Lord Home (9 December 1955), *V.L. Pandit Papers First Instalment*, Subject File 59.

<sup>203</sup> "Talk with Gunnar Jarring" (27 March 1957), *SWJN-SS*, Vol. 37, 434.

The essence of the matter, as Nehru saw it, was that Pakistan had persisted with its basic hostility, and when even a small country would resist such an approach, India was “neither a small nor an ignoble country to submit to threats and bullying.”<sup>205</sup> While peace with Pakistan would always be striven for, the Indian government could not give up on India’s vital interests because doing so “only encourages the other party to open its mouth wider, claim more and shout more.” India’s pursuit of a policy of friendliness with a stronger and hostile Pakistan, Nehru would emphasize, was not an expression of weakness or a prelude to surrender, “because surrender again creates a position of future demands for surrender and so it goes on step by step.”<sup>206</sup> Therefore, while India had no desire to humiliate Pakistan, there appeared no way for Nehru that any progress could be made in Kashmir without an acceptance by Pakistan of its initial aggression, and the validity of Kashmir’s accession to India.<sup>207</sup> As the Indian PM would consequently declare in a press conference in April 1958, “any consideration of this problem which ignores certain basic issues and which endeavours to put us on the same level as Pakistan – that is the aggressor and the aggressed continue on the same level – is not agreeable to us and will not be accepted by us.”<sup>208</sup> On this India was firm, and would remain so.

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<sup>204</sup> Cable from Nehru to Krishna Menon (4 February 1957), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 36, 364; The Government and people of the US apparently realised that their condemnation of India had rather than frightening her and only made her more firm. V Pandit to Nehru (28 March 1957), *VL Pandit Papers First Instalment*, Subject File 59.

<sup>205</sup> “On International Situation - I” (25 March 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 37, 489; Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 103.

<sup>206</sup> *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 37, 489-490.

<sup>207</sup> Cable from Nehru to Krishna Menon (15 September 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 39, 689.

<sup>208</sup> Gupta, *Kashmir*, 338.

## Into the 1960s

The passage of time and events into the 1960s only strengthened Indian intransigence over Kashmir. With a new military regime taking over in Pakistan under General Ayub Khan, India and Pakistan would unexpectedly resolve the contentious Indus water sharing issue, but there would be little progress on Kashmir owing partly to Nehru's increased distrust of what he saw as a naked military dictatorship in Pakistan, which he expected to be ever more prone to war.<sup>209</sup> While the American Ambassador to India, J.K. Galbraith, would find Nehru "not specifically averse" to common defence with Pakistan, and opening access to an Indian administered Kashmir from Pakistan<sup>210</sup>, it was also clear that New Delhi no longer saw as a possibility a solution which raised the prospect of handing over any Indian territory in Kashmir to its neighbour.<sup>211</sup>

By 1962, as the prospect of the Kashmir issue being reignited at the UN became apparent, Indian officials would let it be known to their American counterparts that while they were willing to "go through the motions of negotiations" they would not budge from their demand that Pakistan accept the "basic position" that the dispute be resolved with minor adjustments along the existing cease-fire line.<sup>212</sup> Regardless of legal and moral niceties,

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<sup>209</sup> Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 74, Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol. 3* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 86-87; 143.

<sup>210</sup> Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 196.

<sup>211</sup> Nehru would say: "The fact is that it is quite beyond any possibility for the GOI to agree to hand over any part of our territory to the Pakistan government or to agree to any process which might lead to this. I do not want to should this out, but that is a basic fact and the leaders of Pakistan should remember this." Quoted in Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 143.

<sup>212</sup> MJ Desai to R. Dayal (31 December 1961), *B.K. Nehru Papers*, Subject File 17; MJ Desai to BK Nehru (3 January 1962), *B.K. Nehru Papers*, Subject File 17. Y.D. Gundevia would write to Nehru on 9/3/62 that he had made clear to interlocutors that an arrangement along the status quo was "the only solution that we were seriously prepared to discuss with Pakistan, I repeatedly stressed." Y.D.

New Delhi was no longer willing to accept any suggestions which “led to a possibility of the loss of the Valley or which might give rise to a feeling that this might ultimately result.”<sup>213</sup> Moreover, even external involvement was now spurned as Indian officials would demand that the problem be left to India and Pakistan to address bilaterally.<sup>214</sup>

The increasing build-up of tensions in Sino-Indian relations, and the related and simultaneously blooming relationship between Pakistan and China only reinforced these tendencies in New Delhi. By 1959, Nehru had expressed concern that Pakistan would “stab India in the back” as the latter dealt with the China.<sup>215</sup> The initiation of Sino-Pak boundary negotiations in 1962 was felt to make further impossible “any kind of accommodation now as the two aggressors had already combined.”<sup>216</sup> Following the disastrous Sino-Indian war in late 1962, Nehru would bitterly complain that Pakistan’s new found love for China had demonstrated that “hatred was at the very root of the creation of Pakistan,” and that while the latter had, in characteristically duplicitous fashion, sought to profit from India’s troubles

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Gundevia to Nehru (9 March 1962), *B.K. Nehru Papers*, Subject File 17, 66. Delay became a policy of choice, so that in order to avoid a negative “image” if Kashmir was reintroduced at the Security Council it was advisable that India begin the “motions of negotiation immediately and prolong them as much as possible.” BK Nehru to MJ Desai (8 January 1961), *B.K. Nehru Papers*, Subject File 17, 6.

<sup>213</sup> BK Nehru to MJ Desai (6 April, 1962) – Note on talk with Talbot, *B.K. Nehru Papers*, Subject File 17, 81. Even the cease-fire line based offer, made under bilateral conditions was unlikely to remain open forever, it was to be conveyed to the US. YD Gundevia to BK Nehru (11 April 1962; No T. 23-CS/62), *B.K. Nehru Papers*, Subject File 17, 88.

<sup>214</sup> BK Nehru to MJ Desai (6 April, 1962) – Note on talk with Talbot, *B.K. Nehru Papers*, Subject File 17, 83-85; YD Gundevia to BK Nehru (5 April 1962), *B.K. Nehru Papers*, Subject File 17.

<sup>215</sup> “Record of Talk between President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Nehru” (10 December 1959), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 4.

<sup>216</sup> MJ Desai to Nehru (19 May 1962), *B.K. Nehru Papers*, Subject File 17, 107. Krishna Menon would declare in the UN that any agreement between China and Pakistan would be invalid because “Pakistan has no sovereignty over the state; it is not Pakistan’s to trade away or to negotiate about.” Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 100.

with China, the Chinese invasion had in fact made it even more difficult for India to make concessions over Kashmir.<sup>217</sup>

The Indian PM would therefore enter the 1963 talks with Pakistan, with prodding from the US and the UK<sup>218</sup>, with little intention of offering anything beyond the status quo on Kashmir, an intention that would only concretize with the announcement of the Sino-Pakistan boundary agreement just as the first round of talks were about to begin in Rawalpindi. In this period of trauma, Nehru felt certain that anything but firmness would be reputationally disastrous, with the result that even if the dispute were resolved, further demands from Pakistan would be sure to follow. For Nehru, persistence with the talks therefore had the sole value of preventing Pakistan from joining hands with China in renewing military aggression on India.<sup>219</sup>

Domestically too, the reputational costs of compromise were now immense, reinforcing New Delhi's tendency to firmness. That the Indian public had become increasingly averse to any compromise with Pakistan had become clearly evident in the vigorous reaction to even Nehru's desire to engineer a minor exchange of disputed enclaves in the Bengal frontier.<sup>220</sup> By the time of the 1963 talks, even accepting international

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<sup>217</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Pakistan Seeks to Profit from Chinese Aggression* (Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, GOI, July 1963), 10-15. Nehru would further warn that "Pakistan is mistaken if it thinks it can intimidate us because we are facing this threat from the Chinese." Quoted in *ibid.*, 102.

<sup>218</sup> Michael Brecher, "Non-Alignment under Stress: The West and the India-China Border War," *Pacific Affairs* 52, no. 4 (1979): 622-625.

<sup>219</sup> Gopal, *Nehru* 3, 256-258, Gupta, *Kashmir*, 352-355.

<sup>220</sup> Gopal, *Nehru* 3, 86-143. With regard to the enclaves on the borders with East Pakistan, in talks between Nehru and Pakistan's PM, FK Noon India agreed to an exchange of enclaves. This agreement would be subject to criticism domestically for conceding too much to Pakistan, and would eventually flounder due to the unanimous resolution of the West Bengal Assembly that no territory would be transferred to Pakistan as had been agreed in the Prime Ministerial talks. Gupta, *Kashmir*, 339-340.

mediation was viewed by Nehru to be politically “suicidal,” and likely to be seen in parliament and public opinion as an act of weakness, and a prelude to surrender to pressures emanating from China and Pakistan.<sup>221</sup> Within Kashmir, it was clear that the will of the people was no longer a concern for the Indian leadership. “By the middle of the 1950s,” as one scholar has put it, “any substantive autonomy Kashmir had managed to carry over from its earlier princely statehood had largely vanished – a victim of New Delhi’s insistence that Kashmir’s accession to India was final and irrevocable, not subject to negotiation with Pakistan or, by implication, with the Kashmiris.”<sup>222</sup> Sheikh Abdullah would be briefly released from imprisonment in early 1958, but promptly returned to prison soon after, for adopting what Nehru would term “a wrong and dangerous path.” He would be released again in 1964, but only after elections in Kashmir were so blatantly manipulated that Nehru himself would advise the head of the administration, Ghulam Bakshi, to allow a few bonafide opponents to run and even win a few seats in the vote so as to retain a semblance of legitimacy.<sup>223</sup>

## Conclusion

Indian policy with regard to Kashmir in the space of less than two decades had moved from a position open to significant compromise, in accordance with the wishes of the people of the state, to one only willing to accept the status quo favourable to New Delhi, in

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<sup>221</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 261.

<sup>222</sup> Robert Wirsing, *Kashmir in the Shadow of War: Regional Rivalries in a Nuclear Age* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 203.

<sup>223</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 84, 262.



disregard of popular sentiment. This chapter has, in explaining these changes, demonstrated how, while the nationalist attachment to Kashmir in India had stayed constant during the entire period, what had changed were the perceived strategic and reputational costs of compromise, the same considerations which had precluded the conduct of a plebiscite in the period prior to 1954. While strategic concerns were no doubt pervasive in the Indian calculus, and concerns about the domestic political implications of compromise were never absent, this discussion has importantly pointed to the efficacy of the reputational logic highlighted in this dissertation, in a case which can be considered a hard case for the theory. That reputational considerations manifested themselves clearly in the thoughts and actions of the Indian leadership with regard to a territory that has clearly high salience, both in strategic and nationalist (both psychological and domestic) senses, indicates how reputational concerns play an independent and significant role in shaping state behaviour in territorial disputes. The following chapter moves to complete the discussion of the Kashmir dispute by addressing the other side of the conflict, Pakistani policies and behaviour over the disputed state in the same period.

## Pakistan and the Dispute over Kashmir

### Introduction

If Kashmir held great nationalist salience for India, this was arguably even more so the case for Pakistan. While the fate of the state offered a test for India's secular national identity, it even more crucially challenged the very basis of the two-nation ideology<sup>1</sup> that underlay Pakistan's very creation and the partition of the Indian subcontinent into two separate states. This ideology demands, it has been argued, that Pakistan can be complete only if Kashmir were to become part of it. Kashmir after all was a princely state which was contiguous to Pakistan, shared strong economic and social links with it, and most importantly was composed of a majority Muslim population. With partition having been accepted on the basis of the two-nation principle, it was only natural to expect that Kashmir would automatically accede to Pakistan by virtue of its population.<sup>2</sup> Not acquiring Kashmir therefore was on the one hand too severe a psychological blow to Pakistani nationalism for

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<sup>1</sup> The theory contended that two nations of Hindus and Muslims existed in undivided India that were so distinct as to make it impossible for them to co-exist, necessitating partition.

<sup>2</sup> A typical expression of this sentiment was M.A. Gurmani's - Pakistan's Minister for Kashmir Affairs - statement in January 1949: "Kashmir is an article of faith with Pakistan and not merely a piece of land or a source of rivers...We took a solemn vow that we would secure for all areas of the sub-continent where Muslims were in the majority, the fundamental right of self-determination." Quoted in Michael Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 51-52. In 1951 Governor-General Nazimuddin would similarly state that: "The liberation of Kashmir is a cardinal belief of every Pakistani. It is an integral part of the Pakistan resolution and Pakistan would remain incomplete until the whole of Kashmir has been liberated." Quoted in Sisir Gupta, *Kashmir: A Study in India-Pakistan Relations* (Bombay, India: Indian Council of World Affairs, 1967), 236. For a recent discussion of how the Kashmir dispute plays into the very idea of Pakistan, see Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

its leadership to be willing to bear, and on the other hand made for a highly domestically charged issue, with the likely domestic political costs of surrendering Kashmir simply too high for any Pakistani leadership.<sup>3</sup> Given this high nationalist salience, Kashmir was and is, according to most, indivisible for Pakistan, territory which must be wrested from India at whatever cost.

Strategically also, Kashmir has been argued to be of great value for Pakistan, making possession of the territory imperative. As Nehru himself had contented, Kashmir's location at the zenith of the Indian subcontinent, may have rendered the territory of great importance for a Pakistan scrapping for resources, to be used as a bargaining chip in currying for great power favours. More importantly, however, Kashmir was viewed by the Pakistani leadership as a strategic lifeline for their country, both in economic and military terms. West Pakistan's economy after independence was primarily agricultural, and relied for the most part on an irrigation system dependent on the flow from Kashmir of the waters of the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab rivers, disruption of which risked severely damaging a large chunk of Pakistan's economy.<sup>4</sup> In military-strategic terms, the territory was viewed as crucial to the defence of West Pakistan, given the latter's vulnerability to being outflanked by India from mountainous Kashmir, especially with two of the major road and rail arteries in West Pakistan running in

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<sup>3</sup> For discussions of the role of national identity and religious irredentism underlying Pakistani efforts in Kashmir see, Vali Nasr, "National Identities and the India-Pakistan Conflict," in *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry*, ed. T. V. Paul (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 178-201, Stephen M. Saideman, "At the Heart of the Conflict: Irredentism and Kashmir," in *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry*, ed. T. V. Paul (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 202-224. See also, Myron Weiner, "The Macedonian Syndrome" an Historical Model of International Relations and Political Development," *World Politics* 23, no. 4 (1971).

<sup>4</sup> These fears about water were reinforced by India actually cutting off the supply of the water to the canals in the spring of 1948. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 32-34.

close proximity to the border with Kashmir state.<sup>5</sup> Zafrullah Khan, Pakistan's Foreign Minister after independence, would accordingly assert that if Kashmir ended up with India, "Pakistan might as well, from both the economic and strategic points of view, become a feudatory of India or cease to exist as an independent sovereign State."<sup>6</sup> Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistan's first Prime Minister, would similarly encapsulate both sets of motivations in writing to Nehru soon after the outbreak of military hostilities in late 1947 that "the security of Pakistan is bound up with that of Kashmir, and the ties of religion, cultural affinity and economic inter-dependence bind the two together still closer."<sup>7</sup>

I argue in this chapter that, for all its intuitive appeal, the uncomplicated argument that nationalist and/or strategic salience alone made Kashmir indivisible for Pakistan from the very beginning, making conflict inevitable, does inadequate justice to the complexities in Pakistan's approach towards Kashmir in the first two decades after independence. I demonstrate, in contrast, that central to the task of explaining Pakistani behaviour is the intense commitment problem that a significantly stronger and ideologically hostile (in Pakistani perceptions) India presented to Karachi leading up to, and after partition. This fear of India's long term intentions and potential actions no doubt made the strategic implications of the fates of the princely states deeply important in the Pakistani calculus, but for Kashmir this did not mean automatic indivisibility as is often assumed. Indeed, the primary objective for Pakistan being to ensure a weakened and therefore less threatening India, the possession

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<sup>5</sup> Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 45-48. See Map 3.2 in previous chapter.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Mujtaba Razvi, *The Frontiers of Pakistan: A Study of Frontier Problems in Pakistan's Foreign Policy* (Karachi: National Pub. House, 1971), 95.

<sup>7</sup> Liaquat to Nehru (16 December 1947), *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, ed. M.S. Deora and R. Grover (New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 1991), 51. Liaquat would similarly state on 5 October 1950 that "For Pakistan, Kashmir is a vital necessity; for India it is an imperialistic adventure." Quoted in Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 111.

of Kashmir itself was not an immediate priority for Karachi, with independence for the state a perfectly acceptable alternative outcome, especially if it also facilitated other princely states staying out of India, thereby practically balkanizing Pakistan's imperious neighbour. Only once it became clear, however, that India was likely to successfully integrate the other princely states did Kashmir become central to Pakistani concerns, and even then only the diminishing initial prospect of Kashmir remaining independent made action absolutely imperative in the form of the tribal invasion.

Following the failure of the tribal invasion, the high costs of conflict necessitated a less than zero sum approach, leading to Karachi's acquiescence to resolve the dispute based on the will of the people Kashmir, but the Pakistani leadership would insist on terms which imparted on their country, to the greatest extent possible, parity with India in the state. Such parity was sought in order both to deny India strategic advantages in the state which could be exploited, but also to clearly signal that Pakistan would not succumb to Indian power and 'fraud.' To capitulate on Kashmir to a stronger India, particularly when Kashmir's accession was viewed to have been acquired fraudulently, was perceived in Pakistan to be not only strategically dangerous, but also reputationally costly were it to encourage further Indian expansionism threatening Pakistan's very existence.

With the collapse of the plebiscite option, Karachi would consider partition of the state, but again for strategic and reputational reasons demand a share of the territory far larger than its actual bargaining strength merited. Finally, with increasing Indian intransigence and build-up of military capabilities in the aftermath of the 1962 Sino-Indian war, the Pakistani leadership would resort to war yet again in 1965, intending to redress their deteriorating bargaining position in Kashmir, but importantly also to signal to India and the

international community a reputation of firmness, in the hope that doing so would help elicit more conciliation on the part of New Delhi.

In brief, despite the great nationalist and strategic value that Kashmir held for Pakistani leaders after independence, such concerns did not render the territory indivisible, and rather Pakistan's willingness to make certain concessions over this period, and the extent of these concessions, as well as the eventual resort to force in 1965, all seemed motivated to a significant extent by what the Pakistani leadership perceived to be the long term strategic and reputational implications of compromise or conflict.

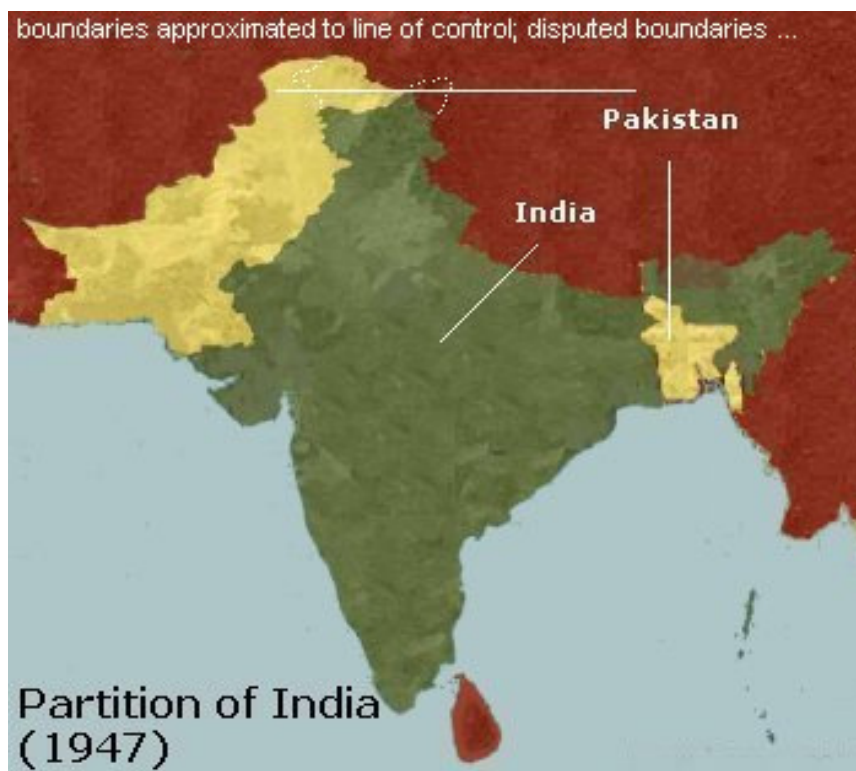
### **Approaching Independence**

Once it had become clear in June 1947 that British India would indeed be partitioned into two dominions, the fate of the expansive territories which formed the princely states became one immediate issue of contention. This in turn had much to do with what the soon to be Pakistani leadership perceived to be immediate and long term threat that India would pose, with grave misgivings in Karachi about whether the Indian leadership would adhere even to their acceptance of Pakistan once the British had left. Such fears owed themselves in part to the obvious position of disadvantage that Pakistan was placed in vis-à-vis India. Just in terms of size and demographics, not only was Pakistan faced with an India that was three and half times larger, with a population two and half times greater, but Pakistan was also to be split into two non-contiguous entities of East and West Pakistan, separated by the large expanse of India.<sup>8</sup> To add to this fundamental asymmetry, with regard to resources –

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<sup>8</sup> Russell Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968), 53.

financial, military and administrative – Pakistan was similarly handicapped at independence. Over the several months approaching and after the departure of the British from the subcontinent, the issue of the distribution of stocks and resources, most of which were concentrated in post-independence India, would vividly illustrate just how fragile Pakistan’s independence really was. This was particularly the case with regard to military stocks and capabilities, of which Pakistan held very little at birth, and was moreover reliant for obtaining even her legitimate share of reserves and stores on the goodwill of a larger, stronger, and potentially hostile India.<sup>9</sup>



**Map 4.1: Indian subcontinent after Partition**  
(Source: <http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/itihas/partition.htm>)

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<sup>9</sup> For detailed discussion of these issues see Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58*, 75-85, Stephen P. Cohen, *The Pakistan Army* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 5-8, Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 22-48.

Territorially 'moth eaten,' as Jinnah would term it and militarily weak, Pakistan's fears would be exacerbated by the perceived hostility of India. The fundamental source of this perception lay in the belief that the Indian leadership had in fact not reconciled to the idea of Pakistan, and therefore continued to be hostile to it, seeking to undo partition eventually.<sup>10</sup> The acceptance of the partition plan had, accordingly, been a mere tactic by the Indian leadership to hasten British departure, with little sincerity behind it.<sup>11</sup> Public statements by people in responsible positions in India expressing their distaste for the two-nation theory, and expressions of the wish that India and Pakistan be united again added credence to Pakistani fears, leading an irritated Jinnah to complain about the "vigorous propaganda" in India that Pakistan was "merely a temporary madness [and] that Pakistan will have to come into the Union as a penitent, repentant, erring son."<sup>12</sup>

Acrimonious debates over the distribution of military and financial resources would only validate such concerns. Particularly, the perception that India was maliciously denying Pakistan her fair share of military and financial resources, heightened fears that India intended to ensure that Pakistan's independence was stillborn.<sup>13</sup> The Pakistani leader's likely

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<sup>10</sup> According to Cohen, the "Hindu mind" was viewed in Pakistani elite circles as "scheming and devious, and compelled to expand." Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, 36, Hasan Askari Rizvi, *Pakistan and the Geostrategic Environment: A Study of Foreign Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58*, 23-24.

<sup>12</sup> This was in response to statements such as that of Nehru in a 3 June 1947 broadcast that partition might be the way that "we shall reach that united India sooner than otherwise." Both Jinnah and Nehru quoted in S. M. Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 8-10. Similarly, Sardar Patel would declare that "sooner or later, we shall again be united in common allegiance to our country." Quoted in, Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters: A Political Autobiography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 115-116. The All India Congress Committee would indeed state in a resolution that "when the present passions have subsided, India's problems will be viewed in their proper perspective and the false doctrine of two nations in India will be discredited and discarded by all." Quoted in V. P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), 384.

<sup>13</sup> Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 55, Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis*, 10-15.



shared the Supreme Commander, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck's assessment that the Indian government were "implacably determined to do all in their power to prevent the establishment of the dominion of Pakistan on a firm basis," in aid of which they eventually sought the premature closure of the Supreme Commander's Headquarters, which was responsible for ensuring a fair division military assets.<sup>14</sup> The communal violence accompanying partition only served to confirm both the wisdom of the two-nation theory and Pakistani fears of India.<sup>15</sup>

This mistrust in Pakistan about whether India would adhere to even the most basic of commitments – of accepting Pakistan's existence and territorial integrity – undoubtedly shaped Pakistan's approach to territorial issues, and especially the fate of the princely states. The immediate concern in Karachi was to preserve and enhance Pakistan's strategic viability against potential Indian machinations to undo partition. With regard to territorial issues this entailed a recognition that the larger, and the more geographically whole an already strong India became, the more strategically menacing its existence would be to Pakistan in years to come. On the future of the princely states therefore, Pakistan would from early on adopt a position in keeping with a strict interpretation of the *Cabinet Mission Memorandum*, and later the *Indian Independence Act*. According to Pakistan, with the lapse of British paramountcy, the rulers of the princely states ought to be allowed complete freedom to accede to either India or Pakistan, or crucially, remain independent. In a 13 June 1947 meeting convened by

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<sup>14</sup> Auchinleck's report to the British cabinet from 28 September 1947 quoted in John Connell, *Auchinleck: A Biography of Field-Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck*, 2d ed. (London: Cassell, 1959), 921. Also Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 28-30.

<sup>15</sup> Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, 46.

Mountbatten, Jinnah and Nehru would openly disagree on the independence option for the states, with Jinnah coming down strongly in favour of offering the rulers the choice to remain independent.<sup>16</sup> On 17 June 1947, Jinnah would proceed to declare categorically that for the Muslim League, it was open to the states “to join the Hindustan Constituent Assembly or the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, or decide to remain independent.”<sup>17</sup>



**Map 4.2: Ethnic Composition of Jammu and Kashmir State**  
 (Source: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/jammu\\_kashmir\\_ethnic\\_2000.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/jammu_kashmir_ethnic_2000.jpg))

<sup>16</sup> Liaquat had conveyed the same opinion a few months earlier in asserting that the states would have full liberty “to assume complete and separate sovereign status for themselves.” Gupta, *Kashmir*, 47.

<sup>17</sup> Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 19, Gupta, *Kashmir*, 48.

Such a principle, if it were accepted, while technically justified also had for Pakistan the important strategic advantage that it would have likely balkanized India, rendering the latter significantly weaker. The option of independence for the states would have done little to add territory to Pakistan, and might have even denied it some, but was certain to deny India many of the princely states which otherwise had no choice but to join India, given geographical compulsions. The effect of such states joining Pakistan or remaining independent would have been disastrous for India's integrity and viability. As Mountbatten would note, "out of something like 565 states, the vast majority are irretrievably linked geographically with the Dominion of India. The problem therefore is of a far greater magnitude with the Dominion of India than it is with Pakistan."<sup>18</sup>

Pakistan's stance, rejected by India as well as the British, therefore made little distinction amongst the princely states. Muslim majority Kashmir, and Hindu majority Hyderabad, were for instance equally within their rights to remain independent, regardless of the fact that it was the former which was of far more symbolic, as well as direct strategic importance to Pakistan, compared to Hyderabad which was located deep within Indian territory.<sup>19</sup> This implication for Kashmir was indeed recognized by Jinnah as early as 1940, when he would state that Pakistan would like for Kashmir to "willingly agree to come into the federation of the Muslim homeland... [but had] no desire to force them or coerce them in any way." While the incorporation of Kashmir into Pakistan was desirable, the early emphasis was on denying as much territory as possible to India, by persuading the states,

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Sumit Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia: The Indo-Pakistani Conflicts since 1947* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 39-40.

<sup>19</sup> At a later point, Sardar Patel would reportedly tell the Pakistanis: "Talk of Hyderabad and Kashmir and we could reach an agreement," an option which was never explored. Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58*, 43.

including Kashmir, to stay out of the Indian Union. Such an outcome would have served Pakistan's strategic interests well, and with regard to Kashmir importantly, the prospect of the state joining neither India nor Pakistan was therefore perfectly acceptable to the latter.<sup>20</sup>

Technically, Pakistan's position also left open the possibility of Kashmir acceding to India, if the Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir chose to do so, just as it would have allowed for the Muslim ruler of Hyderabad to reject union with India. In fact, however, there was little reason for the leadership in Pakistan to think such an outcome was likely. For one, Jinnah was convinced that given considerations of geography, population, economic ties, and even the Maharaja's own dynastic interests, Kashmir "will fall into our lap like a ripe fruit."<sup>21</sup> Mountbatten himself had observed, in dissuading Nehru from visiting Kashmir, that both the Maharaja and his Prime Minister held an intense hatred for Nehru, owing to the latter's unhesitant support for Sheikh Abdullah's demands for political reforms in the state.<sup>22</sup> Even if Kashmir did not join Pakistan, it was at least apparent that, at worst, these same considerations would influence the Maharaja to gravitate towards a position of independence.

This would be exactly the course the Maharaja would initially pursue, in disregard of Mountbatten's pleading that Kashmir accede to one or the other dominion before the lapse

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<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the leadership of the pro-Pakistan Muslim Conference would, in contrast to the National Conference which sought the creation of a popular government and then a plebiscite, urge the Maharaja in May 1947 to declare Kashmir as an independent state. Gupta, *Kashmir*, 45-50; 64-68, Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unfinished War* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 32-33.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 46-47, Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 103.

<sup>22</sup> Mountbatten quoted in Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 31-32.

of paramountcy.<sup>23</sup> Even if not ideal, such an outcome (of Kashmir joining neither dominion) was perfectly acceptable to Pakistan, so long as it kept the territory out of India, especially with Kashmir acquiring increasingly greater importance as India quickly and successfully absorbed the other princely states.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, in response to rumours in July 1947 that the Maharaja had decided to declare independence, the President of the pro-Pakistan Muslim Conference party would immediately convey his congratulations to the Maharaja, pledging his cooperation in this endeavour.<sup>25</sup> With the approaching lapse of paramountcy, Pakistan (in contrast to India) would also quickly sign a *standstill agreement* with the Maharaja, who seemed disinclined to accede to either dominion and expressed his desire to enter into such an agreement with both India and Pakistan. The standstill agreement would designate to Pakistan the task of operating the communications infrastructure of the state, including rail and river links, the postal and telegraph services, as well as ensure the normal flow of food and other supplies to Kashmir. No arrangements were made with regard to the defence or foreign affairs of the state, in which respect the Maharaja was presumably now sovereign.<sup>26</sup>

## **The Tribal Invasion**

While denying Kashmir to India had become a strategic necessity for Pakistan, the possibility of independence for the princely states also became progressively more unlikely,

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<sup>23</sup> Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 22-24, Prem Shankar Jha, *Origins of a Dispute: Kashmir 1947* (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 38-54.

<sup>24</sup> For the story of the integration of the princely states into India see V. P. Menon, *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1956).

<sup>25</sup> Gupta, *Kashmir*, 95.

<sup>26</sup> Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 23, Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 39-40.

with the prospect having been firmly rejected by India. This being the case, whether the situation of limbo in Kashmir after the lapse of paramountcy would persist, and for how long, was questionable. The urgency of this situation for Karachi was exacerbated by several developments which prompted fears that an elaborate conspiracy was afoot in India and Kashmir, intended to present Pakistan with the fait accompli of Kashmir's accession to India.

First, from July onwards, but increasingly rapidly after the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1947, the Maharaja moved from his earlier preference for independence with substantial links to Pakistan, to one which inclined to acceding to India. In Pakistan, intense lobbying, and even coercive pressure, by Indian leaders who had been visiting Kashmir in rapid succession was held responsible for the Maharaja's volte face.<sup>27</sup> Confirming such alarm in Karachi was the Maharaja's decision on 16 August to summarily dismiss Prime Minister Ram Chandra Kak, who was known to have preferred independence for Kashmir or alternatively accession to Pakistan, and replace him with Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan, a change that was viewed favourably and indeed suspected to have been encouraged by New Delhi.<sup>28</sup> As the Pakistani representative at the UN would later observe, till the point of this dramatic about turn, the Maharaja had for some time shown an inclination to accede to their country, or at least stay out of India.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> During the period approaching and after independence, Nehru had sought to visit Kashmir, and Gandhi in fact did. Apart from these two stalwarts, other visitors included President of the Congress, Acharya Kripalani and the princes of Patiala, Kapurthala, and Faridkot. Pakistan's leaders probably questioned, as Schofield has suggested: "Why so many visitors, all of whom must surely have had a vested interest in the advice they gave?" Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unfinished War*, 32.

<sup>28</sup> Jha, *Origins of a Dispute: Kashmir 1947*, 45-46.

<sup>29</sup> *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 179.

Second, and aggravating these conspiratorial fears, was the outcome of the Radcliffe award which was to determine the final boundary between the two Punjab's. The decision, to Pakistan's consternation, allocated most of the Muslim majority Gurdaspur district to India, with Pakistan receiving only one out of the four *tehsils* which made up the district. The award of Gurdaspur to India, in contravention of the religious composition of the district, allowed for a strategically important direct land route between India and Kashmir, which India would have otherwise lacked, as well as ensured Indian control over some of headwaters of rivers that flowed into Pakistan. Not surprisingly the Radcliffe decision was viewed in Pakistan as not only bizarre given the religious composition of Gurdaspur, but crucially as part of the conspiracy, facilitated by Mountbatten, to ensure India's acquisition of Kashmir. Without the award, it was argued in Pakistan, India would have had no claim to Kashmir and moreover would have lacked the ability to fight a war in the state.<sup>30</sup> The result of the Radcliffe award was therefore a reinforcement of the fear in Pakistan that New Delhi was hell bent on acquiring Kashmir so as to use the strategic advantages thus gained to pressure a fragile Pakistan into dissolution.<sup>31</sup>

While the exacerbation of such fears in Pakistan made the acquisition of Kashmir now a strategic priority, the belief that a fraud was being perpetrated in the state by India, also likely made it important for Pakistan to not meekly submit to such machinations, for fear that doing so, especially with regard to a Muslim majority state, would signal weakness and surrender to India, and embolden the latter into pursuing the grand scheme of undoing

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<sup>30</sup> Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58*, 24-28.

<sup>31</sup> Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 37-40, Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 33-39.

Pakistan.<sup>32</sup> This necessitated that an active policy be adopted to pre-empt an Indian *fait accompli* in Kashmir, leading initially to diplomatic attempts to persuade the Maharaja and Sheikh Abdullah to accede to Pakistan, which would soon be replaced by, according to accusations by the Maharaja in Kashmir, the application of coercive tactics, especially in the form of economic pressures created by the curtailing of communication links and the supply of vital goods to the state.<sup>33</sup> Jinnah himself would dismiss such accusations contending instead to the Maharaja that “the unfounded allegations and accusations are only a smoke-screen to cover the real aim of your Government’s policy...to seek an opportunity to join the Indian Dominion through a *coup d’état* by securing the intervention and assistance of that Dominion.”<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, there were plans being developed in Pakistan for some form of military offensive in Kashmir, were the Maharaja to not desist from his moves to complete accession to India purely on the dint of the diplomatic and economic pressures being applied by Karachi. As it became increasingly clear that the Maharaja was indeed gravitating in India’s direction, it would be decided that the best means of military intervention would be by indirectly facilitating a tribal invasion of Kashmir, exploiting the increasingly instability in Kashmir itself occasioned by an armed rebellion by the Muslim population in the district of

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<sup>32</sup> According to Cohen, “Kashmir was not a territorial or strategic concern...[it] demonstrate[d] the continued [Indian] antagonism toward all of Pakistan...” Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, 52.

<sup>33</sup> Pakistan would attribute these supply and communication problems to logistical difficulties, with drivers of lorries reluctant to drive to Kashmir given the unstable conditions in the state, where a rebellion against the Maharaja had erupted in the Poonch district. Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 24-25, Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 45-47. Mahajan, in accusing Pakistan of these transgressions, as well as spreading false propaganda with regard to the law and order situation in Kashmir, would in his 18 October 1947 letter threaten to ask for “friendly assistance and oppose trespass.” Telegram from PM of Kashmir to the Governor-General of Pakistan (18 October 1947). *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 10-11.

<sup>34</sup> Telegram from PM of Kashmir to the Governor-General of Pakistan (20 October 1947). *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 12-13.



Poonch against the high-handed administration of the Maharaja. The invasion itself, composed in the first phase of at least 900 Mahsud tribesmen from Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP), soon joined by invaders from other tribes, would commence on 19 October 1947. By 22 October, the invading force had crossed the border into Kashmir and seized the strategic border town of Muzaffarabad, with Baramula, a large town a mere 35 miles from the capital Srinagar lain waste to within the next two days. It was at this point that the Maharaja appealed for help from India, and had by the night of 26 October signed the Instrument of Accession, following which Indian troops were swiftly airlifted to Srinagar on 27 October.<sup>35</sup>

It is clear that while the extent of direct Pakistani central government involvement in the planning and execution of the invasion might have been limited, there was undisputed encouragement and logistical and other support for such an invasion through Muslim League channels, with the Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan's active involvement, developments that Jinnah could not have been unaware of. The North West Frontier Province government, furthermore, was even more actively involved in the encouragement and organisation of the tribal invasion.<sup>36</sup> As one scholar of the conflict has concluded, "the preponderant evidence is that Pakistan permitted the tribal incursions of 1947 and probably instigated them."<sup>37</sup> While it was decided not to involve the Pakistan Army in the operation, such secrecy was maintained, and indeed necessitated, due to the fact that the Army was still under the leadership of

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<sup>35</sup> Indian estimates of the number of invaders were much larger, at around 5000. Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 69-71.

<sup>36</sup> Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule*, 58, Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 43-53.

<sup>37</sup> Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 72.

British officers who would certainly have resisted any such plans at the official level.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, as Ayesha Jalal has succinctly concluded on the issue, while supporting the invasion the Pakistan leadership could not intervene in an official capacity “because of the severe shortage of arms and ammunition, not because this was the preferred course of action. If they had been in a position to do so, the Muslim League leaders, with Jinnah’s blessings, would have thrown in the army behind the tribal effort.”<sup>39</sup>

Mountbatten therefore was likely not far from the truth when he would state after the invasion that Jinnah had been expecting to ride into Kashmir in triumph.<sup>40</sup> The basic motivation underlying the resort to force was captured by Colonel Akbar Khan, a central participant in the planning and execution of this mission. India’s acquisition of Kashmir, he suggested, was seen in Pakistan as “unacceptable because we would remain permanently exposed to a threat of such magnitude that our independence would never be a reality...Kashmir’s accession to Pakistan was not simply a matter of desirability but of absolute necessity for our separate existence.”<sup>41</sup> The initial Pakistani intention was to deliver a swift fait accompli through the tribal invasion. The tribal operation, in keeping things unofficial, ostensibly had the additional advantage of denying India a valid reason to enter Kashmir and spark an all-out war between the two countries, thereby seeking the best possible outcome with relatively low risks and costs. In undertaking this precipitous act, of course, the Pakistani leadership had in effect forgone the prospect of acquiring Kashmir

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<sup>38</sup> Jha, *Origins of a Dispute: Kashmir 1947*, 29.

<sup>39</sup> Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule*, 58.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten* (London: Hale, 1951), 225.

<sup>41</sup> Akbar Khan, *Raiders in Kashmir* (Islamabad: Natl. Book Foundation, 1975), 9-10.

peacefully through a plebiscite which would have become inevitable with time, a fact that conveys the depth of mistrust of Indian intentions that prevailed then in Karachi.<sup>42</sup>

Jinnah's immediate reaction to Kashmir's consequent accession to India, and the latter's military entry in to the disputed state would be to order the then acting Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army, General Douglas Gracey, to dispatch army troops to Kashmir. Jinnah would swiftly relent, however, from such an action, in face of the realization that in addition to his army being in an enfeebled state, the British commanders of his forces would have had to stand down from their positions in the event of an India-Pakistan war.<sup>43</sup> The tribal activities were, however, expected to continue, the aim now being according to Akbar Khan's record of Liaquat's instructions, "to keep the fighting going for three months which would be enough time to achieve our political object by negotiations and other means."<sup>44</sup>

### **The UN and the Plebiscite Option**

While the Indian acceptance of Kashmir's accession had included an explicit commitment to a reference to the people to determine the final status of the state, there were reasons for Pakistan to be initially reluctant about that prospect. This was despite the fact that with the failure of initial goals of the tribal invasion, Kashmir's accession to India and

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<sup>42</sup> Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1997), 13.

<sup>43</sup> Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 71. According to Raghavan, Jinnah was not convinced by Gracey's advice that Pakistan should not risk war, as he was certain that in Kashmir at least India's position was weak. Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 109. It was only in December that the army would finally be brought completely into the picture, and General Messervy would decide on involving regular forces in Kashmir. Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 53.

<sup>44</sup> Khan, *Raiders in Kashmir*, 33.

the latter's rapid military involvement in the state, the costs of continued conflict precipitated for Karachi. First, as Liaquat's instructions to Akbar Khan conveyed, with the tribal forces still in the ascendant there was a possibility that the invasion might yet succeed, or at least succeed enough to get Pakistan better terms. Secondly, it was possible that Pakistan would lose such a plebiscite owing not only to the popularity of the pro-India NC party led by Sheikh Abdullah, but also because of the ill will towards Pakistan generated in Kashmir by the mayhem the tribal invaders had wreaked in the state. Furthermore, Nehru's suggestion that the principle of plebiscite be applied to all cases where the religion of the ruler was different from the majority population meant that Hyderabad too would be subject to a plebiscite, something Jinnah did not desire given the ruler's wish to remain independent, an eventuality that would have served Pakistan's strategic interests well.<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, as the prospect of outright victory for the tribal invaders began diminishing rapidly, and with official Pakistani military intervention ruled out as too risky, Karachi would be forced to begin exploring the option of a compromise solution based on a plebiscite. Jinnah's immediate demand in that regard would seek joint control of the state by Indian and Pakistani troops, with the two army chiefs to act as plebiscite commissioners.<sup>46</sup> In meetings with Mountbatten shortly after, the Pakistani leadership would revise these terms, and call for an immediate ceasefire, simultaneous withdrawal of the tribesmen and Indian troops from the state, to be followed by the two Governors-General restoring peace, and arranging for a plebiscite under their joint supervision and control.<sup>47</sup> While these terms

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<sup>45</sup> Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 106, 110-111.

<sup>46</sup> With India's rejection of this position, and the failure of a meeting with Nehru to materialize, Jinnah would reportedly say that his "hands were now free, legally as well as morally." Ibid., 109.

<sup>47</sup> In this meeting Jinnah would reportedly state that if India were to agree to withdraw her troops from Kashmir immediately, he would "call the whole thing off." (referring to the tribal invasion)

would be disagreeable to India, there now appeared to be a basic acceptance in Pakistan to pursue the plebiscite option under the UN's auspices, with the latter's role soon concretized as the entire dispute would move to the Security Council following an Indian reference. On Pakistan's part this decision to, as Liaquat would put it, "gamble on the UN," was based primarily on a realization that the military situation in the state was fast turning in India's favour, but also on greater optimism in Azad Kashmir (the part of the state in Pakistan's control) about contesting a vote of the people.<sup>48</sup> With a cease fire agreed to on 1 January 1949, the military option would be officially taken off the table, and for all intents and purposes diplomacy assumed the primary role in addressing the Kashmir dispute.<sup>49</sup> However, with the mechanism of a plebiscite agreed to by both parties, it would soon be apparent that Pakistan's prerequisites to a vote in the state were diametrically opposed to India's position, a gulf that would eventually prove too large to bridge, leaving the plebiscite based solution still-born. With regard to every mechanism of making a reference to the people, whether it be through an overall plebiscite for the state, regional plebiscites, or a plan involving a mix of partition and a plebiscite, two issues, the quantum of forces to be left in the state, and

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Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, 229. Liaquat would recapitulate these terms in a note to the prime minister of the UK. Liaquat to PM UK (4 November 1947), *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 31.

<sup>48</sup> Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 146.

<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, while the political leadership, especially Liaquat, made the decision to go ahead with the cease-fire, military commanders were more sanguine about the military position and were disappointed with the decision to halt military operations. Such disagreements, it has been pointed out, would set in motion military disenchantment with the political leadership which would have major repercussions on Pakistan's domestic politics in the future. Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule*, 59, Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 68-73, A. H. Suharwardy, *Tragedy in Kashmir*, 1st ed. (Lahore: Wajidalis, 1983), 209. This is in contrast with scholarly accounts which attribute Pakistan's decision to agree to a cease-fire to a deteriorating military situation. Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 98, Gupta, *Kashmir*, 190.

political arrangements prior to and during the conduct of a plebiscite would dog the prospects of any agreement between the two parties.

On the issue of the disposition of military forces in the state, Karachi would initially demand the complete and simultaneous withdrawal of all Indian forces and tribal warriors, but would express a willingness to relax the simultaneity requirement so long as all Indian forces withdrew from Kashmir. In the absence of this, given the Indian insistence on maintaining sufficient forces in the state (and removing the 'bulk') to prevent a repeat invasion, the debate would revolve around the exact number of forces to remain on either side, with Pakistan particularly resistant to Indian demands that all Pakistani forces including the Army and the Azad Kashmir forces be withdrawn from the state, with the Azad forces to additionally be completely disbanded.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, the Pakistani leadership would express their approval for any scheme that involved the withdrawal of troops by both sides, and in their stead the stationing in Kashmir of an international force constituted under UN auspices.<sup>51</sup> Liaquat would therefore enthusiastically accept a suggestion by the Australian Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, at the 1951 meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers that Commonwealth troops be stationed in Kashmir, or alternatively that a joint Indo-Pakistani force be created by a strong plebiscite administrator at liberty to raise local troops.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, as late as 1957 the Pakistan leadership would express their willingness to withdraw their own troops and Azad forces from Kashmir, if the security of the state was guaranteed by UN forces. The basic requirement was that Indian forces withdraw from Kashmir, even if

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<sup>50</sup> Gupta, *Kashmir*, 251-254.

<sup>51</sup> Speech in UN by Zafrullah Khan (11 Feb 1948), *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 295.

<sup>52</sup> Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis*, 36, Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 83.

that meant UN forces would only be stationed in the Pakistan side of Kashmir and not on the Indian side, given New Delhi's vehement disapproval of the latter prospect.<sup>53</sup>

On the second, arguably more intractable issue of the political administration of the state, Pakistan would be adamant that the pro-India Kashmir administration under Sheikh Abdullah be replaced by an UN created 'impartial administration.' Integral to this was the appointment of a plebiscite administrator who would exercise complete administrative control over all aspects, including the disposal of both Indian and Pakistan troops, related to ensuring a free and unfettered plebiscite in the state. As Zafrullah Khan, Pakistan's Foreign minister and chief spokesman at the UN, would state, "the whole matter including the retention of troops, the character of the interim administration and the holding of the plebiscite" was expected by his government to be entrusted to the UN, with the latter to immediately appoint its representatives "to arrange the programme of withdrawal of outside forces, set up an impartial administration of the State until a plebiscite is held, and undertake the plebiscite under its direction and control for the purpose of ascertaining the free and unfettered will of the people of the State on the question of accession."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> "Pakistan-USSR Correspondence on Kashmir" (1 March 1957), *Swjn-Ss*. Vol. 37, 406. Feroz Khan Noon would submit in the Security Council on 30 January 1957 that "the best way to do this is to introduce a United Nations force in Jammu and Kashmir and call upon all forces of India and Pakistan to withdraw from the State, demobilize the local militia on both sides of the cease-fire line, and enable the people of Kashmir to decide..." Quoted in Gupta, *Kashmir*, 317.

<sup>54</sup> *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 214.

## Strategic and Reputational Concerns Underlying the Prerequisites to Plebiscite

These prerequisites attached to a plebiscite by Pakistan were motivated by the same concerns that made adopting a firm attitude with regard to Kashmir necessary in the first place. While the increasing costs of conflict had made resort to a conciliatory solution preferable, the inability of India and the existing Kashmiri administration to commit credibly to adhering to their word with regard to the conduct of a fair plebiscite, and the great disadvantages that Pakistan carried in terms of bargaining strength in the state, necessitated the adoption of a policy position which sought to prevent both strategic and reputational damage. India's military and administrative control over much of the state, in addition to the Pakistani belief that accession and Indian military intervention in Kashmir was part of an elaborate fraud, was enough to generate an intense distrust of Indian credibility in Pakistan.<sup>55</sup> As Liaquat would inform Attlee, in Pakistan the Indian commitment to a fair plebiscite was in fact considered a clever ruse under which New Delhi sought to "complete their occupation of Jammu and Kashmir and get entire control over its territory, after which the holding of a plebiscite or referendum will be purely a farce."<sup>56</sup> Such Indian machinations in Kashmir were moreover perceived in Karachi as only part of a still a larger plan of India's to undo Pakistan's very existence, the Indian tendency towards which had manifested itself not

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<sup>55</sup> Soon after the accession, Liaquat would inform Attlee that Pakistan could not recognise an accession based on "fraud and violence." Liaquat to Attlee (29 October 1947), *ibid.*, 24. To Nehru Liaquat would allege that, "Kashmir's plan of asking for Indian troops – and it could hardly have been unilateral – was formed quite independently of this raid and all evidence and action taken shows that it was pre-arranged." Liaquat to Nehru (30 October 1947), *ibid.*, 26.

<sup>56</sup> Liaquat to Attlee (4 November 1947), *ibid.*, 32. Pakistani leaders would express similar scepticism to Josef Korbel in September 1948, "that once the fighting had stopped India would be satisfied with a *de facto* division of Kashmir (the better part of which was in her possession) the situation would subsequently become stabilized, and India would then obstruct a free plebiscite." Josef Korbel, *Danger in Kashmir* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), 144.



only in Kashmir, but also New Delhi's attitude towards the transfer of resources to Pakistan. As a downcast Jinnah would tell Mountbatten, India seemed intent to "throttle and choke the dominion of Pakistan at birth."<sup>57</sup> For the Pakistani leaders, Kashmir provided "the culminating illustration of the hostility of the Indian Government to Muslims and Pakistan and their determination to satisfy their imperialistic ambition of rule over the entire sub-continent by fascist tactics and the use of naked force."<sup>58</sup>

To the extent that the Pakistani leaders were agreeable to arrangements which either allowed for joint military and political control of the state by India and Pakistan, or facilitated the involvement of third parties who would replace Indian and Pakistan military forces and ensure an 'impartial' administration in the state, what they sought in essence was, to the greatest extent possible, a position of parity with India in Kashmir. Having rejected the validity of Kashmir's accession to India, Pakistan was considered "as having equal status with the Government of India and entitled as a party to the dispute, to equal rights and considerations."<sup>59</sup> To relent from this demand for parity as a prerequisite to holding a plebiscite, in a situation where Indian promises lacked any credibility, was portended to have two potentially major negative implications for Karachi.

First, agreeing to Indian terms entailed the surrender of a strategic advantage which New Delhi could not credibly commit not to exploit in order to manufacture a verdict in a

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<sup>57</sup> Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 61. For Liaquat, similarly, "Pakistan's very existence is the chief 'causes belli' so far as India is concerned." Liaquat to Nehru (31 December 1947), *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 56-59. Zafrullah Khan would later declare in the UN that ever since the decision to partition the country, India had adopted an attitude of obstruction and hostility towards Pakistan, and paralyse Pakistan at the very start by depriving it of its rightful share of financial and other assets." *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>58</sup> Zafrullah Khan's speech at the UN (1 Jan 1948), *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 128.

<sup>59</sup> UN Commission report, quoted in Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 71-72. Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 78, 143-144, Gupta, *Kashmir*, 152, 185.

plebiscite in favour of India. As Liaquat would state, without the two Pakistani pre-requisites being met, there was “no chance of a free verdict of the people of the State on the question of accession.”<sup>60</sup> The presence of significant number of Indian troops in the state was expected to facilitate coercion of the local population into voting for India. In a meeting with Mountbatten soon after Kashmir’s accession to India, Jinnah would therefore express his scepticism that with India in military control of the state, such “pressure could be brought to bear that the average Muslim would never have the courage to vote for Pakistan.”<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, from a purely military perspective, withdrawing all Pakistani and Azad Kashmir forces as India demanded, posed the strategic danger that it would allow the Indian military easy access to not only the part of Kashmir not yet under their control, but further on to the rest of Pakistan. This concern necessitated for Pakistan that most, if not all, of the Indian forces in the state be withdrawn for Pakistan to be able to do so as well.<sup>62</sup> Without that, Pakistan would contend while informing the UN Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) of the presence of Pakistani Army troops in Kashmir in 1948, there was nothing to prevent an Indian threat, of delivering a *fait accompli* in all of Kashmir, and to the security of West Pakistan in general.<sup>63</sup>

Agreeing to the continuance of the Sheikh Abdullah administration in the state was similarly problematic. For Pakistani leaders, the failure to replace the Abdullah government with an ‘impartial’ administration would have negated the very idea of a free and fair plebiscite. Abdullah after all, with his links to, and obvious and explicit ideological affinity

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<sup>60</sup> Liaquat to Attlee (24 November 1947), *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 48.

<sup>61</sup> Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 61.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-72.

<sup>63</sup> Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 91-92, Gupta, *Kashmir*, 175.

with Nehru and distaste for Pakistan, was regarded in Karachi as “a paid agent of Congress,” a “quisling” with little actual following amongst the Muslim majority in Kashmir.<sup>64</sup> To consent to exclusive stewardship of Kashmir by Abdullah’s party in the lead up to a plebiscite, without ensuring at least that the pro-Pakistan Muslim Conference had a prominent voice in the administration of the state, was expected to guarantee the crushing of any sentiment or movement in the state for accession to Pakistan. To conduct a plebiscite with India in control *both* military and politically in Kashmir, conditions which India could not credibly commit would not be exploited to pressure and manipulate the Kashmiri people to vote in India’s favour, was therefore unacceptable to Pakistan. If the state was completely demilitarized, however, and an ‘impartial’ administration established, the people could be “invited to express the way in which they want to go, and whatever they decide, they should be welcome to do it.”<sup>65</sup> The maximum, therefore, to which the Pakistan leadership seemed

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<sup>64</sup> Liaquat to Attlee (24 November 1947), *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 48-49. Abdullah would, on the opening of the state’s Constituent Assembly state that it was the “kinship of ideals” that his party and people shared with the Indian National Congress which made accession to India so attractive. Quoted in Gupta, *Kashmir*, 367. Zafrullah Khan in the UN would contend that “knowing the relationship of the Maharaja with Sheikh Abdullah, and the relationship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru with Sheikh Abdullah, the conclusion is irresistible that Sheikh Abdullah was handpicked by the Prime Minister of India and that the Maharaja was required, as a condition of the accession, to appoint Sheikh Abdullah as head of the Emergency Administration, an arrangement to which Lord Mountbatten expressed his satisfaction and that of his Government.” *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 2*, ed. M.S. Deora and R. Grover (New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 1991), 201.

<sup>65</sup> *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 244-248. On this issue, Pakistan’s position also enjoyed the support of other parties at the UN, particularly the UK delegation, who would contend that unless an impartial administration were put in place, the UN and her members could not be satisfied with regard to the fairness of the vote, and therefore that “no satisfactory solution can be found unless the Indian Government changes from their present attitude.” Note from UK Delegation to the UN to UK High Commission (New Delhi), *TN Kaul Papers, I-III Instalments*, Subject File 11. The argument was that in an administrative system that that gave immense power to even local officials such as revenue officers or schoolmasters, since it was practically impossible to find a local administration capable of ensuring a fair and impartial plebiscite, it was best if the UN Plebiscite Commissioner were given responsibility for the administration of the state during the plebiscite. Note of Meeting with US and Belgian Officials at US delegation office (16 February 1948), *TN Kaul Papers, I-III Instalments*, Subject File 11; Note of Meeting at the State Department (16 February 1948), *TN Kaul Papers, I-III Instalments*, Subject File 11.

willing to go, as was reportedly conveyed to the UK delegation at the UN, was to have at least one of their two conditions met. While a “plebiscite could not possibly be fair if Sheikh Abdullah remained in control of State administration and Indian troops also remained in Kashmir,” if one of the two obstacles India had set to a fair plebiscite was removed, “Pakistan was ready to take a risk on the other.”<sup>66</sup>

While the desire for legal and practical parity with India as a precursor to any plebiscite in Kashmir was no doubt shaped to a great extent by strategic concerns, there was also a second, reputational consideration attached to Pakistani demands. Indeed, given the immense nationalist and strategic importance of Kashmir for Pakistan, the fact that the Pakistani leadership would even acquiesce to a plebiscite with the possibility of being deprived of the disputed territory, suggests that such concerns alone had not rendered Kashmir indivisible. If a compromise solution were to be found however, it was important for Pakistan that doing so did not bring in its wake reputational costs. Given the lack of credibility associated with any commitment that India made, the least Pakistani leaders needed to ensure was that they did not emerge from the contest appearing weak, and willing to surrender to the machinations of their more potent adversary. To make major concessions to India, from a position of bargaining weakness, would have constituted exactly such a signal, possibly encouraging New Delhi to persist in its attempts to undermine Pakistan.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> The Pakistani preference seemed to be for the removal of Indian troops from Kashmir, and the appointment of a strong Plebiscite Administrator who could effectively ensure that Sheikh Abdullah’s administration did not intimidate and coerce voters. Note from UK Delegation to UN to Foreign Office (5 December 1948), *TN Kaul Papers, I-III Instalments*, Subject File 11.

<sup>67</sup> In a sense then the desire for parity in Pakistan stemmed from a desire for an overall status of equality with its much larger neighbour, a motivation which partly explained the move for partition in colonial India in the first place. Pakistan’s security and independence, in such thinking, could only have been guaranteed if there was first a clear parity of status between the two countries. Gupta, *Kashmir*, 418-419, Rizvi, *Pakistan and the Geostrategic Environment: A Study of Foreign Policy*, 20-22.

Already, Pakistan had failed to resist India's forceful acquisition of Junagadh, where the Muslim ruler of a Hindu majority state had initially decided to accede to Pakistan. Additionally, the fact that India's position and case in Kashmir was based on perceived acts of fraud and violence, further necessitated that Pakistan not be seen to succumb to Indian demands. Finally, the high nationalist and strategic salience of Kashmir (in contrast to Junagadh) itself meant the reputational costs of surrender would be that much stronger, in that the Indians might have been led to believe that a Pakistan unable and unwilling to fight over such a vital piece of territory would prove to be easy pickings in the future on other issues. As Liaquat would therefore make clear in a telegram to Nehru, India's conduct was "based on 'might is right' and on the belief that Pakistan is unable to fight them." If the Indian Government were "allowed to follow their imperialist land-grabbing policy, this will have repercussions not only in Asia but throughout the world."<sup>68</sup> What Liaquat had failed to mention, but was perhaps a more important consideration, was what the failure to resist this 'might is right' approach would have meant for Pakistan's reputation in Indian eyes.

On the other hand, were Pakistan's terms agreed to, imparting on its government some extent of parity with India in Kashmir, not only would the strategic dangers have been averted, but such an outcome would also have served the reputationally salutary purpose of demonstrating firmness in the face of Indian strength and coercion. Since the India leadership could not credibly commit to not exploiting their advantages over Pakistan in Kashmir and beyond, Karachi could only mitigate long term fears of India by either the acquisition of Kashmir, or failing that, at least ensuring that the Indian leadership was left in doubt that Pakistan would not supinely surrender to Indian power, and make gratuitous

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<sup>68</sup> Quoted in speech by Zafrullah Khan, *Documents on Kashmir Problem, Vol. 1*, 214.

concessions whenever challenged.<sup>69</sup> Reinforcing this tendency for firmness was likely the fact that the reputational implications applied not only with respect to India, but also at the domestic level for the Pakistani leadership. With a populace increasing agitated over Kashmir, compromise in any form could only be sold in Pakistan were it to not appear as surrender to India, and as accepting or even rewarding India's perceived aggressions.

That the acceptance of their basic prerequisites, and the strategic and reputational considerations underlying them, were vital in the Pakistani calculus is apparent from the fact that they would be insisted upon by Karachi not only early in the dispute, when there was case to be made that a vote in the state could go either way, but also in 1953 and later when it had become clear to even the Indian leadership that were a plebiscite to be held, India was very likely to lose.<sup>70</sup> Consequently, while both parties would reach an agreement, during talks in August 1953, on expediting the holding a plebiscite in Kashmir, Pakistan would, somewhat perplexingly, show little enthusiasm for such a scheme shortly afterwards, pursuing instead a military pact with the US which was certain to, as Nehru had repeatedly warned, undermine the acceptability to India of a plebiscite.

Ostensibly, this Pakistani decision can be attributed to a refusal to accept India's most prominent demand in the talks, that a prospective plebiscite administrator be the national not of a major world power, but of a small state.<sup>71</sup> According to Indian records of

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<sup>69</sup> According to Cohen, persistence in Kashmir is central for the Pakistani elite who believe that "by merely surviving, Pakistan could demonstrate that the Indian opposition to both the idea of Pakistan and the new state of Pakistan was misguided. Sooner or later the Indians would reconcile themselves to the facts and deal honestly and fairly with Pakistan. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, 72.

<sup>70</sup> See Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion. This sense that Pakistan would win a plebiscite in Kashmir was shared in Pakistan as well. Frank Moraes, the editor of *The Times of India*, would find that with Abdullah's arrest "every single Pakistani high and low" was now convinced that the valley would side with Pakistan. Quoted in Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis*, 46.

<sup>71</sup> Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 68, Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 85.

the talks, while Pakistani leaders had acquiesced to India's stipulation, they had asked that they be allowed to first refer the issue to their cabinet colleagues, before conveying their formal agreement to India in a few days.<sup>72</sup> Having returned to Pakistan, the failure to garner the agreement of the other major power brokers in the state, along with an agitated reaction in the media, could therefore simply explain the drop in Pakistani interest in following through on the talks in Delhi.<sup>73</sup> However, the joint communiqué issued on the conclusion of the 1953 talks, and correspondences between the two PMs shortly after, suggest that Pakistan's decision to jettison the plebiscite option now had much to do with the persistence of the concerns discussed above. The communiqué after the talks, for all the hope it projected, had also made clear that the leaders had only agreed that "preliminary issues should be considered" first, following which steps could be taken to appoint a Plebiscite Administrator, meaning that the pre-existing disagreements continued unresolved.<sup>74</sup> In the following weeks, Prime Minister Mohammed Ali Bogra would raise some concerns of a fundamental nature with Nehru, unsatisfactory answers to which likely undermined any enthusiasm that the Pakistani leadership might have held about the results of the earlier talks.

First was the issue of the practical implications of Nehru's suggestion of a zonal or regional plebiscite. Nehru's suggestion involved the holding of a plebiscite in the entire state, following which it could be decided by India and Pakistan in consultation with each other how to divide the state "so that the final decision should cause the least disturbance and should take into consideration geographical, economic and other important factors." The

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<sup>72</sup> "Conversations with Mohd. Ali" (20 August 1953), *Swjn-Ss*. vol. 23, 343.

<sup>73</sup> Gowher Rizvi, "Nehru and the Indo-Pakistan Rivalry over Kashmir 1947-64," *Contemporary South Asia* 4, no. 1 (1995): 26-28.

<sup>74</sup> Gupta, *Kashmir*, 270.

vagueness of this formula appears to have been unacceptable to the Pakistani leadership who were already sufficiently sceptical of Indian bona fides, and likely feared that under terms as Nehru proposed, even after a plebiscite India could try and force a disposition of the state in keeping with New Delhi's interests. Bogra would therefore write to Nehru that "the idea of a regional plebiscite without a definition of regions was not concrete enough for the expression of a definite view for or against it."<sup>75</sup> If India were to agree to a concrete definition of the zones or regions however, once a plebiscite was held both sides would have had to abide by the verdict, and "it would not be open thereafter to either of us to proceed to dispose of the State in accordance not with that verdict but with some different criteria to be then defined."<sup>76</sup>

Second, the same communications suggested also that for all the optimism that the talks had temporarily generated, the earlier stumbling blocks had continued to exist.<sup>77</sup> Nehru's letter of 3 September 1953 would refer to the fact that Bogra had yet again raised the issue of the quantum of forces and the administration of the state in anticipation of a plebiscite. In response to this, Nehru would reiterate the stand that India could not accede to Pakistan's demand for an impartial authority or a joint Indo-Pakistan commission to administer the state. Furthermore, Nehru would contend, his administration could not as a responsible government contemplate the risk of withdrawing its troops, particularly when there was talk of war in Pakistan.<sup>78</sup> Given India's persistence on the perquisites to a plebiscite, and Pakistan's pre-existing strategic and reputational concerns, it is not surprising

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<sup>75</sup> Note from Nehru to Mohd. Ali (3 September 1953), *Snjñ-Ss.* vol. 23, 361-364.

<sup>76</sup> Mohd. Ali in note of 1 December 1953, quoted in Gupta, *Kashmir*, 276.

<sup>77</sup> Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis*, 41.

<sup>78</sup> Note from Nehru to Mohd. Ali (3 September 1953), *Snjñ-Ss.* vol. 23, 364-367.



then that Nehru's 1953 plebiscite offer made little impression on the Pakistani leadership, even though their prospects of winning a free and fair plebiscite were as high as they had ever been as a result of increasing political and social turmoil, and the resultant anti-India sentiment in Kashmir.

### **Entering the Military Pact and Alternatives to Plebiscite**

With the Indian leadership unwilling to relent on their preconditions for a plebiscite, offering alternatively only to settle the dispute along the existing status quo, Pakistan would push ahead with the 19 May 1954 US-Pakistan Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement.<sup>79</sup> Such a pact had been necessitated for one by the need to bolster Pakistan's military prowess, and therefore its defensibility against India, the fragility of which had been shown up for the Pakistan leadership during the 1951 crisis when India had briefly amassed its troops on the borders.<sup>80</sup> Military aid however also promised to serve the additional purpose of rectifying the large bargaining leverage that India enjoyed over Pakistan in Kashmir and elsewhere. Even in the US, therefore, it was recognized that the Pakistanis "have been motivated largely by a desire to strengthen Pakistan's military position vis-à-vis India."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Dawn* would, in an editorial comment that "the people of this country have come to the conclusion that further negotiations with him [Nehru] would serve no other purpose than that of giving him the time that he wants." Quoted in Gupta, *Kashmir*, 277. A military pact such as that with the US was moreover long desired in Pakistan. The mainsprings of this search emerged as independence approach with Jinnah conveying to Lord Ismay that "Pakistan could not stand alone." Over the next few years Pakistani leaders continued to court the US, emphasizing in particular to Pakistan's strategic location. Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58*, 105-135, Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 93-109.

<sup>80</sup> Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58*, 116.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 99.

Speaking from a position of greater strength, in turn, was hoped to elicit from India a more reasonable approach to Kashmir.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, while concessions that Pakistan had been willing to make till this point, by virtue of being made from a position of weakness were liable to be seen as expressions of weakness in India, therefore encouraging intransigence, the same concessions made from greater strength could have been expected to be taken more seriously in New Delhi. Pakistan's new found military strength also allowed its leadership to credibly signal to India that the latter could not deliver a unilateral *fait accompli* on Kashmir to Pakistan, as New Delhi had been seeking to do by concretizing and strengthening India's political position in the state by increasingly integrating it politically to the union.<sup>83</sup>

In defence of the pact therefore, Mohammed Ali Bogra would respond to Nehru's bitter remonstrations by expressing the hope that "it is not your [Nehru's] view that friendship between India and Pakistan can be established only on the basis that the present great disparity in the military potential of Indian and Pakistan shall never be altered to India's disadvantage."<sup>84</sup> The Pakistani leader would also reject Nehru's renewed offer in August

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<sup>82</sup> Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 69-70, M.S. Rajan, "India and Pakistan as Factors in Each Other's Foreign Policy and Relations," *International Studies* 3, no. 4 (1961): 368-370. Not surprisingly, very little of this nature was said publically by the Pakistani officials in the lead up to and in the early years of the pact for fear that doing so was likely to immediately make the US unenthusiastic in its support. Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 98-109.

<sup>83</sup> Such acts included the decision to have elections to form a Kashmir Constituent Assembly in 1951, the 1952 agreement between Nehru and Abdullah granting Jammu and Kashmir a special position as part of the Indian union, and in 1954 the approval by the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly of Kashmir's accession to India. Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, 119-120, Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 62-63, Korbel, *Danger in Kashmir*, 224-225.

<sup>84</sup> Mohd. Ali would also claim in the note that he did not see how the overall military strength of Pakistan had any relevance whatsoever to the Kashmir issue. However, soon after he would be referred to in the *U.S. News and World Report* as stating that US military aid would be useful in helping resolve the Kashmir problem. Gupta, *Kashmir*, 279-280. According to Burke, Mohammed Ali was convinced that a "healthy relationship between India and Pakistan could only be built up if the existing wide margin between India's strength and Pakistan's weakness could be reduced." S. M.

1954 of a no-war pact, arguing that without the resolution of all outstanding problems, by arbitration if necessary, such a pact would hold little meaning.<sup>85</sup> In 1957, Pakistani Prime Minister Suhrawardy would confirm the rationale of joining a military pact by stating that Pakistan's membership in the western alliance system, by strengthening Pakistan militarily, had made "a favourable turn in the Kashmir dispute possible."<sup>86</sup>

If the hope was that actual parity in military strength would translate into India's begrudging acceptance of legal parity for Pakistan in Kashmir in anticipation of a plebiscite, it was soon dashed by the revocation by New Delhi of its offer of a reference to the people. Failing this, however, it was still expected in Karachi that an increase in bargaining strength would result in an agreement to partition the state along lines more acceptable to Pakistan. Pakistan's requirements from a partition solution were indeed far in excess of its own existing bargaining strength, and what India was willing to offer, that is partition along the existing cease fire line which would leave most of the state, particularly the Kashmir valley in India's possession. As early as 1948, when Nehru had floated the idea of partition with the UNCIP, Pakistan's Finance Minister Ghulam Mohammed had made it be known that in a partition of the state all Pakistan would concede to India was eastern Jammu.<sup>87</sup>

With India's blanket refusal to entertain the prospect of a plebiscite after 1954, the partition option would be resuscitated again in talks between Indian and Pakistani officials in

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Burke, *Mainsprings of Indian and Pakistani Foreign Policies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974), 39.

<sup>85</sup> Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 70.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in "Talk with Gunnar Jarring" (27 March 1957), *Synj-Ss.* vol. 37, 432. Suhrawardy would also publicly state in December 1956 that a policy of neutralism was impractical for Pakistan as it would "keep us weak, so that we may not press our claim for Kashmir, so that we may not ask for a fair settlement of the Canal Waters dispute, so that we may not be in a position to settle any dispute with India in accordance with justice and fairplay." Gupta, *Kashmir*, 307.

<sup>87</sup> Gupta, *Kashmir*, 179.

May 1955.<sup>88</sup> In these talks, Nehru would offer to, at best, consider minor alterations to the existing status quo, and possibly the transfer of a certain part of Poonch (later he would add Mirpur) to Pakistan. Bogra and Iskander Mirza<sup>89</sup> would in response put forward a vastly different proposal, involving the transfer of a large chunk of Jammu north of the Chenab river to Pakistan, in addition to Kashmir being put under joint control of the two countries prior to the conduct of a plebiscite. Anything less than this, the Pakistani representatives would express their unwillingness to accept. This proposal was, not surprisingly, rejected by Nehru who would observe that such terms meant that “all the giving up was on India’s side and the trouble still continued.” The proposal in fact, for Nehru, “amounted to surrender by India which might perhaps follow a complete defeat and a dictation of terms.”<sup>90</sup>

With the failure of these talks, the dispute would revert to Pakistani attempts at reactivating the issue, and the plebiscite option, at the UN.<sup>91</sup> The Chinese aggression on India in 1962 would force India back to the table, with the US and UK, on whom India was desperately reliant for immediate military assistance, eliciting Nehru’s agreement to enter

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<sup>88</sup> As *The Times* correspondent in Delhi had written following the talks, “one fact emerged, and that is that a plebiscite as a means for the Kashmiris to express their choice is as dead as all other proposals that have been made in the past.” Quoted in Razvi, *The Frontiers of Pakistan*, 113.

<sup>89</sup> Formerly Major-General in the Pakistan Army, he was the Minister of the Interior during this period, and would soon be Governor-General and then President of Pakistan.

<sup>90</sup> “Talks with Mohd. Ali and Iskander Mirza – III” (16 May 1955), *Sujn-Ss*. vol. 28, 257-259; “Talks with Mohd. Ali and Iskander Mirza – IV” (17 May 1955), *ibid.* vol. 28, 260-262.

<sup>91</sup> This would result in a renewed attempt, this time by the UN Secretary General Gunnar Jarring to resuscitate the plebiscite option, followed by the return of Dr. Frank Graham to the subcontinent in 1958, attempts which would fail over the Indian insistence that her basic preconditions be met before a plebiscite could even be considered. India would also reject the suggestion that the issue of preconditions be subjected to arbitration, with Nehru stating that India would make no comments with regard to a plebiscite or arbitration “which would be misapplied and used against India as commitments.” Talk with Gunnar Jarring (27 March 1957), *ibid.* vol. 37, 429-434. Furthermore New Delhi would continually object to any proposals which “placed the aggressor and the aggressed on the same footing.” Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 71-74.

talks with Pakistan over Kashmir. In six rounds of talks from December 1962 to the end of May 1963, Pakistan's position would remain largely the same as in the 1955 talks, hardly surprising given that India was at its weakest since independence. With India's rejection of an initial Pakistani proposal to resurrect the plebiscite option, and insistence that the state be partitioned along the cease fire line, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, would counter with a demand that India transfer large parts of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan. According to these terms, only a small portion of the state on the border with Himachal Pradesh, was to be left with India in what Bhutto would term "a forgotten moment of generosity."<sup>92</sup> Alternatively, Pakistan was willing to contemplate a solution which would see the partition of the rest of state along lines already suggested, but with the Kashmir valley to be internationalized for anywhere from six months to ten years, followed by a plebiscite.<sup>93</sup>

Such demands on Pakistan's part, while patently impractical because they were sure to be rejected, as they were by India, are not surprising from our perspective. The intensity of the long term threat that Karachi perceived from India, in combination with Pakistan's significantly weaker bargaining position in Kashmir despite its gradually increasing military strength, and the abiding sense of Indian coercion or fraud, made it imperative that for strategic and reputational reasons were a partition to be agreed to, the outcome go significantly beyond what Pakistan already possessed. Strategically, conceding much beyond what Karachi was willing to offer, and especially agreeing to Indian terms, would have left India with the sort of logistical advantages which could have been exploited later to threaten

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<sup>92</sup> As Bhutto would reportedly ask Nehru, "You are a defeated nation, don't you see?" Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol. 3* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 257-258.

<sup>93</sup> Razvi, *The Frontiers of Pakistan*, 122-123, Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 100-101.

West Pakistan as a whole.<sup>94</sup> Reputationally, again, the Pakistani leadership is likely to have concluded that the larger their concessions, the more likely it was that they would be read in New Delhi as demonstrations of Pakistani weakness and susceptibility to greater power, encouraging the former to exploit the very gains that had been gained by a territorial settlement on Indian terms. That Bogra was aware of this reputational dynamic is suggested in his entreaty to Nehru during the 1955 talks that “India was a big country, the big sister of Pakistan. She was a great nation and there had been much progress in India. It should, therefore, be generous and magnanimous.” Such a request implied recognition that as the stronger party India had much more leeway to make major concessions and appear generous, whereas Pakistan had much less flexibility to make similar concessions coming from a position of weakness. This reputational consequence was expected to reflect domestically as well, where the impression of succumbing to greater strength would have meant, Mirza would claim, that the government would not “last twenty-four hours.”<sup>95</sup> Similarly in 1962-63, Ayub Khan would appeal for India to show “large-heartedness” by adhering to the commitment to a plebiscite, while American President Kennedy would tell Nehru that India being a greater power than Pakistan could afford to be more generous, and that if Kashmir were settled as a result of Indian generosity that would only embellish India’s reputation on the world stage.<sup>96</sup>

For the Pakistani leadership, therefore, strategic and reputational concerns required during this period that they put forward demands far beyond Pakistan’s actual bargaining

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<sup>94</sup> Ayub Khan would later assert that with the present cease-fire line Kashmir “is just like a grip around our neck. That is the military meaning of the present situation.” Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 207.

<sup>95</sup> “Talks with Mohd. Ali and Iskander Mirza – III” (16 May 1955), *Sujn-Ss*. vol. 28, 257.

<sup>96</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 256-259.

strength, involving the transfer of large parts of India controlled territory, in addition to the creation of their preferred conditions for a plebiscite in Kashmir. It is interesting to note here also how strategic and reputational concerns outshone nationalist ones in considerations of a partition solution, with Pakistan demanding not only Muslim majority Kashmir, but also a significant portion of Hindu and Buddhist majority Jammu and Ladakh respectively. While the Pakistani leaders persisted with their demands, New Delhi for its own reasons, as discussed in an earlier chapter, would show no inclination to make any further concessions, which destined these extended talks to certain failure as they ended inconclusively in May 1963.

### **The Decision to War in 1965**

By the late 1950s, from the Pakistani perspective, the Indians had become increasingly intransigent on Kashmir, with the Indian representative at the UN, Krishna Menon even declaring that “we will come here every time you ask us but on no condition shall we trade our sovereignty.”<sup>97</sup> Moreover, while India had continued to extend the process of the political integration of the state into the union,<sup>98</sup> interest in the UN over finding a solution to the Kashmir dispute along the lines of earlier resolutions had clearly diminished. The most notable indication of this had been Secretary General Jarring’s conclusion that the

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<sup>97</sup> Quoted in Gupta, *Kashmir*, 349.

<sup>98</sup> In 1956 the new constitution of Jammu and Kashmir confirmed accession to India, and in 1960 the Indian Supreme Court and Election Commission’s jurisdiction would be extended to the state. Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 98, 235-239. According to Brines, this political integration was in part motivated by the fact that “defense would be far more difficult, as long as Kashmir’s status remained ambiguous and undecided.” *Ibid.*, 100. For a detailed account of all internal politics developments in the state during this period see Gupta, *Kashmir*, 362-408.

“changing political and strategic factors surrounding the whole of the Kashmir question,” made the implementation of prior agreements “progressively more difficult because the situation with which they were to cope has changed.”<sup>99</sup> In Pakistan there had been a resultant despair at the role and utility of the UN, with the *Dawn* commenting in an editorial that “grave territorial disputes which defy solution because of the calculated and often proved intransigence of one party cannot be solved peacefully if the United Nations helps the delinquent by trifling with the problem and giving the guilty party more and more time to consolidate its ill-gotten gains.”<sup>100</sup> Such despair would be apparent in General Ayub’s statement soon after assuming power in 1958 that “purely from the military and security point of view,” Pakistan had to continue to struggle for the “liberation” of Kashmir, and while a peaceful resolution was ideal, “if we are forced to adopt means other than peaceful, the blame will surely lie at the door step of India.”<sup>101</sup> If there was any hope that with Pakistan’s increasing bargaining strength, particularly in the aftermath of India’s defeat to China, India would be any more conciliatory, such hopes were belied in the extended talks in 1962- 1963.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 72-73.

<sup>100</sup> Editorial of 1 May 1957, quoted in Gupta, *Kashmir*, 325.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 340. General Ayub would articulate these fears further in a January 1964 article, claiming that regarding herself as a major power, India sought her sphere of influence in the region, and this combined with the ideological hostility created apprehensions about India’s aggressive intentions in Pakistan. Mohammed Ayub Khan, “The Pakistan-American Alliance: Stresses and Strains,” *Foreign Affairs* 42, no. 2 (1964): 199-206.

<sup>102</sup> In addition to her military strength, Pakistan also had acquired a position of strength thanks to its new relationship with China. The relationship had developed by leaps and bounds from the early 1960s, and as Bhutto would declare in Pakistan’s National Assembly in July 1963, an “attack from India on Pakistan today is no longer confined to the security and territorial integrity of Pakistan,” but involved “the territorial integrity and security of the largest state in Asia.” Quoted in Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 102.



This context of continued Indian intransigence, as New Delhi steadily concretized Kashmir's political status as part of the Indian union, increasingly incentivised in Pakistan a resort again to force. As Burke has observed, "India's basic advantage lay in the fact that she was already in occupation of what she wanted. If Pakistan wished to change the status of the disputed territory, it was for her to do something about it and risk seeming belligerent."<sup>103</sup> This became even more a of a necessity after 1962, with the expectation that massive western military aid to India in the wake of Chinese aggression was likely to rapidly undermine whatever military advantages and bargaining leverage Pakistan had built up in previous years. By April 1964, India had begun a five-year military modernization program at a cost of over one billion US dollars, which by 1965 had already resulted in an appreciable enhancement of Indian military capabilities.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, in 1965, even if India possessed a 3:1 to 3:2 military superiority in quantitative terms, Pakistan could still boast of a distinct advantage in the quality of its military arms and equipment. Such an advantage was however acknowledged to be a fleeting one, likely to be redressed by India within the next two years. This left Pakistan with a fast shrinking window of opportunity for the effective use of force, which if left to evaporate would have practically meant for the Pakistani leadership, given previous Indian intransigence, having to settle for a the status quo and a permanent position of inferiority and strategic vulnerability to India.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Burke, *Mainsprings of Indian and Pakistani Foreign Policies*, 187.

<sup>104</sup> Lorne J. Kavic, *India's Quest for Security: Defence Policies, 1947-1965* (Berkeley,: University of California Press, 1967), 192-193. India's defence budget had grown from 2.1 per cent of GNP in 1961-62 to 4.5 per cent by 1964-64 to facilitate the military modernization program. Raju G. C. Thomas, *The Defence of India: A Budgetary Perspective of Strategy and Politics* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1978), 147-148.

<sup>105</sup> Bhutto would later state that "there was a time when militarily, in terms of armour, we were superior to India because of the military assistance we were getting and that was the position up to 1965," but with its military modernization efforts India would soon "have been too strong to be beaten." See Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 200-202, T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker*

Furthermore, that a military option could indeed be effective was attested for the Pakistani leadership by India's conduct in the military confrontation initiated by Pakistan over a disputed wasteland in the Rann of Kutch region on the border with India's Gujarat state in April 1965.<sup>106</sup> The resulting military stalemate (towards which Pakistan's newly acquired Patton tanks had served well), the eventual withdrawal of Indian forces, followed by New Delhi's acceptance of arbitration to resolve the status of the Rann appeared to confirm for Pakistan both their military superiority against demoralized Indian forces still reeling from the Chinese debacle, as well as the possibility that an Indian leadership enfeebled by Nehru's death in 1964 would be more responsive to coercive military pressure.<sup>107</sup> Foreign Minister Bhutto, the foremost proponent of military action would indeed soon encourage his government to swiftly adopt a military course in Kashmir while they had a military advantage.<sup>108</sup> In writing to Ayub Khan to recommend such a course, Bhutto would state: "If

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*Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 115-116. The temporary confidence in her military capabilities vis-à-vis India was reflected in Pakistan's adoption of an "offense-defence" doctrine which was predicated on Pakistan's possession of "high performance armour and aircraft and superior generalship." Cohen, *The Pakistan Army*, 145.

<sup>106</sup> The Rann of Kutch is an economically and strategically useless wasteland covered by water from the Arabian Sea for the best part of half a year, the status of which had been left undetermined by the Radcliffe award. Pakistan's operation here in 1965 has been characterized as a classic "limited probe." Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 83.

<sup>107</sup> Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 207-208, 288-295, Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 112-114, 122. According to the then Pakistani Commander-in-Chief Gen. Mohammed Musa, Bhutto would convince Ayub that India was incapable of risking a "general war of unlimited duration for the annihilation of Pakistan." Gen. Mohammed Musa, *My Version: India-Pakistan War 1965* (New Delhi: ABC Publishing House, 1983), 90. Increasing Pakistan confidence was the widespread belief in the generally superior martial qualities of Pakistanis in comparison to the timid Indians. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, 103.

<sup>108</sup> Kuldeep Nayar, *Between the Lines* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1969), 112.

we wanted to pursue a policy of confrontation with India, time was running out. We had to act now or it will be too late.”<sup>109</sup>

This calculus would be the mainspring of the eventually unsuccessful ‘Operation Gibraltar’ which sought to use guerrilla forces to cause mayhem, and incite rebellion by the disaffected local population of Kashmir against Indian authority.<sup>110</sup> The plan assumed that the Kashmiri population were ready and willing to throw off Indian rule, in aid of which several thousand specially trained *mujahid* forces infiltrated into various parts of Indian Kashmir in early August 1965. The core of the force was to incite revolt in Srinagar, precipitate the forceful and popular removal of the pro-India government in the state, establish a new pro-Pakistan regime, and then call upon Islamabad for assistance.<sup>111</sup>

To supplement and facilitate the soon to be faltering guerrillas who had infiltrated into Kashmir, ‘Operation Grand Slam,’ launched on 1 September, introduced a large Pakistani regular infantry force in an assault on the Bhimbar-Chhamb front, aimed at the capture or destruction of the strategic Akhnur bridge across the Chenab river. Meeting this objective would have facilitated an eventual conquest of Jammu by Pakistani forces, practically cutting off Kashmir from the rest of India, thereby hampering any swift Indian retaliatory military action, or efforts to re-establish military and political control over Kashmir. India’s own diversionary attack aimed at Lahore and Sialkot however, by requiring

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<sup>109</sup> Quoted in Salmaan Taseer, *Bhutto: A Political Biography* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979), 60. Bhutto had assumed the influential role of Foreign Minister in 1963, and from then on had pushed for a more assertive policy with regard to Kashmir, in addition to a reorientation of Pakistan’s alliance posture towards a closer relationship with China and the US’ expense.

<sup>110</sup> Such dissatisfaction had reached a fever pitch in 1963 with news of the theft of a holy Muslim relic from the Hazratbal shrine. Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 79-80.

<sup>111</sup> Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 305-309.

Pakistani troops to relax their offensive in Akhnur to reinforce the defence of Lahore and Sialkot eventually resulted in the failure of ‘Operation Grand Slam’ too.<sup>112</sup>

The strategy, as T.V. Paul has pointed out, was one of ‘limited aims/fait accompli,’ designed ideally to capture the Kashmir valley, failing which such action sought to acquire enough territory, and impose enough costs on the Indian occupation of Kashmir, so as to create a stronger bargaining position which was hoped would compel India to enter into meaningful negotiations and offer substantial concessions.<sup>113</sup> The resort to the risky option of war by Pakistan also, however, even if the mission were to fail, served Pakistan as a potent reputational signal of Karachi’s firmness on the issue of Kashmir, claims to which had been given short shrift in recent years by both India and at the UN. Demonstrating such firmness it was hoped, would convince the Indian leadership that they would not be allowed to costlessly continue with their efforts to unilaterally resolve the dispute by concretising their political and military position in Kashmir, and thereby “defreeze the Kashmir problem...and bring her to the conference table.”<sup>114</sup>

Such action was also expected, furthermore, to sufficiently concern a somnolent international community (especially the US and UK) to provoke intervention, and pressure on India to either return to the negotiating table, submit the dispute to mediation, or revert back to commitments made at the UN in earlier years, leading to a settlement more in

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<sup>112</sup> Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 206. For an extensive account of the war see Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 251-400, Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 57-96.

<sup>113</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 110-114. According to Shahid Hamid, a Pakistani military officer and scholar, “all planning was based on a short, sharp encounter and ammunition and reserves were organised accordingly.” Quoted in Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 111.

<sup>114</sup> Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, 73, Altaf Gauhar, *Ayub Khan: Pakistan's First Military Ruler* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 216.

keeping with Pakistan's desires.<sup>115</sup> Bhutto would therefore contend that for Pakistan, even a war which resulted in standstill "was equivalent to a victory. While the action smouldered, the loser could only be India."<sup>116</sup> Ayub, with operation Gibraltar having failed, would similarly instruct his commander-in-chief, General Muhammad Musa in a 29 August 1965 communication "to take such action that will defreeze the Kashmir problem, weaken India's resolve and bring her to the conference table without provoking a general war."<sup>117</sup> The intention of the continued use of force had therefore become primarily one of building reputation, and conveying Pakistani resolve, thereby undoing India's attempts at freezing the Kashmir issue, while at the same time aiming to alter the bargaining context to the extent possible, so as to elicit concessions from India which would satisfy Pakistan's strategic and reputational interests.

## Conclusion

Pakistan's stakes in Kashmir were no doubt high, not least because of the significance of Kashmir for the validity of the two nation theory on which partition had been premised. The psychological and domestic political implications of losing Kashmir (and benefits of assertiveness) were (and are) therefore not negligible in accounting for how

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<sup>115</sup> Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, 77-78, 84-85, Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 117-120.

<sup>116</sup> Quoted in Taseer, *Bhutto: A Political Biography*, 62.

<sup>117</sup> Quoted in Stanley A. Wolpert, *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan: His Life and Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 90.

Pakistani leaders tackled the dispute with India after independence.<sup>118</sup> However, what this chapter suggests is that these factors alone did not preclude a compromise solution to the Kashmir dispute, let alone make the territory indivisible for the Pakistani leadership, as is commonly understood. Especially given the undoubted costs of continuing conflict, there were incentives for Pakistan to seek a compromise solution, but Pakistan's willingness to do so, and the extent to which Karachi could make concessions towards that end, was driven to a meaningful extent by strategic and reputational considerations. Given the intense long term threat that India posed for Pakistan, the latter's weaker and deteriorating bargaining position for much of this period, and the perception of Indian coercion and fraud in the matter of Kashmir's accession, only solutions which involved independence for Kashmir, a plebiscite under conditions which acknowledged Pakistan's legal parity, or partition which left Pakistan with much of the disputed territory, were viewed as strategically and reputationally viable by the Pakistani leadership. Anything less, especially agreeing to Indian terms wholesale was feared to compromise Pakistan's long term security by placing the country in a vulnerable strategic position, as well as generating a reputation for weakness that would only encourage Indian actions aimed at dissolving Pakistan's very survival.<sup>119</sup> That the domestic public was likely to read similar signals of capitulation in any significant concessions to a stronger India which gained Pakistan little in return, only reinforced the incentives for the Pakistani leadership to persist with their basic position on Kashmir. As the diplomatic path looked

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<sup>118</sup> In addition, Ayub's shrinking appeal in the Pakistani domestic political scene, and Bhutto's search for more political influence, no doubt further incentivized the use of force in 1965 partly for diversionary reasons. Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 226-234.

<sup>119</sup> Cohen further points to the prevalent belief in Pakistan that while regional peace was possible it was only likely "if a military balance was achieved between India and Pakistan...The Indians were bullies, and bullies recognize superior power." Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, 62.

increasingly doomed by the late 1950s and early 1960s, and it became increasingly clear that Pakistan's temporary military advantages were likely to disappear precipitously, the initiation of a limited war in 1965 was one of the only practical choices left to a desperate Pakistani leadership to redress their position in Kashmir.

## **India and the Frontier Dispute with China**

India's territorial dispute with China has been as intractable as that with Pakistan over Kashmir. In contrast to Kashmir, however, a territory which no doubt held high salience for India in the immediate aftermath of partition, India's behaviour in its territorial dispute with China is curious in that for all practical purposes the conflict revolved around a piece of territory which was of little salience to India. By the end of the 1950s, the period during which the territorial dispute between the two countries assumed crisis proportions leading to war in 1962, it was clear that China was willing to accept Indian sovereignty over territory that the latter held in the eastern sector in exchange for Indian recognition of Chinese claims over disputed territory in the western sector, particularly the Aksai China region, a territory that the Indian leadership from early on would consider of little value owing to its lack of nationalist, economic or strategic salience. Accounting for Indian behaviour in the territorial dispute with China cannot therefore be accomplished solely by a reliance on the standard salience based expectations. This chapter illustrates how commitment related concerns can lead to intransigent state behaviour for primarily reputational (as opposed to strategic) reasons by arguing that India's policies and behaviour prior to the 1962 war were driven precisely by such considerations.

The Indian leadership, it will be shown, was from early in the bilateral relationship conscious of the likelihood of a Chinese territorial challenge on their common frontier, owing in part to Chinese maps which claimed a large expanse of territory that India held, or laid claim to. The leadership in New Delhi also held, at the same time, deep concerns with regard to China's tendencies in the long term, fearing expansionism from the north, as with



time the already potent Chinese overcame temporary vulnerabilities. Therefore, in addressing territorial issues with China, India under Nehru sought to avoid strategically costly concessions of territory, but also clearly engaged in reputation building, with behaviour on territorial issues intended to signal India's resolve to China. China's overwhelming military dominance of the frontier regions, particularly following the invasion of Tibet in 1950, and Chinese unilateralism, as the Indian leadership saw it, in the western sector later in 1950s, only exacerbated reputational fears in Delhi.

These concerns manifested themselves initially in the pursuit of a delaying or avoidance strategy, so long as Peking had not made its claims to territory explicit or acted on such claims, in the expectation that with time India herself would be better placed to resist Chinese pressures. As the dispute broke open from 1958 onwards, India would adopt a publicly intractable position with regard to territorial claims not just in the strategically salient eastern sector, but also in the western sector, where both Indian interests and legal claims were acknowledged by the Indian leadership to be weak. Eventually, with Peking unwilling to relent on its demands, the Indian leadership would resort to a more active, military 'forward policy' on the frontiers in 1961, provoking a Chinese military backlash in 1962. The humiliating defeat for India in the war of 1962 would only deepen Indian intransigence, with the issue continuing to plague Sino-Indian relations to this day. Through an examination of historical records, this case study suggests that contrary to critics who attribute Indian policies to a seeming tendency in Nehru for unilateralism and unreasonable pig-headedness, reputational considerations in particular played an undeniable role in the shaping of India's behaviour, especially the more surprising aspects of New Delhi's intransigence, leading up to the war of 1962.

## The Territory under Dispute

Emerging from British colonialism in 1947, the Indian government had the immediate task of defining its claims with regard to the territorial boundary with China, the latter then embroiled in a civil war between Nationalist and Communist forces. The task was a necessary one for the simple reason that the mountainous frontier region where India and China meet had historically never been delimited consensually during the period of British colonialism of India. Two sectors of this border would be of particular concern to both states given the expanse of territory involved. The 'eastern sector' near Burma, comprising of some 90,000 square kilometres of territory, is largely coterminous with the region India would call the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), now known as the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The 'western sector' on the other extremity of the Sino-India border region includes some 33,000 square kilometres of territory, of which the status of the Aksai Chin plateau bordering the Ladakh region of Indian Kashmir would prove to be the most combustible issue.

In the 'eastern sector' India claimed soon after independence that the border between the two countries had been delimited by the McMahon Line proposed by the British at the Simla Conference between British, Chinese and Tibetans representatives in 1913-1914, a treaty which the Chinese representative to the talks had initialled, but his government never ratified.<sup>1</sup> This line drew the border between the two countries along the crest of the Assam

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<sup>1</sup> For extensive discussions of the history of the Sino-Indian frontier see, Steven A. Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), Steven A. Hoffmann, "Rethinking the Linkage between Tibet and the China-India Border Conflict: A Realist Approach," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 3 (2006): 165-194, Alastair Lamb, *The China-India Border: The Origins of the Disputed Boundaries* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1964), Alastair Lamb, *The McMahon Line: A Study in the Relations between India, China, and Tibet, 1904 to 1914* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1966), Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (London: Cape, 1972). The origins of the McMahon Line have

Himalayas, leaving the area south of it with India. A region largely populated by tribal groups, the NEFA holds little ethno-nationalist significance for the Indian leadership, but is strategically salient as something of a buffer area. A strong China which could project itself into Tibet and beyond, if in control of the Assam Himalayan region would pose a stark threat to India with easy and ready access to the plains of Assam.<sup>2</sup> Already vulnerable in the northeast, which is connected to the rest of India only by the narrow Siliguri corridor, India therefore had strong strategic reasons to insist on firmly adhering to the McMahon Line. Furthermore, problems of political instability in the region, where several groups, particularly the Nagas, had been fighting for their own state since independence, made control of NEFA indispensable to preserving the integrity of the Indian north-east.<sup>3</sup>

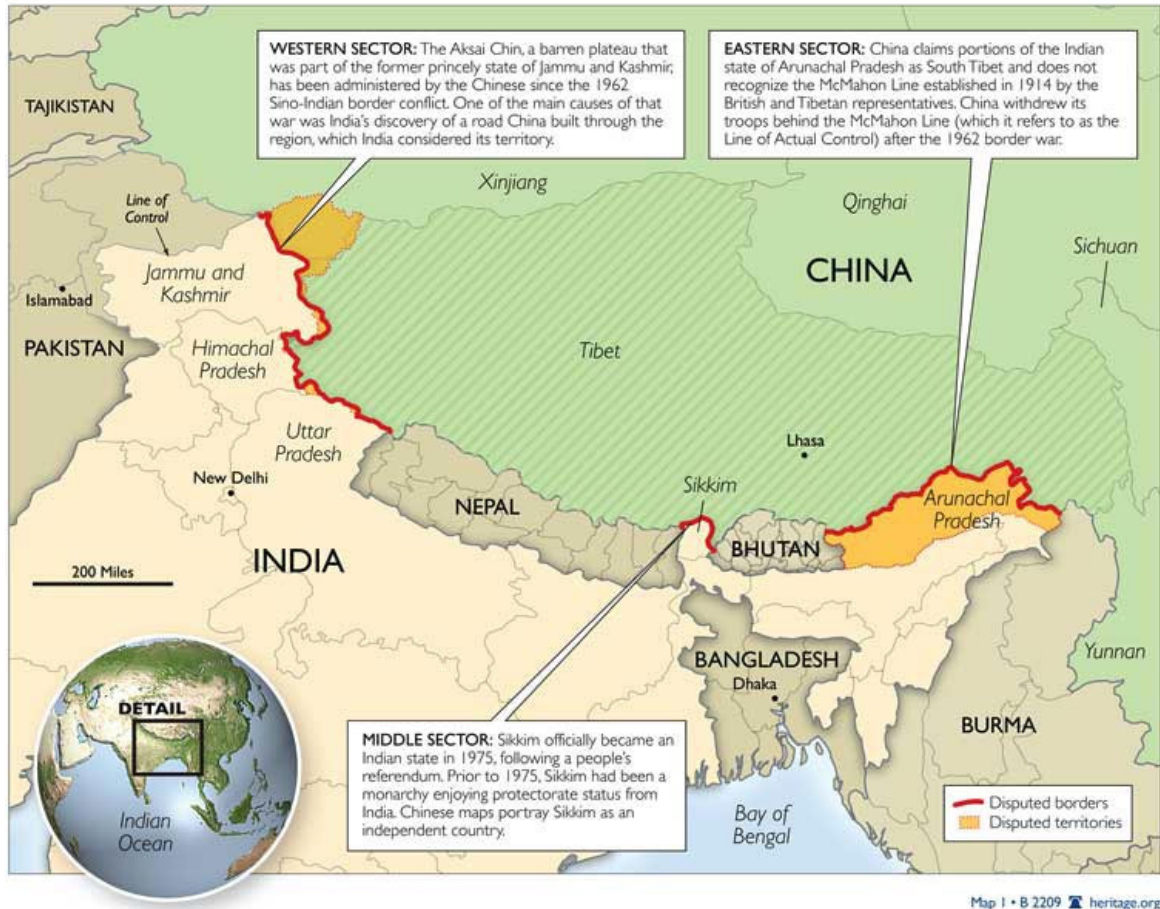
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been adequately discussed in this literature. Suffice it to say that its origins lay in a conference between representatives of British India, China and Tibet in 1913-14 in Simla with the purpose of determining the frontier between Tibet and India on the one hand, and Tibet and China on the other. Henry McMahon, the British representative would propose a frontier along the upper crest of the Assam Himalayas, which would be lead to an agreement initialled by the three representatives. The agreement would however be immediately repudiated by the Chinese government on their representatives return, and China continues to maintain therefore that the McMahon Line had no legal validity.

<sup>2</sup> Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 18-20, Hoffmann, "Rethinking the Linkage between Tibet and the China-India Border Conflict: A Realist Approach," 168-170, Maxwell, *India's China War*, 74.

<sup>3</sup> John W. Garver, *Protracted Contest : Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 91-100. As Patel would elucidate this logic, "All along the Himalayas...we have on our side of the frontier a population ethnographically and culturally not different from Tibetans and Mongoloids... [who] have no established loyalty or devotion to India." Patel to Nehru (7 November 1950), in *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50: Volume X*, ed. Durga Das, 1st ed. (Ahmedabad,: Navajivan Pub. House, 1971).

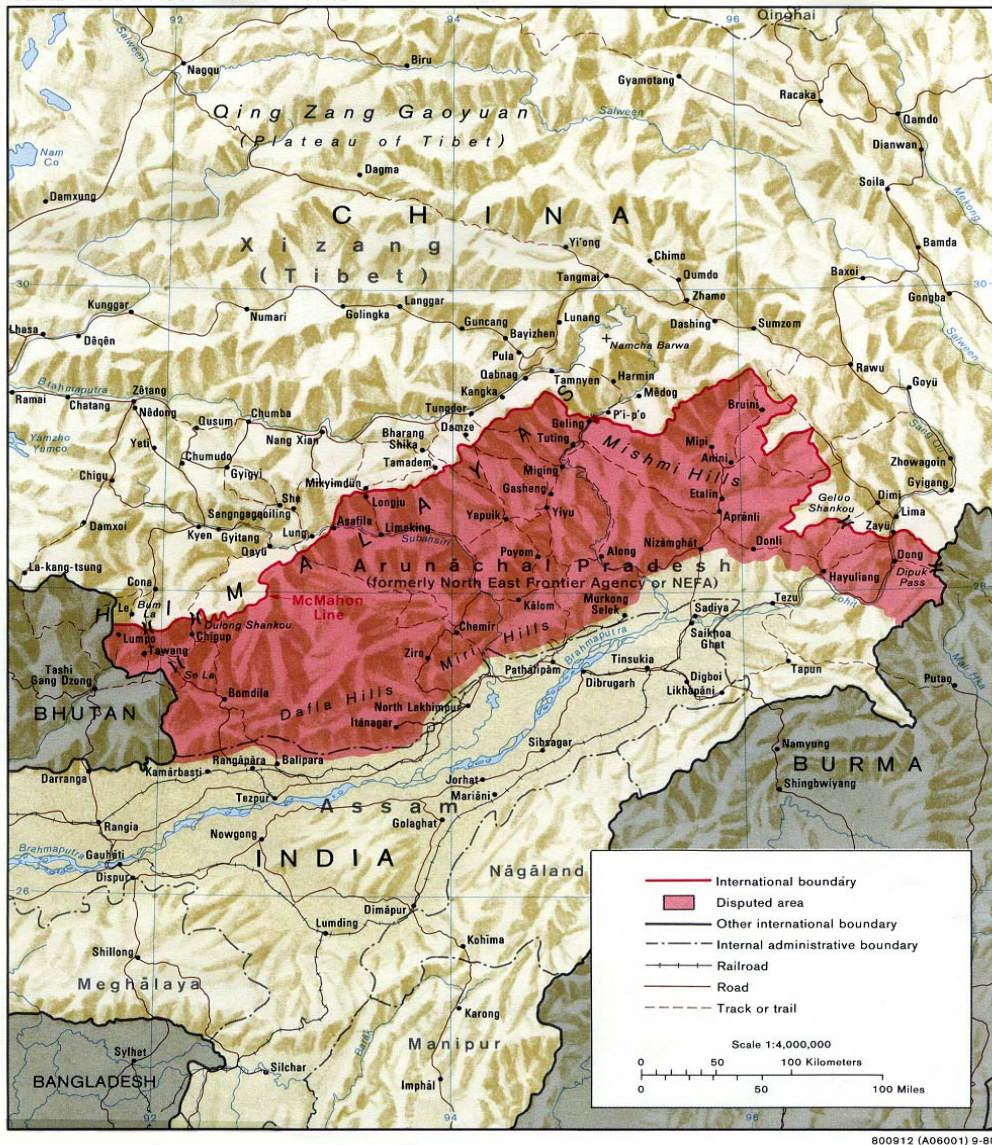
## India, China Disputed Borders



**Map 5.1: Sino-Indian Frontier Dispute**

(Source: <http://www.heritage.org/static/reportimages/4757F8FB54082BDD53A42E16D084A696.jpg>)

**China-India Border: Eastern Sector**



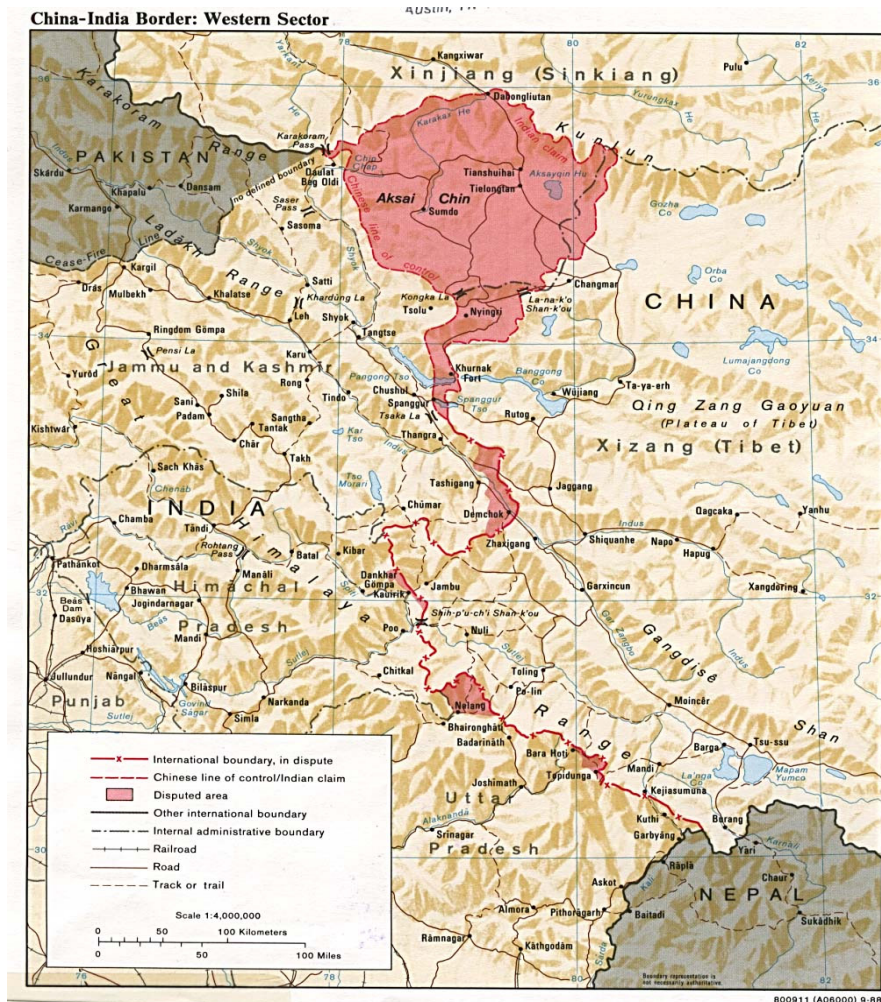
**Map 5.2: The Eastern Sector**

(Source: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/china\\_india\\_e\\_border\\_88.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_india_e_border_88.jpg))

In the ‘western sector’, on the other hand, particularly with regard to the Aksai Chin, India’s claims would eventually settle largely along the most expansive of the British claim lines, the Ardagh-Johnson line. British claims, which had fluctuated over time, had been largely motivated by a desire to keep the region as a buffer zone between India and Russian



expansionism during periods of Chinese weakness.<sup>4</sup> The salience of the territory for post-independence India was low, especially in comparison to the undoubted importance of the Assam Himalaya region.<sup>5</sup> The territory in the west, an uninhabited high-altitude desert extending west from the Tibetan plateau was of little value, in terms of symbolic significance, economic endowments, or strategic importance.<sup>6</sup>



Map 5.3: The Western Sector

(Source: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/china\\_india\\_e\\_border\\_88.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_india_e_border_88.jpg))

<sup>4</sup> Maxwell, *India's China War*, 31-36.

<sup>5</sup> Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 88.

<sup>6</sup> Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 9-12.

India's claims over Aksai Chin would therefore, for the most part, occupy little attention, and a subordinate position to the McMahon Line, in Indian discussions immediately after independence, and only acquire an unexpected significance in the later part of the 1950s after the Indian discovery of a Chinese road traversing the region.

### **Treatment of India's Role in Existing Literature**

Much of the debate both public and scholarly about the Sino-Indian territorial dispute after 1962 centred around assessing the legality of contesting claims, and assigning blame for the descent to war between the two countries. The story in the immediate aftermath of the war was one that pointed to Chinese betrayal of a friendly India in pursuit of its illegal expansionist goals in the region.<sup>7</sup> In accounting for India's approach to the dispute, in particular, such narratives also often attributed to Nehru a naivety and idealism in his handling of China, which made him largely incognisant to the threat posed by the latter. In practically appeasing China with regard to Tibet in 1950 and then again in 1954, and then leaving India undefended for the Chinese assault of 1962, Nehru by this account betrayed this essential idealism, and sacrificed strategic thought at the altar of romanticism. To the extent that Nehru did have misgivings about China, the failure to reorient policy to address

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<sup>7</sup> Prithwis Chandra Chakravarti, *India's China Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), Margaret W. Fisher, Leo E. Rose, and Robert A. Huttenback, *Himalayan Battleground: Sino-Indian Rivalry in Ladakh* (New York: Praeger, 1963). This narrative still finds greatest prominence in Indian histories and public understandings of the origins of the Sino-Indian conflict. Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol. 2* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976).

them also betrayed incompetence in the Indian leadership of the period.<sup>8</sup> Such an impression was corroborated by evidence that prominent officials within the Indian administration such as Home Minister Sardar Patel, Secretary General of the Ministry of External Affairs G.S. Bajpai and Foreign Secretary K.P.S Menon had expressed at various points misgivings about Nehru's approach to China. Nehru himself would add credence to such a view after the 1962 war, confessing that India, in relying on the good faith of other states (read China), had been "living in a world of unreality."<sup>9</sup>

A contrary, revisionist account soon emerged however, which contested claims both of Nehru's idealism and India as victim. These accounts suggest at best that rather than driven by unmitigated idealism, Nehru's foreign policy had some real elements of *realpolitik* and strategic thought, aimed at securing India's security interests within the constraints posed by India's limitations.<sup>10</sup> More critical revisionist works point to the baselessness of the claim that India was the victim of Chinese treachery, arguing to the contrary that in fact it was Nehru's government that precipitated conflict by seeking to unilaterally impose a boundary on China, by demanding Chinese surrender on major issues before India would even

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<sup>8</sup> Chakravarti, *India's China Policy*, 52-74, Ashok Kapur, *India: From Regional to World Power* (London: Routledge, 2006), 41-44, Paul F. Power, "Indian Foreign Policy: The Age of Nehru," *The Review of Politics* 26, no. 2 (1964): 80-81, Shashi Tharoor, *Reasons of State: Political Development and India's Foreign Policy under Indira Gandhi, 1966-1977* (New Delhi: Vikas Pub. House, 1982). Also, Raju G.C. Thomas: "Security Considerations in Nehru's Foreign Policy," in *The Legacy of Nehru: A Centennial Assessment*, eds. Giri Deshingkar, D.R. SarDesai and Anand Mohan (Promilla and Co. Publishers: New Delhi, 1992), 289-296.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol. 3* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 223.

<sup>10</sup> Srinath Raghavan, "Sino-Indian Boundary Dispute, 1948-60: A Reappraisal," *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 36 (2006), Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3882-3892, K. Subrahmanyam, "Nehru and the India-China Conflict of 1962," in *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years*, ed. B. R. Nanda (New Delhi: Radiant, 1990).



consider minor concessions.<sup>11</sup> It was in fact China, as Neville Maxwell has argued, which had been the victim of the unilateral assertion by India of questionable territorial claims, an intransigence which eventually left the former with little option but to use force.<sup>12</sup> Far from Nehru's naïve idealism leading India to walk into a Chinese trap, therefore, it was, according to these accounts, Nehru's mindless arrogance, and refusal to be reasonable and function on the basis of give and take that led to a wholly unnecessary conflict and war between the two countries.<sup>13</sup>

While historically exhaustive and compelling reading, much of this work on the Sino-Indian territorial dispute has offered little by way of *explaining* India's behaviour over this period. It is unclear in essence what the motivations were which underlay India's treatment of territorial dispute with China.<sup>14</sup> While the accounts emphasizing idealism cannot explain the undeniable intractability of the Nehru government's policies, revisionist works do not sufficiently account for *why* Indian policy acquired such trenchant firmness, leaving us with rather an unsatisfactory and even unfair account, which centres on the impression of Nehru as an unmitigated bigot.

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<sup>11</sup> The most prominent early revisionist work on the legal claims of the contestants is found in the work of Alastair Lamb. Lamb, *The China-India Border*, Lamb, *The McMahon Line: A Study in the Relations between India, China, and Tibet, 1904 to 1914*, Alastair Lamb, *The Sino-Indian Border in Ladakh* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973). Also see, "India-China Relations: The Nehru Years" in *The Legacy of Nehru: A Centennial Assessment*, eds. Giri Deshingkar, D.R. SarDesai and Anand Mohan (Promilla and Co. Publishers: New Delhi, 1992), 324-334.

<sup>12</sup> Maxwell, *India's China War*, Neville Maxwell, "Sino-Indian Border Dispute Reconsidered," *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 15 (1999): 905-918.

<sup>13</sup> A. G. Noorani, *India-China Boundary Problem 1846-1947: History and Diplomacy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), A. G. Noorani, "Nehru's China Policy," *Frontline*, 4 August 2000.

<sup>14</sup> There are exceptions of course, the most recent and notable ones being the works of Raghavan and Garver. The former's work, however, is nevertheless primarily a work of history, and therefore provides only a skeletal theoretical argument. Garver similarly identifies several theoretical variables but there is again the absence of a precise theoretical argument. Garver, *Protracted Contest*.

Other scholarly works have sought to bridge this gap, by more explicitly accounting for Indian behaviour in theoretical terms. The attempt has been to explain why India could not arrive at a solution to the territorial dispute short of war, owing either to nationalist dynamics as Hoffmann asserts, or due to fundamental misperceptions on the part of the Indian leadership, as Vertzberger has suggested. Such works have, for the most part, perhaps understandably, focussed on only a limited period of the dispute itself, specifically the most intense period of the crisis beginning in the later 1950s and ending with the war in 1962.<sup>15</sup> What is missing in even these works, then, is a theoretical account explaining Indian behaviour with regard to the territorial disagreements with China which encompasses even the pre-crisis period.

Hence, while nationalism (both of the symbolical/psychological and domestic political varieties) might indeed matter<sup>16</sup>, several puzzles still remain unanswered. Did nationalist concerns and domestic political pressures matter prior to the eruption of the crisis in the late 1950s? If they did not, what explains the reluctance of the Indian leadership even then to raise the territorial issue, let alone resolve it through a compromise formula with Peking? Furthermore, once domestic political pressures did emerge in late 1950s, do they alone account for the Indian leadership's policy decisions, and did they move the government to adopt policies fundamentally opposed to their own actual preferences? Finally, if as Hoffman suggests the historical or symbolic aspects of nationalism were indeed important, why was there a failure on the part of the Indian leadership to treat differently the

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<sup>15</sup> Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, Hoffmann, "Rethinking the Linkage between Tibet and the China-India Border Conflict: A Realist Approach.", Yaacov Vertzberger, *Misperceptions in Foreign Policymaking: The Sino-Indian Conflict, 1959-1962* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984).

<sup>16</sup> Also Nancy Jetly, *India China Relations, 1947-1977: A Study of Parliament's Role in the Making of Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1979).

western sector where by their own acknowledgment till late in the conflict, their legal-historical case was flimsy, and practical interests flimsier? I argue that a nationalism based argument alone is incapable of satisfactorily addressing these issues, and suggest an account in accordance with the theoretical framework that has been offered earlier, with the reputational imperative assuming particular salience in Indian thought and behaviour.

### **India and the Sino-Indian Frontier, 1949-55**

Immediately after independence, Indian maps with regard to the border with China were understandably those that their British predecessors had left them. This meant that, in keeping with the British Indian maps, the McMahon line was shown as the Sino-Indian boundary in the eastern sector, but in the western and middle sectors Indian claims were left undefined. China was at this time in a state of disarray, embroiled in a civil war between Chinese Nationalist and Communist forces, and the frontier with that country consequently occupied little attention from the Indian leadership, embroiled as they themselves were with the aftermath of partition and the brewing disputes with Pakistan. Indications of a Communist victory in 1948 would first draw the attention of Indian officials to a potential frontier issue, but it would be the impending Chinese invasion of Tibet in late 1950<sup>17</sup> which would truly activate thinking in India about the frontier, and the formulation of a policy in addressing the same.<sup>18</sup> From this time on till sometime in 1956-57 India's policy would be

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<sup>17</sup> By January 1950, the new communist regime in China had made clear their intention for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to "liberate" Tibet and "stand guard at the Chinese frontiers." Chakravarti, *India's China Policy*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> Noorani, *India-China Boundary*, 210-218, Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 228-235. The British policy at the time of decolonization was that "the Government of India stand by the McMahon Line and will not tolerate incursion into India...They would however at all times be

shaped by three basic constants: a focus on the eastern sector or the McMahon Line frontier, a policy of avoidance of any discussion of territorial issues with China, and an attitude of firmness with regard to Indian claims.

With communist forces looking likely to emerge victorious in China, Nehru would increasingly begin alluding to the necessity of paying attention to the frontier. It was essential now, he would state in a note to one of his ministers, to develop communications infrastructure in the region, particularly road networks, cautioning that it would be “risky business” to not act on this in the near term.<sup>19</sup> While he would underplay the possibility of any immediate Chinese military threat on the Tibetan frontier,<sup>20</sup> Nehru would acknowledge the fact that the movement of Chinese communist troops right up to the Indian frontier was troubling for not only India but also for the crucial Himalayan states of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim.<sup>21</sup> With the Chinese invasion of Tibet, others in the Indian administration such as Patel would view the threat even more seriously, branding Chinese actions in Tibet as “little short of perfidy,” convinced that a strong and united China would function in imperialist ways, and in all likelihood disown the McMahon Line.<sup>22</sup> Bajpai similarly would fear that

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prepared to discuss in a friendly way with China and Tibet any rectification of the frontier that might be urged on reasonable grounds by any of the parties to the abortive Simla Conference of 1914.” Ibid., 230-232.

<sup>19</sup> Nehru to John Matthai (10 September 1949), *Smyth-S.S.* Vol. 13, 260.

<sup>20</sup> Note to Secretary-General “Indian Mission in Lhasa” (9 July 1949), *ibid.* Vol. 10, 410. Nehru was here responding to notes by K.P.S. Menon and Bajpai, the former suggesting continued military and moral support for any Tibetan resistance, and the latter precautionary measures on the frontier.

<sup>21</sup> Nehru to C.P.N. Singh (10 September 1949), *ibid.* Vol. 13, 258; Nehru to Krishna Menon (18 August 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15 – I, 429. In relation to Nepal, Nehru would note soon after the invasion of Tibet that Nepal formed a crucial barrier to China, and therefore “much as we appreciate the independence of Nepal, we cannot risk our own security from anything going wrong in Nepal which permits either that barrier to be crossed or otherwise weakens our frontier.” *India’s Policies* (6 December 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15 – II, 433.

<sup>22</sup> Patel to Nehru (7 November 1950), in *Sardar Patel’s Correspondence, 1945-50: Volume X.*

China might now seek to heal the scars of humiliations from the past “on the basis of frontier rectifications that may not be to our liking.”<sup>23</sup> Nehru, while more sanguine than Patel and Bajpai about at least the short term prospects of conflict, would nevertheless in a note addressing such fears concede that the status of the territorial boundary between the two countries had become an issue of concern, and that there was now a possibility of Chinese troops entering and taking possession of disputed territory.<sup>24</sup>

The immediate policy implication of the Chinese invasion of Tibet beginning on 7 October 1950 would be a move by the government to clarify India’s territorial claims. Previous Chinese governments had challenged the frontier and there was reason to think that communist China would not follow suit.<sup>25</sup> Nehru would therefore immediately assert to his ambassador in China that “all frontiers with Tibet, that is, the McMahon Line, must stand as they are. There is no room for controversy over that issue.”<sup>26</sup> In a discussion in parliament over the issue Nehru would further state the while the frontier in the west from Ladakh to Nepal owed its definition to usage and custom, in the eastern sector the McMahon line was

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<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 236. As the Chinese invasion of Tibet approached, Bajpai would in fact communicate to V. Pandit that he had to “work hard to control his [Nehru’s] enthusiasm” about China, under the influence of Panikkar, when in his own “rather conservative judgement, caution seems to be necessary.” Bajpai to V. Pandit (10 September 1950), *VL Pandit Papers Ist Instalment*, Subject file 56. Bajpai’s own take on China was that in India “China see the only potential rival to political and economic equality in Asia and, therefore, jealousy rather than love is likely to be the real sentiment of China towards us. While we must cultivate her friendship, we must not be led away by false sentiments or illusions.” GSB to VP (21 August 1950), *VL Pandit Papers Ist Instalment*, Subject file 56.

<sup>24</sup> “Policy Regarding Tibet and China” (18 November 1950), *Swjn-Ss*. Vol. 15-II, 344.

<sup>25</sup> “Recent Developments in East and Southeast Asia” (8 November 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15-II, 409. After all, not only had the nationalist ambassador in India as one of his last acts reminded the Indian government of the fact that the Chinese did not recognize the McMahon Line, but even the Tibetans had been claiming lands which the McMahon Line placed under Indian control. Maxwell, *India’s China War*, 69, Hugh E. Richardson, *Tibet and Its History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 114.

<sup>26</sup> Nehru to Panikkar (25 October 1950), *Swjn-Ss*. Vol. 15-I, 439-442.

India's boundary "map or no map," a breach of which would not be tolerated.<sup>27</sup> Legally, India's stance was "in fact on strong ground," making any reconsideration of the McMahon Line unnecessary.<sup>28</sup>

It would be also be decided in November 1950 to form a North and North-Eastern Border Defence Committee under Brigadier Himmatsinghji, composed of delegates from several government ministries, the intelligence services, and the armed forces to assess the security situation in the frontier regions. The committee's recommendations would lead to efforts at strengthening Indian administrative control, and development of the communications infrastructure in NEFA, as well as a reorganization of the intelligence apparatus of the Indian government under the Intelligence Bureau (IB). Nehru would particularly emphasize, repeatedly, the need to strengthen communication networks and check posts in the region, adding to intelligence capabilities, and developing the border regions economically so as to integrate them to the rest of India, while being cautious not to disaffect the population in the area.<sup>29</sup> Presumably, it was also decided at this point that India ought to start defining and clarifying her border claims, to be reflected in maps issued by the Indian government.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, as part of asserting her claims over the region, India would in February 1951, take over the Tawang tract in the NEFA region, a piece of territory

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<sup>27</sup> "The Indo-Tibetan Boundary" (20 November 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15-II, 348.

<sup>28</sup> "Recent Developments in East and Southeast Asia" (8 November 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15-II, 409.

<sup>29</sup> "North-Eastern Frontier Situation" (5 March 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 21, 555-558; Nehru to B. Medhi (20 July 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 23, 228; Nehru to Durgabai Deshmukh (16 September 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 23, 234; "Friendly Policy towards China," *ibid.* Vol. 24, 597.

<sup>30</sup> Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 24-31.

which Nehru acknowledged was located on the Indian side of the McMahon line but had always been under Tibetan control till that point.<sup>31</sup>

A decision now also had to be made on how India would approach the looming frontier dispute at the diplomatic level with Peking. In keeping with the view of the likes of Bajpai and K.P.S Menon who preferred the extension of the scope of discussions over Tibet to cover the question of the border, and demanding recognition of the frontier by China in return for concessions in Tibet,<sup>32</sup> Nehru would initially instruct his ambassador in Peking to raise the issue of the frontier with Chinese premier Chou En-lai.<sup>33</sup> The Indian government's diplomatic approach to the issue however would quickly settle into one predicated on delay or avoidance, based on the assumption that the frontier was settled by the McMahon Line, which meant India would not initiate or encourage any discussions with regard to the frontier with China. A preference for such a policy had been anticipated by Nehru in a 1950 note to Burmese leader U Nu stating that India intended to ignore Chinese maps, clarify her own claims with regard to the McMahon Line, and avoid raising the issue which would attract attention to "something which is rather complicated," exacerbating already existing fears and suspicions on both sides.<sup>34</sup>

This stance would be facilitated by what appeared to be Chinese disinterest on the issue, with Chou's claims that since their maps were old they were likely inaccurate,<sup>35</sup> and

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<sup>31</sup> Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 235. Maxwell points out that even the British in their forward policies reached a similar conclusion with regard to Tawang, that it was undisputedly Tibetan. Maxwell, *India's China War*, 42, 73.

<sup>32</sup> Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 32-33.

<sup>33</sup> Cable from Nehru to K.M. Panikkar (12 April 1952), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 18, 471; Cable from Nehru to K.M. Panikkar (24 May 1952), *ibid.* Vol. 18, 473.

<sup>34</sup> Nehru to Thakin Nu (8 February 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15-II, 549.

<sup>35</sup> "Relations with China and Tibet" (3 November 1951), *ibid.* Vol. 17, 507.

that barring the issue of the “stabilization of the Tibetan frontier” there were no territorial issues between the two countries.<sup>36</sup> While this lack of interest on even talking about the frontier issue would surprise Nehru, and even disconcert him, he would nevertheless recognize that there was some “advantage in our not ourselves raising this issue,” especially if Panikkar had made India’s interests with regard to the frontier clear to the Chinese.<sup>37</sup> With Panikkar’s confirmation of the same, Nehru would decide that India would not raise the issue of the frontier for the present.<sup>38</sup> That Nehru was worried about the potential drawbacks of such an approach is apparent in a note a month later where he would confess to feeling that India’s “attempt at being clever might overreach itself,” and it was therefore better to be open and frank.<sup>39</sup> Four days later, however, he would again reconsider and accept Panikkar’s suggestion that no mention be made of the frontiers in discussions with China.<sup>40</sup> In parliament, Nehru would be clear that although Chinese maps showed large claims, at no point had China raised the issue of borders, but if the latter were to do so, there was “nothing to discuss about the frontier. The frontier is there: the McMahon Line is there.”<sup>41</sup>

In keeping with this posture, as the two countries began talks on 31 December 1953 over renegotiating India’s interests in Tibet, leading to an agreement in mid-1954, Nehru would make it known to his officials before talks that India had no intention of raising the frontier question, “because we take it for granted.” If the Chinese representatives were to

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<sup>36</sup> Note from Panikkar of 28 September 1951, Quoted in Gopal, *Nehru* 2, 177.

<sup>37</sup> Cable from Nehru to K.M. Panikkar (16 June 1952), *Swjn-Ss*. Vol. 18, 474-475.

<sup>38</sup> Cable from Nehru to K.M. Panikkar (18 June 1952), *ibid.* Vol. 18, 475.

<sup>39</sup> “On the Truce Talks” (25 July 1952), *ibid.* Vol. 19-I, 585.

<sup>40</sup> “Border Issue with China” (29 July 1952), *ibid.* Vol. 19-I, 651.

<sup>41</sup> “A Realistic Approach to Problems” (24 December 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 24, 577.



raise the issue, members of the Indian delegation were instructed to express their surprise, and let it be known that they had no authority to discuss an already settled matter. Indeed, if China sought to reopen the issue of the frontier, Nehru agreed with Panikkar that the Indian delegation could walk out and break off on-going negotiations over Tibet.<sup>42</sup> At the same time Nehru was in no mood to “leave things to chance,” in aid of which he emphasized strengthening ties, and coordination of defence and foreign policies with Bhutan and Nepal, as well improving Indian presence in the frontier areas which he complained had already been delayed inordinately.<sup>43</sup>

With the conclusion of the agreement on Tibet, while Nehru would publicly state that India had won herself “a friendly frontier and an implicit acceptance” of the same,<sup>44</sup> Indian policy betrayed more circumspection. In an important memorandum dated 1 July 1954, Nehru would instruct his officials that all existing maps of the frontier region needed to be carefully examined and withdrawn if necessary. In their place, new maps were to be printed which would clearly show the North and Northeastern frontier lines in accordance with Indian claims, and state explicitly that there was no un-demarcated territory. Further, these maps and future Indian pronouncements were to give up referring to the frontier as the McMahon Line, given its unfortunate British imperialist connotations. Finally, the frontier as indicated on these maps would be firm and not open to discussion with China, apart from maybe minor alterations. In keeping with this policy, it was necessary for India to establish military check posts all along her frontier, and particularly so in potentially disputed

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<sup>42</sup> “The Peking Conference” (3 December 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 24, 598-599; Note from Nehru to B.K. Gokhale (21 December 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 24, 589.

<sup>43</sup> “Coordination between India and Bhutan” (30 January 1954), *ibid.* Vol. 24, 593. “Future Negotiations with China” (12 May 1954), *ibid.* Vol. 25, 470.

<sup>44</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 2*, 181.

areas. In general, the issue of the frontier was not even to be raised by India. However, if Chinese maps were to continue showing large parts of India as belonging to China, India would not take this issue up immediately, but would also not “put up with this for long.”<sup>45</sup>

Indian maps now showed the country’s frontier with China in the east running along the McMahon Line, while in the west Aksai China was shown as part of India.<sup>46</sup> However in the western sector, Raghavan has recently suggested, India’s claims did not adhere completely to the forward most Ardagh-Johnson line, but rather showed a compromise line between the Ardagh-Johnson and the Macartney-MacDonald line, reflecting doubt in the Indian establishment about both the utility of, and India’s legal claims to, the region.<sup>47</sup> That India had viewed the Aksai Chin as less important, is also corroborated by the almost exclusive emphasis by Nehru on the obviously more salient McMahon Line both publicly and in communications internally, and with Chou. Furthermore, in contrast to the eastern sector where India had sought to rapidly extend the communications infrastructure, and administrative and military presence, there had been little attention paid to the western sector. Given India’s poor access to the region, the lack of strategic salience of the territory, as well as the uncertainty with regard to its general usefulness, India had it appears desisted

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<sup>45</sup> “Tibet and the Frontier with China” (1 July 1954), *Smyth-Ss.* Vol. 26, 482-483. Gopal, *Nehru* 3, 33. In October 1954, in talks with Chou, Nehru would raise the issue of Burmese anxieties about Chinese claims, only indirectly hinting at India’s own fears by asking Chou: “Supposing we publish a map showing Tibet as a part of India, how would China feel about it?” “Foreign Policies of America and China” (20 October 1954), *Smyth-Ss.* Vol. 27, 14-20.

<sup>46</sup> Apparently by 1953 India had decided to firm up claims in the western sector, which till now had been undefined in Indian maps. These claims showed Aksai Chin as part of India. Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 35, Noorani, *India-China Boundary*, 224-225.

<sup>47</sup> Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 239.

from disrupting relations with China over Aksai Chin despite having known since 1951 that the Chinese were somewhat active in the region.<sup>48</sup>

### **Explaining Delay and Avoidance, 1949-1955**

The failure to raise the issue of the frontiers at this early stage, along with the exchange prompted by Patel's note during the Chinese invasion of Tibet, has been read by many as a demonstration of Nehru's obliviousness to a Chinese threat. Yet, a deeper perusal of the record suggests that the Indian stance was less a result of any idealism on Nehru's part, but rather was premised on a posture of firmness, and conceived of as an effort to 'buy time.'<sup>49</sup> With the long term in his ken, and having concluded that China posed little threat in the near term, Nehru logically developed a preference for avoiding overt hostility vis-à-vis China in the near term, with a view of building up bargaining strength for the future.

Central to the approach was the conviction from early on that largely due to the fact that communist China would be faced with a mammoth and costly task of domestic reconstruction, it was unlikely to function in expansionist ways in the short term, allowing India (and other countries) to "await developments," rather than adopt a hostile stance immediately.<sup>50</sup> Geographical constraints presented by the mighty Himalayas only reinforced the sense that regardless of developments in Tibet, China would be "foolish" to pose any

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<sup>48</sup> Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 35. In the early years, according to Noorani, "frontier consciousness centred exclusively on the McMahon Line." Noorani, *India-China Boundary*, 220-221.

<sup>49</sup> Subrahmanyam, "Nehru and the India-China Conflict of 1962," 112.

<sup>50</sup> "The Asian Situation" (14 December 1948), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 7, 329; Cable from Nehru to V. Pandit (19 July 1949), *ibid.* Vol. 10, 389; "Letters to Premiers of Provinces" (1 April, 1949), *ibid.* Vol. 10, 307. The Chinese, Nehru would note, were "realists." "India and Indonesia" (28 June 1949), *ibid.* Vol. 10, 371.

immediate large-scale threat on the Indian frontier.<sup>51</sup> This being the case, it made little sense for Nehru to invite Peking's hostility early on in the relationship, and with there being little in any case that India could do to resist the Chinese in Tibet,<sup>52</sup> it was felt that a non-hostile approach was best, both to preserve India's interests in Tibet, and to ensure maximal autonomy for the region.<sup>53</sup> As the 1950s progressed, such an assessment persisted in Delhi,<sup>54</sup> leading Nehru to conclude that "the present is not a suitable time to raise this question."<sup>55</sup> Mao's confession that any war would destroy their newly begun Five Year Plan, and postpone the industrialization of China, further corroborated Nehru's belief that China would not be so foolish as to act adventurously for some time.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to the unlikelihood of any immediate military threat from China,<sup>57</sup> India's own weaknesses and constraints made adopting a confrontational policy even more unwise.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Note to Secretary General "The Indian Mission in Lhasa" (9 July 1949), *ibid.* Vol. 10, 410.

<sup>52</sup> "To John Matthai" (10 September 1949), *ibid.* Vol. 13, 260.

<sup>53</sup> "Policy Regarding Tibet and China" (18 November 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15-II. As Nehru would put it, "our interest...is Tibet, and if we cannot serve that interest, we fail."

<sup>54</sup> "The Indo-Tibetan Frontier Issue" (24 December 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 24, 581-83. In a discussion with John Foster Dulles, Nehru would point out that China was too embroiled in domestic issues to indulge in "rash adventures." She could have easily invaded Burma by now, and she even had the excuse of KMT troops, but had not done so. "Talks with John Foster Dulles" (20-22 May 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 22, 511.

<sup>55</sup> "North-Eastern Frontier Situation" (5 March 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 21, 555-558.

<sup>56</sup> "War and Peace" (23 October 1954), *ibid.* Vol. 27, 40.

<sup>57</sup> This assessment, it is to be noted, was also shared by Bajpai. According to him, "though a large Chinese army or a Tibetan army under Chinese inspiration and leadership may not attempt an invasion of India, the possibility of small forces dribbling in through the numerous passes...cannot be and had not been ruled out." "The Threat from Tibet" (5 October 1951), *ibid.* Vol. 16-II, 560.

<sup>58</sup> In responding to Patel and others Nehru would emphasize this very issue: "When you talk of defence, remember your resources; remember your capacity; and remember that defence consists of the economic position of a country, of the industrial potential of the country, plus the defence forces...you have to work within those limitations." "Preventing the Drift to Disaster" (7 December 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15-II, 438.

Provoking open conflict at this point, therefore, while ineffective, was likely to only encourage the very Chinese behaviour that India sought to avoid.<sup>59</sup> While Nehru therefore had few illusions about the potential for Chinese expansionism, he was certain friendly relations could last for a few decades owing primarily to the Chinese need to first address domestic instabilities. Furthermore, for Nehru India herself could “use the 25 years of peace just as well as the Chinese can, and if we just postpone our conflict, which I think may eventually occur, it would give us that much time to build up our own country.”<sup>60</sup> China was, particularly in military terms, already a great power but in 10-15 years it was destined to be even stronger. India needed a similar amount of time of peace in order to grow strong enough economically and militarily to match China.<sup>61</sup> In its present position of weakness, therefore, the Indian government was determined to avoid conflict with China unless her immediate interests in the frontier or the Himalayan states were threatened.<sup>62</sup>

Given these considerations, it is not surprising that the Nehru would find merit in Panikkar’s suggestion to seek to delay, or avoid discussion of the frontier with China. Delay allowed India to wait things out rather than trigger immediate conflict, and in the meantime strengthen her political and administrative position in the frontier regions in accordance with

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<sup>59</sup> Cable from Nehru to B.N. Rau (25 September 1949), *ibid.* Vol. 13, 269; “Record of Conversation with US delegation to the UN” (19 October 1949), *ibid.* Vol. 13, 308-309; On a larger scale, advocating the Chinese cause internationally was intended to mitigate any Chinese expansionist tendencies by drawing her out of isolation. “Closer Indo-US Relations” (15 September 1951), *ibid.* Vol. 16-II, 628.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in, Chester Bowles Oral Transcript – recorded by BR Nanda – NMML Oral History Project (9 March 1971), 2-3. Also see, “Talks with the American Ambassador” (5 May 1955), *Sujin-Ss.* Vol. 28, 283; “Conversation with Amir Faisal” (5 May 1955), *ibid.* Vol. 28, 225.

<sup>61</sup> “India and the World Situation” (4 May 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 33, 8.

<sup>62</sup> Subrahmanyam, “Nehru and the India-China Conflict of 1962,” 113. Moreover, for Nehru, Pakistan remained the primary threat in the short term. Nehru to Mohan Sinha Mehta (20 September 1952), *Sujin-Ss.* Vol. 19-I, 603.

the Himmatsinghji Commission's recommendations.<sup>63</sup> Panikkar himself would explicate this rationale in a note to Bajpai, contending that if India were to raise the issue at the present, China would have the choice of either accepting the McMahon Line or offering to re-negotiate the frontiers. Since the former was unlikely, it was more advantageous for India to avoid the issue, and function as if there was nothing to be discussed.<sup>64</sup> As Foreign Secretary Dutt would later recapitulate, India had assumed that that the boundary was well-known, and that there was no reason for India to acknowledge or raise a dispute. "We were not ignorant of past disputes," Dutt would state "but on balance we thought that the matter should rest with the Chinese to raise."<sup>65</sup> In the meantime, India intended to maintain normal relations with China, and in the process "gain time for building our own strength."<sup>66</sup> The 1954 agreement over Tibet therefore served just such a purpose, premised as it was on the principle that India should take advantage of any proposal that afforded time to build up, unless it was clearly undesirable.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 237. As Nehru would explain this stance in 1959: "We felt we should hold by our position and that the lapse of time and events would confirm it and by the time, perhaps, when the challenge to it came we could be in a much stronger position to face it." Speech to the Rajya Sabha (8 December 1959), *Prime Minister on Sino-Indian Relations: In Parliament*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of External Affairs, Government of India, 1962).

<sup>64</sup> This was in contrast to Bajpai, for whom it was clear that the Chinese having never accepted the boundary, would only raise the issue when it served their convenience, and therefore India ought to simply inform China that she regarded the McMahon Line as the border. Maxwell, *India's China War*, 77-78.

<sup>65</sup> "Record of Talk between President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Nehru" (10 December 1959), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 4. Note from Subimal Dutt to Nehru (24/11/59), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 39, 34.

<sup>66</sup> RK Nehru Oral Transcript – recorded by BR Nanda – NMML Oral History Project, 17-18. The territorial issue could be taken up once a Chinese threat fructified, and some concessions might be have to be made as part of a larger settlement, but as Pant would articulate "there is no urgency and it can well wait for easier days." Quoted in Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 244.

<sup>67</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 2*, 227.

## Commitment Problems, Reputation and Indian Firmness: 1949-1955

This avoidance strategy was characterized however, as noted earlier, by not just a wish to delay the territorial issue to a more opportune time, but also by a unilateral streak which dismissed even acknowledgement that a dispute did exist, let alone willingness to compromise. This firmness owed itself to the commitment problem that China presented to India from early on, and Indian fears, evident throughout the course of this period, about the long term costs of concessions on the frontier. Importantly, while the emphasis on the McMahon Line as frontier had much to do with the strategic value of NEFA, the documentary record points to a more explicit reputational fear in the Indian leadership, even at this stage, of betraying weakness through concessions, encouraging Chinese expansionism in the future.

Central to the problem for India of Peking being unable to credibly commit to any territorial settlement was the belief that China, in addition to possessing undisputed and expanding economic and military strength, was also historically prone to expansionism – essentially a negative reputation that the Indian leadership had already attributed to the Chinese. As early as in January 1950, Nehru would state that with China likely to develop rapidly, despite India's preference for friendship “outwardly, there are inner conflicts and frictions and suspicion of each other.”<sup>68</sup> The Chinese invasion of Tibet would only exacerbate these suspicions.<sup>69</sup> In communicating with his ambassador in China, Nehru would

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<sup>68</sup> India would therefore, Nehru would write to Thakin Nu, not give in to any demands from China which was considered “improper,” especially if they involved India's interests in the frontier or the Himalayan states. Nehru to Thakin Nu (7 January 1950), *Smyth-Ss*. Vol. 14-I, 503-506.

<sup>69</sup> Nehru would confess that whether or not China had deliberately deceived India, it was probably true that “we may have deceived ourselves.” Nehru to C. Rajagopalachari (1 November 1950), *ibid*. Vol. 15-II, 336.

point to the great potential for rivalry between India and China in Asia, and note that whether the bilateral relationship could avoid conflict had become an open and uncertain question.<sup>70</sup>

Nehru would now acknowledge that the emergence of a great power on India's frontier was a troubling development,<sup>71</sup> and that India's enthusiasm with regard to China would naturally wane, to be replaced by caution.<sup>72</sup> He would also make it clear that India's interests with regard to her frontier overshadowed any interests which she held inside Tibet. Therefore, while the Indian government would be friendly with regard to Tibet, it would be equally firm and unyielding when it came to "vital interests," that is the frontier, and the Himalayan states.<sup>73</sup> Importantly, the logic behind this approach would also now be made clear. Developments in Tibet had made Nehru "apprehensive of the long frontier" which had previously been ignored by his government, especially since Chinese aggression in the future could not be ruled out, given that great powers tended naturally to expand.<sup>74</sup> It was clear that China was in its strength and activity already a great power, and was only likely to grow stronger with time, and as India herself grew there was real possibility for conflict.<sup>75</sup> China's growth moreover appeared to be swifter, leading Nehru to conclude that India had

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<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, while he had sought to be sympathetic to China, Nehru would concede that "latterly I have been unable to appreciate it fully." Nehru to Panikkar (25 October 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15-I, 439-442.

<sup>71</sup> Nehru to B.C. Roy (15 November 1950), *ibid.* Vol. 15-II, 341.

<sup>72</sup> Nehru to V. Pandit (1 November 1950), *Vijayalakshmi Pandit Papers Ist Instalment*, Subject File 60.

<sup>73</sup> "Cable to Indian Mission – Lhasa" (6 September 1952), *Snjn-Ss.* Vol. 19-I, 652.

<sup>74</sup> PMs Secretariat (15 September 1951), *VL Pandit Papers Ist Instalment*, Subject file 56.

<sup>75</sup> "Changing Situation in Afro-Asian Countries" (3 January 1953), *Snjn-Ss.* Vol. 21, 469-471.



to be “very, very wide awake,” and be careful not to fall behind.<sup>76</sup> With this in mind, India’s policies on the frontier issue had to be shaped not only by the present but aimed at the future.<sup>77</sup> A strong China, historically, had demonstrated expansionist tendencies, not necessarily in territorial terms, but certainly in terms of seeking decisive influence beyond her borders.<sup>78</sup> Historically, it had been an aggressive country, and now that it had acquired an aggressive political philosophy, India was concerned. Since “China did not believe in treating other countries on equal terms,” it was likely that as soon as it had stabilized it would seek to expand, both territorially and in terms of influence, and India was likely to be a prime target as the only potential obstacle to China in Asia.<sup>79</sup>

Consequently, India’s attitude towards China, Nehru would inform N. Raghavan, Panikkar’s successor as ambassador to Peking, had to always be a combination of friendliness and firmness, and devoid of any element of apology. This was crucial, because the demonstration of any weakness would be taken advantage of immediately.<sup>80</sup> The Chinese government must be made to appreciate that India would hold firmly to her opinions and interests, and that her policy of friendship was “subject always to not giving in on any matter

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<sup>76</sup> Gopal, *Nehru* 2, 230.

<sup>77</sup> “A World Overburdened with Fear, Anger and Hatred” (17 March 1953), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 21, 484.

<sup>78</sup> “Dynamics of India’s International Relations” (17 June 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 22, 519.

<sup>79</sup> B. N. Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: 1948-1964* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1972), 78-80. Also B.R. Nanda, “Introduction,” in *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years*, ed. B. R. Nanda (New Delhi: Radiant, 1990), 16-17. Nehru would tell a cultural delegation to China: “Never forget that the basic challenge in South-East Asia is between India and China. That challenge runs along the spine of Asia. Therefore, in your talks with the Chinese keep it in mind. Never let the Chinese patronize you.” Quoted in Subrahmanyam, “Nehru and the India-China Conflict of 1962,” 107.

<sup>80</sup> Nehru to N. Raghavan (10 December 1952), *Sujn-Ss*. Vol. 20, 488.

that we consider important or vital to our interest.”<sup>81</sup> Chinese expansionism, Nehru would contend, would only be encouraged if India failed to deal with China firmly. With regard to the frontier this meant that India had to “maintain an attitude of firmness. Indeed there is nothing to discuss there.”<sup>82</sup> With tensions mounting between China and India over the impasse in Korea, and death of Stalin in early 1953 exacerbating Indian uncertainty about Chinese intentions, Nehru would scuttle a Burmese suggestion for a pact of non-aggression between India, China, and Burma. While open to the idea in principle, Nehru would warn U Nu that any such offer might appear to the Chinese as being made “because of our weakness and therefore we want favour from them. They do not respect those who show weakness. We have to be both friendly and firm.”<sup>83</sup>

The satisfactory conclusion of the 1954 agreement over Tibet, and the declaration of the Panchsheel<sup>84</sup> principles, would do little to dampen such concerns, despite public displays of great bonhomie. Nehru would privately temper the mood by opining that “in the final analysis, no country has any deep faith in the policies of another country, more especially in regard to a country which tends to expand,” and so the best India could do was to strengthen her own position, while seeking to curb “to some extent undesirable urges in the

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<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Gopal, *Nehru* 2, 148. This was an impression shared by other top officials in New Delhi, with Bajpai stating that Chinese communists “reacted well to firmness but would exploit any sign of weakness.” Quoted in Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 233.

<sup>82</sup> Nehru to N. Raghavan (10 December 1952), *Smyrn-Ss*. Vol. 20, 488.

<sup>83</sup> Nehru to Thakin Nu (6 March 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 21, 534-535. Ironically, Nehru would attribute the intractability of the Cold War participants, including China, to this very same this fear of the consequences of “appeasement.” “Foreign Policies of America and China” (20 October 1954), *ibid.* Vol. 27, 14.

<sup>84</sup> Five principles of peaceful co-existence agreed to by India and China at the end of their talks over Tibet in 1954. These were: Mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; Mutual non-aggression; Mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; Equality and mutual benefit; and Peaceful co-existence.

other country.”<sup>85</sup> Moreover, because a “communist government especially functions often in a peculiar way,” it was wise to not rely wholeheartedly on any assurances the Chinese government might make.<sup>86</sup> An agreement over Tibet could therefore not be taken to be a “permanent guarantee” of Peking’s friendship. Chinese expansionism owed itself not only to Communism, but had been “evident during various periods of Asian history for a thousand years or so,” and Asia was now facing a new such era.<sup>87</sup>

### **Opening the Territorial Breach, 1956-1962**

Progressively, the Indian policy of delay and avoidance became unsustainable, as increasing Chinese activity along the frontier, and the continued publication of Chinese maps which laid claim to vast tracts of territory claimed by India, generated in New Delhi a “sense of disquiet.”<sup>88</sup> Most revealingly, Nehru would confess to Krishna Menon<sup>89</sup> that Chou’s earlier explanations for Chinese maps (that they were old and erroneous) could not be assumed to mean Chinese acceptance of Indian claims, since despite Indian assumptions that there was no frontier dispute, Peking had in fact “never admitted this clearly, though they did

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<sup>85</sup> Nehru to KK Chettur (9 May 1954), *Smyjn-Ss.* Vol. 25, 479. As R.K. Nehru suggests the relinquishing of certain rights in Tibet was for the Indian leadership “a concession only to realism.” Quoted in Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 241.

<sup>86</sup> Nehru to U Nu (29 May 1954), *Smyjn-Ss.* Vol. 25, 480.

<sup>87</sup> “Tibet and China” (18 June 1954), *ibid.* Vol. 26, 477-478. Interestingly, the Americans seemed to have formed an impression during this period, as Dulles would convey in a note to the President that a friendly approach to India was in order since Nehru had become increasingly more disconcerted about China’s growing strength and its policies. John Foster Dulles – Memorandum to the President (30 November 1954), *TN Kaul Papers: Instalments I-III*, Subject File 13, 1.

<sup>88</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 39.

<sup>89</sup> Nehru’s close confidante, India’s ambassador to the UN, and soon to be Defense Minister.

not deny it either.”<sup>90</sup> Intelligence reports from Tibetan sources that the Chinese were actively exploring their claims with regard to Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, with the intention of eventually absorbing the ‘Indo-Mongloids’ in the border regions by encouraging Tibetan irredentism, likely only exacerbated such concerns in New Delhi,<sup>91</sup> as did the entry of Chinese soldiers into Burmese territory in August 1956.<sup>92</sup>

At this stage Nehru decided to send a friendly but firm communication to China,<sup>93</sup> while on the ground Indian forces in the Shipki La pass area would be instructed that they must on no account withdraw from their positions under Chinese pressure, even at the cost of conflict.<sup>94</sup> Nehru would also decide to approach China informally at this point, as bringing up the issue in parliament was expected to engender rigidity and “come in the way of our taking this matter up more formally later with the Chinese government.”<sup>95</sup> In talks with Chou on 31 December 1956 and 1 January 1957, therefore, Nehru would finally explicitly address the issue of the McMahon Line, to which Chou would respond by stating that even though the line had never been recognised by China, “it is an accomplished fact, we should accept

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<sup>90</sup> Nehru to Krishna Menon (6 May 1956), *Swjn-Ss*. Vol. 33, 475-477.

<sup>91</sup> Apa Pant to Kaul (1 May 1956), *Apa Pant Papers*, Subject File 3. Infrastructural developments by China in that frontier region of Tibet, including the building of roads, were assumed facilitate these Chinese efforts at an opportune moment in the future. “Countering Chinese Moves on the Frontier” (12 May 1956), *Swjn-Ss*. Vol. 33, 477-478.

<sup>92</sup> The ready willingness of China to resort to the use of force was particularly disconcerting to Nehru. “Chinese Incursions into Myanmar” (26 August 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 34, 385-386; “China-Myanmar Border Dispute” (1 September 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 35, 506. In the latter note, Nehru would suggest that despite Burmese suggestions that India not get involved at present, an aide memoire should be sent nonetheless.

<sup>93</sup> Cable from Nehru to R.K. Nehru (16 September 1956), *Swjn-Ss*. Vol. 35, 513.

<sup>94</sup> “Shipki La Pass Incident” (21 September 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 35, 515.

<sup>95</sup> “India-China Boundary Question” (7 September 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 35, 514.

it,” pending Tibetan approval.<sup>96</sup> Chou would also, Nehru claimed, agree with the latter’s contention that barring two or three minor issues, which could be settled soon, the frontier between the two countries was known and undisputed.<sup>97</sup>

The relief that Nehru now felt with regard to boundaries being settled would only be fleeting, however. A signal event, which would precipitate conflict, would be the announcement in China, in late 1957, of the construction of a road in Aksai Chin in the western sector which indicated that the Chinese had established permanent presence deep in the area.<sup>98</sup> Following confirmation in the summer of 1958 by military patrols that the Chinese road did in fact pass through territory claimed by them, the Indian leadership would begin a series of communications with China over the frontier issue, beginning with an informal protest.<sup>99</sup> In a note of 14 December 1958, Nehru would formally elucidate Indian claims, asserting that there was “no question of these large parts of India being anything but India.”<sup>100</sup> In response Chou would now let it be known to a disconcerted Indian leadership

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<sup>96</sup> “Talks with Chou En-lai” (31 December 1956 and 1 January 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 36, 598-600; In a note to U Nu, Nehru would clarify that Chou had indeed confirmed that China accepted the McMahon Line though he did not agree with the justness of the Indian claim, or with the name attached to the line. In order to satisfy himself of what Chou had said, Nehru had asked Chou the question again and Chou had repeated the Chinese position explicitly again. Nehru to U Nu (22 April 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 36, 507-508.

<sup>97</sup> Nehru to U Nu (22 April 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 36, 507-508.

<sup>98</sup> Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 35-36. Another issue which had persisted since 1954 was that with regard to the Bara Hoti area in the middle sector, discussions over which India had been planning since 1955, partly to develop an “an inkling into the Chinese mind in regard to frontier questions in general.” Note from Subimal Dutt to Nehru (24 February 1955), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 31, 238. These discussions did not materialize till 1958, and would leave Foreign Secretary Subimal Dutt disconcerted at the intransigence of the Chinese over even this minor piece of territory. Subimal Dutt, *With Nehru in the Foreign Office* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1977), 117.

<sup>99</sup> Informal Note of GoI (18 Oct. 1958), *Notes, Memoranda and Letters Exchanged and Agreements Signed between the Governments of India and China*, (New Delhi: Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 1959), 36-37. All references from this source cited as *White Paper* hereafter.

<sup>100</sup> Note of 14 Dec 1958, *White Paper I*, 48-51.

that the Sino-Indian border had never been delimited, and that the issue had not been raised earlier “because conditions were not yet ripe for its settlement.” China was willing, however, to take a “more or less a realistic attitude” towards the McMahon Line but needed time to address the situation, and in the meantime suggested both sides adhere to the status quo.<sup>101</sup>

As perceptions of Chinese hostility deepened in India, owing to these extensive Chinese claims, in addition to tensions on the frontier, a brewing rebellion in Tibet, and the accompanying anti-India rhetoric from Chinese officials,<sup>102</sup> Chou’s note of 8 September 1959 would truly agitate the Indian leadership, by formally declaring that Chinese maps reflected the true customary boundary between the two countries.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, as India saw it, these claims were left sufficiently vague as to make possible further extension of demands later<sup>104</sup>, and gone was Chou’s earlier assurance to accept the McMahon alignment, with mention now only to resolving the issue by a reference to “the historical background and existing actualities.”<sup>105</sup> A fire-fight in the Kongka Pass area of Ladakh on 21 October 1959 which would leave several Indian troops dead, would further exacerbate Indian fears, aggravate domestic opinion, and increase the urgency of dealing with a deteriorating situation.

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<sup>101</sup> Note of 23 January 1959, *White Paper 1*, 53-54. In response, Nehru would try to demonstrate and assert the validity of the frontiers as they had been shown in Indian maps. Note of 22 March 1959, *White Paper 1*, 55-57.

<sup>102</sup> See Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 59-70. During this period would also come a communication from the Chinese ambassador saying that just as China could not “antagonize the US in the east and again to antagonize India in the west,” India could surely not afford to have two fronts? In India this communication was apparently taken as an implicit threat of China aligning with Pakistan if India did not settle the dispute on Chinese terms. Chakravarti, *India's China Policy*, 94-95.

<sup>103</sup> Note of 8 September 1959, *White Paper 2*, 27-33.

<sup>104</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 206, Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 71.

<sup>105</sup> Maxwell, *India's China War*, 122.

In response, New Delhi would adopt a firm diplomatic position, demanding Chinese withdrawal from occupied areas in Ladakh and NEFA as a precondition to any talks, during which moreover, the Indian government would only be willing to consider minor alterations to its claims, particularly in the eastern sector.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, there was no possibility of negotiations being held on the basis that the entire boundary with China was undelimited<sup>107</sup> and without there being a reversion to what India saw as the status quo ante. Consequently, Chou's 7 November suggestion that status quo be maintained along the frontier, with each side withdrawing 20 kilometres from the line of actual control on the frontier<sup>108</sup>, would be viewed as unacceptable in New Delhi<sup>109</sup>, with Nehru making his own counteroffer seeking Chinese withdrawal from all disputed territories, and suggesting that each side move behind the others claim lines only in the western sector.<sup>110</sup> If these preconditions were met, Nehru would convey, he was willing to immediately negotiate minor rectifications to the entire border, and even submit the issue to mediation or arbitration based on historical evidence.<sup>111</sup> As Chou would respond, this proposal meant that China would have to withdraw from more

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<sup>106</sup> To this effect India would also be willing to submit minor disputes to mediation or arbitration. Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 73.

<sup>107</sup> Note of 5 February 1960, *White Paper III*, 80-81; Note of 12 February 1960, *White Paper III*, 82-95.

<sup>108</sup> Note of 7 November 1959, *White Paper III*, 44-45.

<sup>109</sup> "We cannot," Nehru would write to Chou "agree to any arrangement, even as an interim measure, which would keep your forcible possession intact." Note of 16 November 1959, *White Paper III*, 48-50. Such a position was also viewed as a Chinese trick in the Indian capital. Peking's proposal would have for one equated Chinese claims in the west to the Indian position in that east, which was unacceptable to Nehru. Further, given Chinese strength, the kind of withdrawal envisaged in the east was viewed to create a serious exploitable strategic disadvantage for India. Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 81, Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 260.

<sup>110</sup> Note of 16 November 1959, *White Paper III*, 48-50.

<sup>111</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 96.

than 33,000 square kilometres of territory in the west that it in fact held, whereas India had no presence in the area to revert from.<sup>112</sup>

After rejecting multiple calls by Chou for negotiations, Nehru would finally agree to “talks”, not “negotiations” he would clarify publicly, to be held in late April 1960 in New Delhi.<sup>113</sup> In these talks, as Indian records corroborate, Chou would propose a barter agreement wherein China would recognize Indian claims in the eastern sector in return for Indian reciprocity in the western sector.<sup>114</sup> In fact as early as October 1959 the Indian Foreign Secretary had anticipated that by speaking of the “realities of the situation,” Chou likely sought Indian acceptance of China’s possessions in Ladakh, in return for Peking’s agreement to the McMahon Line frontier delineation.<sup>115</sup> During the talks themselves it would become “obvious” to the Indian leadership that this was indeed the case and that if India were to “accept the line claimed by China in Ladakh they [China] would accept the McMahon Line. There might be need for minor frontier rectification, but that would not create much practical difficulty.”<sup>116</sup> The Chinese according to Dutt, wanted to treat the dispute as one of delimitation, with each side to hold what it possessed and not make any

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<sup>112</sup> Note of 17 December 1959, *White Paper III*, 52-53.

<sup>113</sup> Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 87.

<sup>114</sup> It was claimed in India that Chou’s never explicitly made such an offer, and that the proposal was rather elliptical in nature. Dutt, *With Nehru in the Foreign Office*, 131, Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 136, Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 86-87.

<sup>115</sup> S Dutt (FS), Address to Conference of Governors (28 October 1959), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 109, 9. Prior to the talks, the Chinese note of April 3<sup>rd</sup> had been interpreted in Delhi as suggesting “compromise on the basis of give and take.” Subimal Dutt from Parthasarathy (5 April 1960), *PN Haksar Papers*, Subject File 25.

<sup>116</sup> Subimal Dutt to Indian Missions (27 April 1960), *PN Haksar Papers*, Subject File 25, 1-2. This is corroborated by RK Nehru according to whom the Chinese proposed a quiet exchange, in the sense, that “you occupy NEFA, we will keep on making our claim on our maps etc. We will occupy Aksai Chin, then sometime later we will settle it.” RK Nehru Oral Transcript – recorded by BR Nanda – NMML Oral History Project, 30.



further territorial claims. The proposal would be rejected by India out of hand as unacceptable, with the Foreign Secretary decrying Chinese attempts to justify claims over territory “occupied during the last two or three years,” and avoid any discussion of legal issues. This firmness, Dutt would claim, had probably impressed the Chinese leadership.<sup>117</sup>

By 1961, Nehru would publicly state that India’s case was fool-proof, and the question could only be settled by Chinese withdrawal, not by “horse trading.”<sup>118</sup> Indian government communications would, in response to repeated Chinese calls for negotiations, continue to declare that while the government of India was willing to enter negotiations, this required as a prerequisite the restoration of the status quo which existed prior to Chinese occupation of nearly 20,000 square kilometres of India claimed territory, especially in the western sector, since 1957.<sup>119</sup> To this end, a 14 May 1962 note would convey, India was agreeable at the most to the Aksai Chin road being used by Chinese civilian traffic pending negotiations and settlement of the border issue.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Foreign Secretary to Dayal (26 April 1960), *PN Haksar Papers*, Subject File 25. That barter was probably unacceptable even before the talks is apparent from a note written by the Indian ambassador in Peking the previous month reiterating that while India would be prepared to consider minor alterations on the frontier, there could be no talks based on an assumption that the entire frontier was undelimited. Parthasarathy to Subimal Dutt (27 March 1960), *PN Haksar Papers*, Subject File 25.

<sup>118</sup> Speech in Rajya Sabha (February 20, 1961), *Pm on Sino-Indian Relations*, 383.

<sup>119</sup> Note of 13 March 1962, *White Paper VI* 17-19; Note of 30 April 1962, *White Paper VI*, 32-36.

<sup>120</sup> Note of 14 May 1962, *White Paper VI*, 43. For a brief instance, there would be a hint in New Delhi’s ambiguous 26 July 1962 note of a possible acceptance of China’s 1956 claim line in Ladakh, and a willingness to negotiate without preconditions. *White Paper VII*, 3-4. Delhi would revert to its earlier position in the very next note, however. An aggravated domestic public likely had much to do with the reversal, but no small part can be attributed to the Chinese response which was dismissive of the offer and demanded that India first “unequivocally and publicly withdrew all fictitious and false claims on Chinese territory. “ Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 290-292, Allen Sues Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Indochina* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), 84-91.

This diplomatic firmness was, moreover, supplemented by the adoption of more active military measures in Ladakh. By mid-1960, the political leadership had begun pushing for more aggressive patrolling in disputed areas not yet occupied by Chinese troops in the western sector, where till that point there had been little Indian activity. There was a clear understanding that with regard to territory which China had not occupied, there was no obligation on India not to send patrols, even though they would try to avoid clashes with the Chinese. Indeed, New Delhi now sought the establishment of military posts in unoccupied territory, an effort that would be temporarily forestalled by a reluctant Army leadership which had already been assigned responsibility for that frontier following events at Kongka Pass.<sup>121</sup>

However, with increasing intelligence suggesting steady Chinese build-up of military posts in the disputed territory, a ‘forward policy’ would be conceptualized in New Delhi. The plan sought to forestall any further Chinese ingress into Ladakh in particular, where China’s claims themselves had expanded, according to maps presented by the Chinese delegates at the officials’ talks in 1960. The policy, which took shape during a 2 November 1961 meeting, required Indian troops to patrol as far as possible towards India’s claim line in Ladakh (by December 1961 the instructions were expanded to include NEFA), and establish military posts with the aim of preventing “the Chinese from advancing any further and also dominating from any posts which they may have already established.” Military clashes with

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<sup>121</sup> Subimal Dutt to Director (N) (29 May 1960), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 43, 66. Also Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 78; 92-94.

Chinese forces were to be avoided, however, barring instances where this was necessary in self-defence.<sup>122</sup>

By March-April 1962, Indian troops began to act on the 'forward policy' by establishing posts in unoccupied parts of Ladakh. Once such posts were established, it became Indian policy for them to hold firm when faced by intimidation or threat of force from superior Chinese forces, who had resumed (according to a Chinese note of protest) their own forward patrolling in the western sector on 30 April. In May 1962, the Indian post in the Chip Chap valley was instructed by the political leadership to hold firm against Chinese advances despite the Army's Western Command requesting permission to withdraw. Shortly thereafter, in July, an Indian platoon at Galwan was similarly instructed, and even ordered to open fire in response to a Chinese siege. Commanders in Ladakh were now even given the authority to open fire first on Chinese troops if they approached too close to Indian posts.<sup>123</sup> With the diplomatic avenue deadlocked, and military eyeballing and skirmishes extending from Ladakh to the NEFA with Chinese pressure in Dhola-Thagla La Ridge area, on 20 October 1962 Chinese troops would launch massive military offensives in both the western and eastern sectors which would be briefly halted on October 24, only to resume again three weeks later, with Nehru having rejected in the interim Chou's latest call for negotiations.<sup>124</sup> By the end of the war on 21 November, Chinese troops had shattered

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<sup>122</sup> Minutes and details of meeting from Maxwell, *India's China War*, 221. By the spring of 1962 India had established more than forty new posts in the area claimed by China. Russell Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968), 190-191.

<sup>123</sup> Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 104-106.

<sup>124</sup> Chou's would call for talks based on India's withdrawal from territory acquired as part of the forward policy which India would reject stating that "India cannot and will not accept a position under which Chinese forces continue to commit aggression into Indian territory, occupy substantial Indian territories and use these as a bargaining counter to force a settlement on their own terms." Quoted in Maxwell, *India's China War*, 374-376.

Indian defences and advanced up to their claim lines in both sectors, only to unilaterally announce a cease fire and withdraw in the eastern sector to behind the McMahon Line.

### **The Aksai Chin Puzzle**

Before discussing the logic behind Indian intransigence over this later period, it is important to note that the Indian government's refusal to accept Chou's 1960 barter proposal is in many ways puzzling, given that both the salience of, and India's legal claims in the Aksai Chin region were questionable. This was true as much in 1960 as it was in the early 1950s, when New Delhi had paid little attention to the western sector.<sup>125</sup> Shortly after the discovery of the Chinese road in Aksai Chin, Dutt would therefore write to Nehru that India's claim in the region did not "seem to be based on very sure ground," and that one option was to indeed give the area up.<sup>126</sup> Moreover, the territory being so remote, there was very little in practical terms that India could do to obstruct Chinese activities in the area, and conflict was likely to be costly and futile.<sup>127</sup> Dutt would further clarify in a later note that India's claim line in the region, contrary to the McMahon Line, had been meant by the British "to serve only as a basis of possible discussion with the Russians and the Chinese,"

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<sup>125</sup> Nehru would admit as much in a speech to Parliament in February 1961, stating that following the Tibetan invasion the government's attention was directed solely at the NEFA border with Tibet, with the "uninhabited" and "very difficult" Aksai Chin the only area where Indian check posts were not established because the government was "busy with the other areas." Speech in Lok Sabha (23 February 1961), *Pm on Sino-Indian Relations*, 385-386.

<sup>126</sup> S Dutt to PM (3 February 1958), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 31, 348-349. According to B.N. Mullik the Ministry of External affairs took the line that "the exact boundary of this area had not yet been demarcated and so in any protest we lodged we could not be on firm grounds..." B. N. Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1971), 203.

<sup>127</sup> S Dutt to JS (E) (23 September 1958), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 33, 141. In this note Dutt would point out that his assessment of Indian claims not being well-founded was based on a note from the Indian Historical Division a few months back.

and since it was never put forward formally could not be relied upon to serve Indian claims.<sup>128</sup> Corroborating all this is B.N. Mullik's account, in which he recounts that "the attitude of the External Affairs ministry was that this part of the territory was useless to India...The boundary had not been demarcated and had been shifted more than once by the British... It would be pointless to pick up quarrels over issues in which India had no means of enforcing her claims."<sup>129</sup>

Accordingly, in response to a Chinese note of 3 November 1958, the Indian government would only state that "whether the particular area is in Indian or Chinese territory is a matter of dispute."<sup>130</sup> Publicly, in parliament too, Nehru would over the next year make apparent that the dispute in the western sector was fundamentally different from that over the McMahon Line. The Aksai China, Nehru would repeatedly point out was practically uninhabited, and located in such difficult terrain that India had found it difficult and impractical to exercise any presence there.<sup>131</sup> In this "barren, uninhabited region without a vestige of grass and 17,000 ft. high," moreover, the Chinese had greater strategic interest and their own evidentiary claims, which made the territory "peculiarly suited obviously for some kind of consultations and decision as to the facts, because the facts are very

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<sup>128</sup> S Dutt to PM (18 November 1958), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 34, 209. This was indeed the case as Maxwell's discussion suggests. The Ardagh-Johnson line, on which Indian claims were broadly based, had never been suggested by the British to the Chinese. The Macartney-McDonald compromise line on the other hand, which placed left most of Aksai Chin to China, was the only one that had ever been offered to the Chinese by the British in 1899. According to Maxwell, when China was finally ready to negotiate a boundary in this area, the British intended to bargain away their claims to Aksai Chin against Chinese claims to reach a compromise along the line proposed to China in 1899. Maxwell, *India's China War*, 31-35, 85.

<sup>129</sup> Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal*, 203-206.

<sup>130</sup> Note of 8 Nov 1958, *White Paper I*, 29.

<sup>131</sup> Speech in Lok Sabha (18 August 1959), *Pm on Sino-Indian Relations*, 80. Speech in Lok Sabha (19 November 1959) *ibid.*, 153.

complicated.”<sup>132</sup> In response to Chou’s combative letter of 8 September 1959, Nehru would make clear in Parliament that while India would at most discuss minor alterations on the McMahon Line<sup>133</sup>, the Aksai Chin was “a matter for argument.” He could not say “what part of it may not belong to us, and what parts may,” with there never having been any delimitation of the region.<sup>134</sup> Even with the escalation of tensions in late 1959, and following talks with Chou in 1960, Nehru would concede that in the west, while he felt India’s case was strong, determining claims over historical jurisdiction was an “extraordinarily difficult thing where you are dealing with a country where people do not live or hardly live or are very few,” and rival maps and evidence were produced.<sup>135</sup>

All this suggests that for much of this period the Indians did have some scope for flexibility over claims in Aksai Chin. This is corroborated by the testimony of RK Nehru, India’s ambassador to Peking till 1958, that Nehru was well aware that China could not be expected to give up everything, especially in the Aksai Chin, territory which was recognized to be of great value to Peking.<sup>136</sup> More importantly, “until 1960, we ourselves were not sure that the territory belonged to us and we were thinking in terms of giving up our claims as part of a satisfactory settlement.”<sup>137</sup> As Raghavan has recently discovered, Indian president S. Radhakrishnan would also during this period propose to the Chinese (presumably with the knowledge and approval of Nehru) that they retain the ‘substance’ and concede the ‘shadow’

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<sup>132</sup> Speech in Rajya Sabha (31 August 1959), *ibid.*, 98.

<sup>133</sup> Speech in Rajya Sabha (4 September 1959), *ibid.*, 119.

<sup>134</sup> Speech in Rajya Sabha (12 September 1959), *ibid.*, 147-149.

<sup>135</sup> Speech in Rajya Sabha (29 April 1960), *ibid.*, 342.

<sup>136</sup> RK Nehru Oral Transcript – recorded by BR Nanda – NMML Oral History Project, 29-30.

<sup>137</sup> Quoted in Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 260.

in Ladakh, that is China could retain *de facto* control over the territory in return for conceding *de jure* Indian sovereignty over it.<sup>138</sup> All this being the case, how do we account for India's puzzling failure to agree to a solution along the lines Chou offered in 1960, which would have only denied India territory which the government seemed to have little interest in in the first place?

### **Reputation and Indian Intransigence, 1956-1962**

The continued publication of the offending Chinese maps, and the increasing instances of Chinese incursions across the border from 1956,<sup>139</sup> only exacerbated the pre-existing commitment related concerns India faced in dealing with China. Nehru therefore, despite the 1954 agreement on Tibet, had continued to speak with concern of an emerging Chinese problem for India, as an already strong (especially militarily) China grew more potent and increasingly dominant in Asia in the next decade or so.<sup>140</sup> While geographical barriers might contain China in the immediate future<sup>141</sup>, India needed to be wary, according

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 262-263.

<sup>139</sup> Judith M. Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 270.

<sup>140</sup> The Position of China (2 July 1956), *Swjn-Ss*. Vol. 34, 250; India and the World Situation (4 May 1956), *ibid.* Vol. 33, 8.

<sup>141</sup> Already, Apa Pant, India's agent in Sikkim would warn that there had been building of roads and other infrastructure by China which provided better access to "the ill-defined border areas, and to take possession of these as on their side of the frontier...at an opportune moment." *Apa Pant Papers*, Subject file 3.

to Nehru, of what the Chinese might do in a decade's time, and therefore integrate the Northeast into India with increasing urgency.<sup>142</sup>

The 1957 talks with Chou were therefore temporarily reassuring for Nehru, because history had shown that China was “capable of vast efforts of constructive expansion,”<sup>143</sup> and might at some point officially lay claim to the vast tracts of Indian territory which had been represented as part of China in maps since before the time the communists had assumed power in Peking.<sup>144</sup> The discovery of the Aksai Chin road and the failure of the talks over a small tract of land called Bara Hoti however brought these fears immediately to the fore again, and importantly, triggered an urgent need for reputation building in New Delhi. Having conceded the weakness of Indian claims and interests in Ladakh, Dutt would nevertheless suggest a posture of firmness, the logic being that “if we let the Chinese get away with the impression that they can unilaterally assert their authority without any regard to past discussion, they may try the same method in dealing with other border disputes also.”<sup>145</sup> Indeed, the Foreign Secretary would further note, an “attitude of indifference might serve as an encouragement to the Chinese authorities to take unilateral action in the other contested areas also.”<sup>146</sup> Even in the case of Bara Hoti, Dutt had earlier pointed out that

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<sup>142</sup> Nehru particularly had in mind the dangerous portents of instability in the Naga areas, and the need therefore to further integrate the restive population of this region through economic integration and industrial development. Nehru to KN Katju (28 July 1956), *Sujm-Ss*. Vol. 34, 203.

<sup>143</sup> “China, Tibet and South-East Asia” (28 June 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 38, 610-612.

<sup>144</sup> Nehru to Sampurnanand (14 May 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 38, 689-690. Vigilance was nevertheless required, because at the same time the Sino-Burmese talks appeared to be floundering, with Nehru expressing displeasure with Chou's attitude, and under the impression that China had failed to adhere to earlier commitments to the Burmese. Nehru to U Nu (22 April 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 37, 507-508; Nehru to RK Nehru (15 July 1957), *ibid.* Vol. 38, 693.

<sup>145</sup> S Dutt to PM (12 June 58), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 32, 186.

<sup>146</sup> S Dutt to PM (8 October 58), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 33, 123.



while in itself the territory could be conceded because it was small and immaterial to India, the trouble lay in the Chinese repudiation of the entire frontier, including on the issue of border passes, the status of which the 1954 agreement had apparently settled. On these latter issues India could not “afford to make concessions,” and compromise on Bara Hoti was therefore feared would indicate weakness, encouraging greater Chinese demands all across the frontier.<sup>147</sup> As Dutt later revealed, Nehru’s fear was that by accepting that the frontier was undelimited, “even if India gave in to the Chinese claim in Ladakh, other demands would not be long in coming.”<sup>148</sup>

Moreover, Chinese activities in general during this period were causing increasing consternation in New Delhi. In addition to Sino-Burmese territorial issues,<sup>149</sup> reports of Chinese interference in Yugoslavia would lead Nehru to write to Dutt that there was no reason why China would not do the same to India. The attitude of the Chinese had perceptibly “stiffened” and this, Nehru would say, “signifies that we have to be particularly careful in the future in what we say and do in regard to China specially.”<sup>150</sup> Closer to home, in Sikkim<sup>151</sup> and with regard to Tibet<sup>152</sup> there were reports of increasing Chinese pressure.

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<sup>147</sup> S Dutt to PM (3 June 58), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 32, 264.

<sup>148</sup> Dutt, *With Nehru in the Foreign Office*, 131.

<sup>149</sup> The Sino-Burmese negotiations had been deadlocked for a while, with the Burmese holding China responsible for such a state of affairs. Maxwell, *India's China War*, 100.

<sup>150</sup> Nehru to Dutt (15 June 58), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 32, 48. These impressions were no doubt encouraged in part by comments by Tito who had expressed that China appeared to be developing “expansionist tendencies.” Ali Yavar Jung (Note on interview with President Tito at Brioni on 9 June 1958), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 32, 6.

<sup>151</sup> Dutt would reveal that the Sikkim royal family were receiving clear overtures from the Chinese to shift their allegiance way from India to Tibet, with which Sikkim had more in common culturally. S Dutt (25 June 58), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 32, 45.

<sup>152</sup> Apa Pant would convey that the Chinese had reportedly told the Dalai Lama that “that though India and China were friends American and British imperialists were ‘influencing Pandit Nehru’ and

With the exacerbation of tensions in Tibet by early 1959, there were, to Nehru's distress, open allegations from Peking that India had inherited the mantle of British imperialism, leading Nehru to conclude that the issue was "far more serious, far deeper, far deeper than Tibet," which required India to be particularly wary of her future actions.<sup>153</sup> The deeper issue of course was the potentially large Chinese territorial claims which Chou's January 1959 note would allude to, which Nehru would declare were "totally and manifestly unacceptable."<sup>154</sup>

Under conditions of what was viewed in New Delhi as nascent Chinese expansionism, agreeing to negotiate on the basis of the unilaterally created status quo and the principle that the entire frontier was delimited as the Chinese were arguing, was unacceptable to the Indian leadership. This was even more so as the Chinese note of 8 September was viewed by Nehru to constitute a reneging in bad faith on what he believed had been an implicit gentleman's agreement in 1954, made explicit in later meetings by Chou: that in exchange for Indian concessions in Tibet, Peking would recognize India's territorial claims in the frontier, especially the sanctity of the McMahon Line.<sup>155</sup> This history of broken Chinese promises, beginning with the decision to invade Tibet in 1950 not surprisingly only heightened the lack of credibility that New Delhi attached to anything Peking had to suggest, and suspicions about the latter's future intentions.

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that they could not be too careful when they are dealing with India as they were afraid that 'Nehru may side with the imperialist.' Apa Pant Report on Visit to Tibet (28 November 1957), *Apa Pant Papers*, Subject file 5, 10-21.

<sup>153</sup> Speech in Lok Sabha (March 23, 1959), *Pm on Sino-Indian Relations*, 33.

<sup>154</sup> Speech in Lok Sabha (8 May 1959), *ibid.*, 56. Speech in Lok Sabha (August 28, 1959), *ibid.*, 91.

<sup>155</sup> Dawa Norbu, "Tibet in Sino-Indian Relations: The Centrality of Marginality," *Asian Survey* 37, no. 11 (1997): 1080-1082. As Nehru would write to Chou on 26 September 1959: "When our two countries signed the 1954 Agreement in regard to the Tibet region, I hoped that the main problems which history had bequeathed to us had been peacefully and finally settled. Five years later, you have now brought forward, with all insistence, a problem which dwarfs in importance all that we had discussed in recent years and, I thought, settled." Quoted in Chakravarti, *India's China Policy*, 105.

What was worse, Chou's notes had also disconcertingly left the actual extent of Chinese claims vague, portending the possibility of further claims in the future.<sup>156</sup> Consequently, Nehru would declare that India would not be willing to give up even one inch of her territory if it were to be done under compulsion or force. It was the "the pride and arrogance...of a strong and aggressive power," that was showing in Chinese behaviour, and to India it was not "a yard of territory that counts...but it makes a great deal of difference if that is done in an insulting, aggressive, offensive, violent manner." In essence, what India now faced with was "a great and powerful nation which is aggressive. It might be aggressive *minus* Communism or *plus* Communism," but it was there nonetheless.<sup>157</sup> The Indian PM would therefore also, towards the end of September 1959, refuse U Nu's offer to serve as a go-between to India and China, for fear of conveying Indian anxiety and fear to Peking, which might result in increasing Chinese pressure and demands.<sup>158</sup> If through conciliatory attitudes with their other neighbours, the Chinese leadership had sought to signal good faith to India, the effect was in fact completely contrary, with Delhi viewing such efforts as

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<sup>156</sup> Speech in Rajya Sabha (10 September 1959), *Pm on Sino-Indian Relations*, 139-141. Indian officials would ask why "no question of the frontier of the Tibet region with Ladakh was ever raised during all these years...It is to be observed that at no time up till now has any precise statement been made by the Chinese Government as to where according to them, their frontier is. Even their own maps give completely different and varying frontiers." Note of 4 November 1959, *White Paper II*, 20.

<sup>157</sup> Speech in Rajya Sabha (12 September 1959), *ibid.*, 144, 152-153. As early as 15 April 1959, Nehru had conveyed to V. Pandit in speaking about Tibet that "the Chinese always and, more especially, now are given to arrogance and throwing their weight about." Nehru to Pandit (15 April 1959), *VL Pandit Papers Ist Instalment*, Subject file 61. Similarly in a note to Chief Minister's, Nehru would acknowledge the "indefinite" nature of the frontier, but saw China as a "powerful country bent on spreading out to what they consider their old frontiers, and possibly beyond..." Quoted in Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 257.

<sup>158</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 98.

intended to isolate and embarrass India, by painting New Delhi as unreasonable while China herself would appear generous.<sup>159</sup>

The theme of Chinese expansionism, “a national trait which has existed for a considerable time past,” would indeed increasingly be a constant in Nehru’s statements.<sup>160</sup> Now, he would note, a combination of strength and an “abnormal state of mind” had given rise to a China “which cares less for peace” than any other country in the world.<sup>161</sup> Indian actions had to keep in mind long term implications of the fact that “for the first time a world power or would-be world power” sat on India’s frontiers,<sup>162</sup> a development which had “all manner of implications attached to it, all manner of forebodings.”<sup>163</sup> Specifically, the obvious gap in bargaining strength meant that the Indian government could not meekly submit to China, because in the long term “friendship cannot exist between the weak and the strong, between a country that is trying to bully and the other who accepts to be bullied.”<sup>164</sup> Peking had to be made to realize that “the time for any country to display arrogance in dealing with India” was long past, and without the Chinese ceding to Indian demands there was little likelihood, Nehru would concede, of a settlement which would be acceptable to any Indian

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<sup>159</sup> The Chinese, according to Dutt, were adopting a “sort of two-faced attitude... trying to tell all Asian countries that they would like a settlement and so on but at the same time extending their occupation and using force in protection of what they consider is their territory.” S Dutt (FS) (28 of October 1959), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject file 109, 8-9.

<sup>160</sup> Speech in Lok Sabha (25 November 1959), *Pm on Sino-Indian Relations*, 188.

<sup>161</sup> Speech in Lok Sabha (27 November 1959), *ibid.*, 213-216.

<sup>162</sup> Speech in Rajya Sabha (8 December 1959), *ibid.*, 230-231, 240-242.

<sup>163</sup> Speech in Lok Sabha (17 March 1960), *ibid.*, 323.

<sup>164</sup> It was unclear, Nehru would state, if Chinese behaviour was an expression of local aggressiveness, a quest to “show us our place,” or something deeper. Speech in Parliament (4 September 1959), *ibid.*, 117.

government.<sup>165</sup> The only option therefore was to stand firm in the face of a “situation which can only be faced by strength,” and in the meanwhile build capability so India could eventually speak from a position of equality with China, because “only when there is strength behind it,” did the voice of a nation count.<sup>166</sup> If friendship was the ultimate goal, it could not come “by adopting a weak attitude to a strong country...If you do not respect yourself, if you cannot protect yourself, others will not respect you.”<sup>167</sup>

Little surprise then, that India’s policy was predicated on maintaining firmness on her basic demands. Underlying the rejection of Chou’s 1960 offer, and the Indian insistence that negotiations could not take place on the basis that the entire territory was undelimited, and without the Chinese first withdrawing from occupied territory, was the fear that accepting the Chinese conditions would demonstrate weakness, and thereby risk encouraging Peking to pose further territorial challenges in the future. Any proposals made by China, particularly the barter option, were therefore viewed in New Delhi as tricks which could not be taken at face value or expected to exhaust Chinese claims, and were consequently unanimously unacceptable to the Indian cabinet.<sup>168</sup> The reputational implications of such concessions were viewed as especially worrying by the Indian leadership given that they were clearly the weaker party, and had been the target of Chinese coercion and unilateralism, which the latter refused

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<sup>165</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 89-90, 139.

<sup>166</sup> Speech in Rajya Sabha (8 December 1959), *Pm on Sino-Indian Relations*, 244-246. According to Mullik, the danger from China was for Nehru of an abiding nature, which necessitated preparation for a possible war in the future, because “lack of preparedness would indicate weakness and if India was weak, other countries would not pay any heed to her.” Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: 1948-1964*, 187.

<sup>167</sup> Speech in Lok Sabha (23 November 1960), *Pm on Sino-Indian Relations*, 369.

<sup>168</sup> Dutt, *With Nehru in the Foreign Office*, 131-132. Such fears would be exacerbated later in 1960 when in the meetings of officials over the boundary issue, the Chinese delegation would claim territory in Ladakh beyond claim lines presented by Chou in 1956. See Dutt, and also Nehru’s statement in the Rajya Sabha (20 February 1961), *Pm on Sino-Indian Relations*, 381.

to rectify.<sup>169</sup> The Indian posture therefore, according to RK Nehru, was one of keeping talks going while not surrendering on the border issue, and building up strength at the same time. While there was recognition that China could not be expected to give up all claims in the western sector, compromise for India was conceivable only under conditions where the Chinese accepted Indian sovereignty in the eastern sector, and withdrew from Aksai Chin, after which negotiations could be confined to the latter region.<sup>170</sup>

To reinforce this position, the Indian government would further bolster its questionable historical claims in the western sector,<sup>171</sup> and in late 1959, Sarvepalli Gopal of the Historical Division was dispatched to London for that purpose. As Maxwell has pointed out, Nehru could have used the opportunity to instruct Gopal to find what Indian officials were aware was readily available historical justification for a compromise boundary in the western sector.<sup>172</sup> That option however had little chance of being considered by the Indian leadership given the above considerations, and Dutt would accordingly instruct his officials to provide Gopal with a list of “points on which further evidence should be secured in

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<sup>169</sup> Speech in Lok Sabha (1 April 1961), *Pm on Sino-Indian Relations*, 390. As an Indian official, N.R. Pillai would articulate this thinking, if India “gave way now on this matter, it would only encourage the Chinese to feel that they [India] were weak and to press even more ambitious claims later on.” Quoted in Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 263.

<sup>170</sup> RK Nehru Oral Transcript – recorded by BR Nanda – NMML Oral History Project, 28-30. In accordance with this position, the Indian members to the 1960 delegation level talks would be instructed to take up discussion of Ladakh first, and only carry documents related to that sector, especially given that the Chinese had already shown little willingness to produce all their maps. S. Dutt to PM (27 May 1960), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 42, 34. Additionally Dutt would let it be known that if the Chinese did not relent in the face of Indian arguments, “our officials will also have to take a more or less similar attitude.” S. Dutt to PM (29 April 60), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 42.

<sup>171</sup> Vertzberger, *Misperceptions in Foreign Policymaking*, 151-156. According to Vertzberger, with regard to the McMahon Line, India also drew the opposite conclusions to what China intended from her territorial agreements with Burma and Nepal, by construing such concessions as further validating India’s legal position.

<sup>172</sup> Maxwell, *India's China War*, 119-120.

London.”<sup>173</sup> On his return, Gopal would find Nehru in a “malleable mood” seeking to be convinced of the Indian case, resistant as he already was to gratuitously handing over territory to the Chinese.<sup>174</sup> Presented with this evidence in February 1960 that India’s case in the Aksai Chin was sound, Indian officials would expectedly go in to the April talks with Chou fully prepared to reject any arrangement involving a territorial swap.<sup>175</sup>

The eventual resort to a more active military stance along the frontier in the ‘forward policy’ was therefore in large part also an extension of this general policy of reputation building. Initially with regard to the western sector, Nehru’s 13 September 1959 directive had sought to leave things as they were in the expectation that China would not seek to transgress in the region any further, and that the issue could be addressed later on as part of a broader consideration of border issues.<sup>176</sup> However, with little indication that diplomatic firmness alone was influencing the Chinese to relent from further advancing towards their new extended claim line in Ladakh the ‘forward policy’ was envisaged not primarily as a means to militarily rectify territorial losses in the west, but rather as a means to deter Chinese progress through demonstration of firmness by way of token resistance.<sup>177</sup> The Indian

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<sup>173</sup> S Dutt to JS (E) (7 October 1959), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 38, 341.

<sup>174</sup> Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 83. According to Gopal having been convinced of India’s case Nehru could state that “I think that our case is a strong one and I see no reason why we should weaken in it at any point.” Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 134.

<sup>175</sup> The Indian officials report later in 1960 would add to Nehru’s conviction about India’s case, leading him to conclude that he could not “conceive of their [China] having read this and not having felt that their position was a weak one.” Quoted in Maxwell, *India’s China War*, 218.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>177</sup> Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 276, Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 40. According to Kaul, India had no choice but to adopt the policy, failing which China “would have kept advancing up to her claim line and India, being the weaker country, could have done nothing about it. It would then have been a *fait accompli*.” Lt. Gen. BM Kaul Oral Transcript— recorded by Dr. AK Gupta/Dr. SR Bakshi - NMMML Oral History Project (13 January 1972), 144-145.

military's weaknesses in the theatre were clearly acknowledged by the leadership. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> November meeting, military unease with the plan due to India's distinct numerical and logistical disadvantages in the region would be acknowledged.<sup>178</sup> Nehru would even confess, in keeping with military assessments, that such forward posts were "in constant danger of attack with larger numbers" that the Chinese possessed.<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless the risk was assumed in the hope that even a symbolic presence of a dozen men, as an earlier IB paper had concluded, would be sufficient to keep the Chinese at bay.<sup>180</sup> Reinforcing this belief was Nehru's conviction that China's internal troubles meant that they "were in no position to divert their attention to anything except putting their own internal matters right," which meant that if India "dealt with them strongly, we should have the better of them..."<sup>181</sup>

Rather, as Foreign Secretary MJ Desai would now reportedly suggest, giving the Chinese "an occasional knock during these chance encounters within our own territory and

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<sup>178</sup> Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 98.

<sup>179</sup> Nehru quoted in Maxwell, *India's China War*, 254. Army Chief, Gen. Thimayya, would state in July 1962: "I cannot even as a soldier envisage India taking on China in an open conflict on its own...It must be left to the politicians and diplomats to ensure our security." Quoted in Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 269.

<sup>180</sup> In the absence of such a presence, however, the Chinese were expected to fill out their 1960 claim lines. Gopal, *Nehru* 3, 207. Kaul would similarly suggest that "It is better for us to establish as many posts as we can in Ladakh, even though in penny packets, rather than wait for a substantial build-up, as I am convinced that the Chinese will not attack any of our positions even if they are relatively weaker than theirs." Quoted in Maxwell, *India's China War*, 254.

<sup>181</sup> Lt. Gen. Brij Mohan Kaul, *The Untold Story* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1967), 339. Kaul states elsewhere that "Nehru believed that though China was becoming more and more uncompromising in her border dispute with India, she would never resort to war to settle its dispute with India." Lt. Gen. BM Kaul Oral Transcript— recorded by Dr. AK Gupta/Dr. SR Bakshi (13 Jan 1972), 143. K.P.S Menon similarly states that "it never occurred to Panditji the Chinese would ever invade India." KPS Menon Oral Transcript – recorded by BR Nanda – NMML Oral History Project (30 September 1981), 21-22. Mullik corroborates Kaul's account by recounting that the temporary domestic travails that China was undergoing in the early 1960s owing to the dramatic failure of the Great Leap Forward, exacerbated by the emerging breakdown of relations with the USSR was sufficient for Nehru to conclude that China could not afford a major offensive any time soon. Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: 1948-1964*, 186-188.



to engage them in a short offensive action aimed at inflicting casualties and for taking prisoners,” was likely to be an effective strategy for deterring the Chinese by demonstrating Indian resolve.<sup>182</sup> Presumably in accordance with such considerations, confrontations in the Chip Chap Valley and Galwan would elicit instructions from the Indian political establishment for troops to stand firm and use force if necessary in doing so. The eventual Chinese withdrawals from such situations would only reassure the Indian leadership that such a policy was indeed paying off. For Nehru, the Chinese had demonstrated the worst they would do in those two instances, leading to his instruction to his army officials to maintain their posts so as to “study the ‘behaviour pattern’ of the Chinese.”<sup>183</sup> As Lt. Gen. B.M. Kaul recalls, the political leadership believed that “if India challenged China...it would call China’s bluff.”<sup>184</sup>

### **Domestic Politics and Indian Policy**

It has been argued that beginning in late 1959, with news of the Chinese road in Aksai Chin, Chou’s 8 September note outlining China’s extensive claims, and following that the Kongka Pass incident, an aggravated public opinion and parliamentary opposition narrowed any scope for flexibility that the Indian government might have possessed in earlier

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<sup>182</sup> According to Director of Military Operations, Brigadier D.K. Palit, quoted in Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 96.

<sup>183</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 211.

<sup>184</sup> Lt. Gen. BM Kaul Oral Transcript— recorded by Dr. AK Gupta/Dr. SR Bakshi (13 Jan 1972), 146. Also Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 286. India’s military action in Goa was presumably also taken at this time partly to signal to Peking India’s willingness to resort to force. Failure to act in Goa, Nehru thought, would adversely affect “the position of India generally in regard to other problem that we face, including other borders.” Nehru quoted in Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 202.

years.<sup>185</sup> In particular, the 28 August 1959 decision of the Indian government to release white papers detailing correspondence with Peking, served to effectively restrain the government in its China policy.<sup>186</sup> Testimonies from Indian officials have served to attest to this notion that were it not for the pressures of public opinion, Nehru would have adopted a more conciliatory position vis-à-vis China, including accepting the barter agreement proposed by Chou in the 1960 talks.<sup>187</sup> Nehru himself was reported to have stated at a private meeting in the lead up to the 1960 talks that, “if I give them that I shall no longer be Prime Minister of India – I will not do it.”<sup>188</sup>

Nevertheless, while domestic pressures were undeniable, it is suggested here that over the course of the Sino-Indian territorial dispute, domestic politics served not as the fountainhead, but rather as reinforcement for policies that the Indian leadership had already adopted. To the extent that domestic politics did play a role then, it did not do so by driving Nehru in policy directions opposed to his government’s preferred policy, with Indian fears of Chinese expansionism having engendered the adoption of a firm posture soon after the

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<sup>185</sup> Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life*, 260-261, Jetly, *India China Relations, 1947-1977*, Tharoor, *Reasons of State*, 40. According to Dorothy Woodman “it was not until after the Kongka Pass that Indian public opinion really became emotional about China.” Kingsley Martin and Dorothy Woodman Oral Transcript – recorded by BR Nanda – NMML Oral History Project (8 August 1967), 32-33.

<sup>186</sup> Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 67-68, Maxwell, *India's China War*, 115-116, Vertzberger, *Misperceptions in Foreign Policymaking*, 65-68, 138-147.

<sup>187</sup> Krishna Menon suggested later that Nehru was “concerned about what people would say...Panditji was very sensitive to public opinion in that way...” in Michael Brecher, *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 40. RK Nehru has similarly pointed to Nehru’s belief that “public opinion would not accept a settlement at present.” RK Nehru Oral Transcript – recorded by BR Nanda – NMML Oral History Project, 38. For KPS Menon “it is possible that a solution might have been reached on these lines [Chou’s package deal]...But Jawaharlal Nehru did not assert himself vis-a-vis Parliament and vis-a-vis what we regard as public opinion.” KPS Menon Oral Transcript – recorded by BR Nanda – NMML Oral History Project (30 September 81), 21-22.

<sup>188</sup> Quoted in Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 86.

Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950. By the late 1950s, China's assertion of expansive territorial claims, and resort to what was seen in New Delhi as unilateralist expansionism in the western sector, only heightened such fears making compromise over even an admittedly unimportant piece of territory problematic, for fear that gratuitous concessions would betray weakness, with dangerous portents for the future.<sup>189</sup> The basic underpinnings of Indian policy had therefore been set by Nehru and his advisors prior to and independently of any public pressure, and as Maxwell suggests, while political pressure might have made it difficult for Nehru to change course, such pressures "did not make him do anything he was not himself inclined to do; nor did they prevent him from doing anything he really wished to do."<sup>190</sup>

Public reactions therefore only reflected, if by exacerbating, Nehru's own increasing disconcertion with China. Having declared that it was "wrong to be swept away by public opinion" if it was considered wrong, that Nehru did little to resist parliamentary and public opinion, suggests that there was no fundamental disjuncture between Nehru's thinking and domestic political demands.<sup>191</sup> Indeed, were Nehru genuinely convinced that a significantly different approach to the dispute was wise and appropriate, Nehru's own party did carry a handsome majority in parliament sufficient to push through the government's preferred

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<sup>189</sup> According to Hoffmann, any tendencies that the India leadership had towards compromising on her claims in the Aksai Chin were lost by China "failing to recognize a moment of opportunity, and by occupying the Western Sector territory pre-emptively." Ibid., 112. Maxwell similarly suggests that if Chou had brought up the Aksai Chin issue during talks in 1956, Nehru might have been prepared to compromise, "which was definitely not possible once China had built a road and committed a perceived aggression." Maxwell, *India's China War*, 93.

<sup>190</sup> Maxwell, *India's China War*, 134. Noorani similarly states that for all the pressures of public opinion, Nehru had not held "a different view of the past. He had himself mobilized public opinion. Had he so willed...a policy based on the historical truth and sensible diplomacy conducted in private could have cleared a route that would assuredly have led to accord." Noorani, *India-China Boundary*, 230-232.

<sup>191</sup> Speech in Rajya Sabha (8 December 1959), *Pm on Sino-Indian Relations*, 239.

policies.<sup>192</sup> Garver has in fact suggested that had Nehru accepted Chou's 1960 offer, he could "very probably have carried Indian public opinion with him."<sup>193</sup> Consequently, when Nehru spoke of not being prime minister, he was alluding not only to domestic pressures but also to his sense that concessions in the face of Chinese aggression would be wrong on the part of someone in his position.<sup>194</sup>

The explanation offered in this chapter might also help shed some light on Nehru's surprising decision to release the white papers in August 1959, when he himself acknowledged that public diplomacy on such issues, by rousing national feelings engendered rigidities which make a flexible approach impossible.<sup>195</sup> One can speculate therefore that the decision to release white papers at this point may have been a function not only of parliamentary pressures, but also of Nehru's realization that the flexibility he had sought earlier through secrecy was likely to serve little purpose in the face of China's extensive claims and refusal to concede to Indian preconditions. With no interest in budging from India's own basic position, Nehru likely even saw benefit in parliamentary and public

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<sup>192</sup> While the Congress itself held massive majorities in Parliament, none of the opposition parties could even garner enough seats (50 out of 518 in the fifth Lok Sabha) to count as the official opposition. Of these opposition parties the largest was often the Communist Party which remained the most sympathetic to the Chinese viewpoint in parliamentary debates. Jetly, *India China Relations, 1947-1977*, 8.

<sup>193</sup> John W. Garver, "China's Decision for War with India in 1962." (<http://chinaindiaborderdispute.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/garver.pdf>). 31. Maxwell suggests similarly that while public pressures were immense, they only cemented a position that Nehru had already adopted, and that he could have carried parliament with him if he had really chosen an alternative path. Maxwell, *India's China War*, 152-153.

<sup>194</sup> Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 86.

<sup>195</sup> Nehru would advise U Nu in 1956 to agree to informal and secret talks with Chou, because with formality and publicity "there is a tendency to adopt rigid attitudes. Once this rigidity comes in, then it becomes very difficult to deal with the matter" Nehru to U Nu (4 September 1956), *Smyj-Ss*, 509. He would make the same point in Parliament explaining earlier decisions to keep the issue secret. Speech in Lok Sabha (27 November 1959), *Pm on Sino-Indian Relations*, 213-216.

transparency as a useful bargaining tool.<sup>196</sup> That Indian officials were capable in thinking along those lines is illustrated in a note from Dutt earlier in the year, months before the release of the white papers, pointing to the possible merit of letting the Chinese “feel that there is anxiety in our country about the border incidents.”<sup>197</sup> On the day of the release of the white papers, an Indian note would in fact inform the Chinese government that the Indian government had until then “observed discreet reticence about these incidents” despite concern in public and parliament, implying that New Delhi now saw little benefit in doing so with China’s continued “unilateral application of force.”<sup>198</sup> Nehru would later state that by publishing the white papers what he was “aiming at is either winning over the other party or weakening the other party in its own opinion and in the world’s opinion and in my own.”<sup>199</sup> The resort to the ‘forward policy’ too, while it had its own underlying logic of deterrence and reputation building as discussed above, was therefore likely encouraged by the expectation of its salutary effect on a charged public opinion.<sup>200</sup> Nehru indeed saw the benefits of activating

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<sup>196</sup> As Walter Crocker has speculated: “Why did Nehru publish the White Papers? They were bound to unleash nationalist passion in India, probably to a degree which could deprive him of any leeway for negotiating. Pique? Nationalist passion in himself? Or calculation, for instance to exert pressure on China as well as to anticipate criticisms of his border policy in India? Walter R. Crocker, *Nehru: A Contemporary's Estimate* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), 105.

<sup>197</sup> S Dutt to PM (6 February 59), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 35, 91. This logic is in keeping with the “audience costs” logic discussed in an earlier chapter. James D. Fearon, “Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sinking Costs,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 1 (1997), Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

<sup>198</sup> Note of 28 August 1959, *White Paper I*, 44-45.

<sup>199</sup> Maxwell, *India's China War*, 127.

<sup>200</sup> Vertzberger, *Misperceptions in Foreign Policymaking*, 236. Maxwell in fact suggests that the forward policy was not spurred by popular pressure which had “simmered down” after the 1960 talks and had more pressing concerns than China and the Aksai Chin. Maxwell, *India's China War*, 205.

intense public feeling on the issue in helping speed up industrial productivity and nation-building in preparation for conflict with China.<sup>201</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The Indian government's approach to the nascent territorial dispute with China soon after independence, until the demoralizing military defeat in 1962, was in a very real sense motivated by what the leadership perceived to be the long term implications of compromise. The expectation of China's increasing might, supplemented by the perceived aggressive tendencies of the Chinese nation, generated in the Indian leadership fears of potential Chinese expansionism, the desire to curb which drove New Delhi to the adoption of an intractable position with regard to the frontier. While strategic considerations did motivate part of this intractability, such fears, particularly in the context of China's dominant bargaining position in the frontier regions, and later China's unilateral expansion into the Aksai Chin, activated the reputational imperative in the Indian leadership prompting anxiety that concessions on territory would, by signalling weakness in the face of Chinese power and coercion, only encourage pre-existing tendencies of expansionism in Peking. This concern would dictate an Indian determination to not negotiate, let alone concede territory that was even acknowledged to be worthless, without at least eliciting a Chinese withdrawal from the disputed territory and a retraction of the contention that the entire Sino-Indian boundary was undelimited. The 'forward policy' was a logical extension of a posture of firmness from the diplomatic to the military domain, as a means of deterrence through reputation building. Domestic political pressures, and nationalist mobilization mattered only later in the dispute,

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<sup>201</sup> Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 117.

and only to the extent that they reinforced tendencies to which the political leadership seemed already committed, one reason why there was little attempt on Nehru's part to convert domestic opposition to more conciliatory lines.

With the war having humiliatingly confirmed India's immense military weakness vis-à-vis China, regardless of Peking's declaration of a unilateral ceasefire and withdrawal in the eastern sector, there was, not surprisingly, even lesser willingness on the part of New Delhi to negotiate or compromise. Nehru would persist in his demand that Chinese troops and officials withdraw to the status quo prior to 8 September 1962 (which would maintain India's territorial gains made as part of the 'forward policy') before any talks could be held. For India to relent on this, Nehru would contend, "would mean not only letting him [the aggressor, China] have what he wanted but exposing our country to further inroads and demands in the future."<sup>202</sup> The war had only reinforced in Indian minds the belief that Communist China was indeed expansionist. For Nehru, "whenever in her history China has been big and powerful, it has tried to expand and overawe surrounding countries and bring them within its circle," and it was India's refusal to accept Chinese hegemony, rather than the territorial issue alone, which had evoked Chinese wrath.<sup>203</sup> India's intransigence was therefore necessitated not only by issues of territory, but also by the need to signal to China that India

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<sup>202</sup> The 8 September demand itself Nehru would defend against parliamentary criticism by arguing that getting China to agree to that demand would be a major victory for India as it would indicate Chinese acceptance of their aggression. Anything beyond that had little chance of Peking's agreement and would show India in poor light in the international community. Nehru would also now float the idea of sending the dispute to arbitration at the International Court of Justice, provided again that the Chinese withdraw to positions as they existed before 8 September. Jetly, *India China Relations, 1947-1977*, 191-197. According to Gopal, even after the Chinese withdrawal Nehru was absolutely unwilling "to consider negotiations which were not backed by strength." Gopal, *Nehru 3*, 234.

<sup>203</sup> Nehru, *Pakistan Seeks to Profit from Chinese Aggression*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, GOI, July 1963, 4. In Parliament, Nehru would declare that "China as constituted today is an aggressive and expansionist country, possibly with vast designs for the future." quoted in Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 196.

would not succumb to Chinese attempts at coercion and hegemony, and further undermine her own tattered status and prospects for the future. The reputational costs of compromise for India had only been magnified now, leaving the dispute intractable for the decades to come.



## China and the Sino-Indian Dispute

As was the case for India, the vast amount of disputed territory in the Sino-Indian frontier region held mixed salience for the communist Chinese leadership which came to power on the mainland in 1949. For the most part, these barren and sparsely inhabited frontier regions were of little intrinsic salience. For one, if they were inhabited at all, in ethno-nationalist terms these areas were composed of people of non-Han ethnicity. In the eastern sector, the population was largely composed of tribal groups, who if anything might have shared some cultural connections with Tibet. These territories therefore ostensibly enjoyed less importance for Peking than other Han majority disputed territories such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau, territories which were considered part of the 'homeland.' In addition to this lack of ethnic ties, the general lack of large permanent populations, or economically and strategically important endowments in these frontier regions also meant that these lands were unlikely to be very highly valued.<sup>1</sup> Only in the western sector did the territory assume strategic importance for Chinese control over a restive Tibet. As the only, and for many reasons the best, over land link from Tibet to the rest of China, access to the Aksai Chin area was viewed as essential for the transport of men and material indispensable for Chinese control over Tibet during and after the invasion of 1950.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation : Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 41-51. China's frontier disputes in general average 4.5 on a 12 point salience scale. Paul Hensel and Sara Mitchell, "Issue Indivisibility and Territorial Claims," *GeoJournal* 64, no. 4 (2005): 278.

<sup>2</sup> John W. Garver, *Protracted Contest : Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 80-88.

In another sense, however, the disputed territory did enjoy some nationalist salience for the new Chinese leadership. While Indian understandings of the frontier were viewed by the Chinese leadership as the perpetuation of the fruits of British colonialism, communist China's own extensive claims, contrarily, were premised on the need to redress what had been termed in China as the "century of national humiliation," when a weakened Qing dynasty had been forced to cede extensive territory and influence to foreign powers through "unequal treaties."<sup>3</sup> While the Sino-Indian frontier itself had not been shaped by any such treaty agreements, the wide divergence in Indian and Chinese claims was attributed in China to the inheritance by the new Indian leaders of the mantle of British colonialism, and the latter's efforts to deprive China of Tibet, and unilaterally impose the McMahon Line on Peking. Fulfilling China's territorial claims therefore had the nationalist objective of rectifying injustices attached to the colonial era.<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of this nationalist importance however, the Chinese leadership would demonstrate a marked tendency for conciliation and 'give and take' over competing claims in the late 1950s and early 1960s, despite their military dominance and stronger bargaining position in the disputed frontier regions.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, even after eventually resorting to the use

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<sup>3</sup> Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1988), Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2000), 21-95. As Mao would inform Edgar Snow in 1936 "it is the immediate task of China to regain all our lost territories." Quoted in Allen Sues Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Indochina* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), 7.

<sup>4</sup> As Chou would write to Nehru in his 8 September 1959 note, British expansionism in Tibet and Xinjiang constituted "the fundamental reason for the long term disputes over and non-settlement of the Sino-Indian boundary question...Unexpectedly, to the Chinese Government, however, the Indian Government demanded that the Chinese Government give formal recognition to the situation created by the application of the British policy of aggression against China's Tibet region as the foundation for the settlement of the Sino- Indian boundary question." *White Paper 2*, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 50-66.

of force, and comprehensively defeating India in the war of 1962, Peking would desist from exercising its newly reinforced bargaining advantage, and unilaterally withdraw from territory occupied in the eastern sector. This willingness to compromise, the nature of the concessions China was willing to make, as well as the eventual decision to use force, I suggest can be accounted for by the strategic and reputational imperatives identified in this dissertation. The minimal long term commitment problem that China perceived from India, and the imposing bargaining strength that Peking had built up in the frontier region over the course of the 1950s, meant that once the costs of the dispute with India escalated in the late 1950s, primarily as a result of the rebellion in Tibet, the Chinese leadership were able to move away from a delaying strategy to a conciliatory posture, with few strategic or reputational costs to worry about. Rather, the expectation that a demonstration of generosity would encourage greater cooperation from New Delhi and signal benignity to other neighbours and external audiences, only further incentivised the pursuit of a compromise solution. This was true only however of the eastern sector, because in the western theatre, the same Tibetan revolt had exacerbated the strategic costs of losing Aksai Chin, especially to an actively hostile India. A strategically driven posture of firmness with regard to this territory that China already held by the end of the 1950s, only acquired greater importance with India's refusal to negotiate, and resort to military pressures, making significant concessions reputationally unacceptable for Peking.

The decision to initiate war, and China's conduct thereafter, in addition to re-establishing China's military position in Aksai Chin, was also motivated strongly by reputational considerations. While the offensive itself was intended to signal to New Delhi that Chinese concessions were not a sign of weakness, and any attempts to exploit them would be punished ruthlessly, the later decision to unilaterally withdraw behind the

McMahon Line rather than impose a victor's solution to the dispute, sought to signal to India and others the extent of Chinese generosity and reasonableness. In summary, the perceived long term strategic and reputational implications of compromise, especially the latter, figured prominently in Chinese behaviour at all stages of the territorial dispute with India.

### **The Early Years of Delay, 1949-1957**

Similar to India, the early Chinese diplomatic approach to the nascent territorial dispute between the two countries demonstrated a disinclination to raise or address the issue, preferring rather to postpone the acknowledgment, let alone consideration, of any frontier issues between the two countries.<sup>6</sup> In response to Panikkar's allusion to the issue in a meeting in September 1951, therefore, Chou would suggest that barring the stabilization of the Tibetan frontier, "there was no territorial dispute or controversy between India and China." Even with regard to Tibet, having elicited Indian agreement to talk, there was no attempt by the Chinese leadership to follow through on the proposal.<sup>7</sup> In 1952, again, as Nehru for a brief period encouraged Panikkar to raise the frontier issue with Chou, the latter demonstrated little interest in a discussion.<sup>8</sup> Chinese maps which did represent large swathes of territory claimed by India as part of China were also explained away by Chou as old

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<sup>6</sup> As Fravel has pointed out, this was in keeping with Chinese policy in all of its frontier disputes during this period, choosing to defer opening up the territorial question even when the others had sought to do so. *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>7</sup> This state of affairs, of course, conveniently served Indian purposes at that stage as well. Panikkar note to Nehru of 28 September 1951, quoted in Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol. 2* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 177.

<sup>8</sup> Cable from Nehru to K.M. Panikkar (16 June 1952), *Sujn.-Ss.* vol. 18, 474-475.

inaccurate Nationalist ones, which the new Communist regime had had little time reconsider.<sup>9</sup> All this of course, while Nehru had been declaring publicly that India's boundaries with China were beyond dispute, with even the Indian takeover of Tawang in 1951 eliciting no reaction from Peking.

In the landmark talks over Tibet, which eventually took place in 1953-54, the Chinese would again, like the Indians, desist from raising the frontier issue leaving Nehru with the impression that no such issue therefore existed.<sup>10</sup> Little protest would be forthcoming from Peking even as India produced maps which showed the entire frontier as firm, and delimited in accordance with Indian claims, in not just the east but also in the western sector, where the frontier had until then been marked as undefined in Indian maps.<sup>11</sup> Only in the talks of December 1956 would Chou finally explicitly address the issue of the McMahon Line, with his approach now suggesting that at least part of the reason for early Chinese disinterest in the issue lay in a disinclination to alter the McMahon Line delineation.<sup>12</sup> Chou let it be known to Nehru that while his government disagreed with the legality of the McMahon Line, their desire was to not alter an "accomplished fact," and therefore would accept the

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<sup>9</sup> "Relations with China and Tibet" (3 November 1951), *ibid.* vol. 17, 507. In talks in October 1954 Chou would reassure his Indian counterpart that his government had not had the chance to survey the frontier regions and therefore had not had opportunity to revise old KMT maps, and had no intentions of challenging frontiers like its predecessor. "Foreign Policies of America and China" (20 October 1954), *ibid.* vol. 27, 14-20.

<sup>10</sup> According to Norbu, for Nehru the 1954 agreement implied a gentleman's agreement wherein in return for India's significant concessions on Tibet, China would recognize India's territorial claims and her special position in the Himalayan states. Dawa Norbu, "Tibet in Sino-Indian Relations: The Centrality of Marginality," *Asian Survey* 37, no. 11 (1997): 1080-1082.

<sup>11</sup> "Tibet and the Frontier with China" (1 July 1954), *Synj-Ss.* vol. 26, 482-483. Also, Steven A. Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 35, A. G. Noorani, *India-China Boundary Problem 1846-1947: History and Diplomacy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 223-224.

<sup>12</sup> Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (London: Cape, 1972), 81-82, 92-93.

McMahon Line delineation with Tibetan approval.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, however, given future developments, Chou would leave uncontested Nehru's conclusion that with this commitment by Chou the frontier between the two countries was well known and undisputed, barring a few minor issues which could be settled easily. The Chinese premier, tellingly, had failed to raise the issue of Aksai Chin in the western sector, which he was no doubt aware formed part of India's map claims.

That communist China showed little interest in raising the territorial dispute with India in the early years after coming to power is not surprising. Chou would explain to Nehru in late 1959 that the issue had never been raised "because conditions were not yet ripe for its settlement and the Chinese side, on its part, had had no time to study the question."<sup>14</sup> If one were to interpret the statement at its most benign, as Maxwell has, China's disinterest was merely a function of having accepted the McMahon Line as the de facto boundary, leaving little to dispute or discuss.<sup>15</sup> Given Chou's commitment to Nehru, China's tolerance of Indian actions and statements asserting sovereignty all the way to the McMahon Line, and Peking's later attitude towards that frontier, an interpretation that the Chinese were already prepared to make large concessions on the territorial issue certainly does not appear unreasonable. What remains unclear, however, raising questions about the deliberateness of delay on the part of China, is why Peking would avoid even referring to their claims in the western sector, claims that were objectively far more important in strategic terms, till the Indians threw open the issue in 1958, a failure which moreover was at least partly to blame

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<sup>13</sup> "Talks with Chou En-lai" (31 December 1956 and 1 January 1957), *Sinjn-Ss.* vol. 36, 598-600.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Chou to Nehru (23 January 1959), *White Paper 1*, 53.

<sup>15</sup> Maxwell, *India's China War*, 81-82.

for the later Indian conviction that the Chinese leadership had been sly and duplicitous in their dealings with India.

Delay, as Taylor Fravel has observed, is the least costly strategy for a state when “claim strength is stable, strong or strengthening, and it faces a benign security environment abroad and at home.”<sup>16</sup> Having only recently prevailed in a draining civil war, the new communist regime was naturally at its weakest, faced with the mammoth and resource hungry tasks of cementing their political authority over their territory, against internal and external threats.<sup>17</sup> In such a context antagonizing India was highly avoidable, especially when territorial issues could be addressed later when China had become stable and had acquired a stronger bargaining position. The immediate priority being Tibet, the Chinese leadership could do with Indian cooperation, something that would have become immediately problematic were China to exhibit overt hostility on territorial issues.<sup>18</sup> That the Indians themselves sought to avoid the issue only incentivised deferment for Peking. So did the fact that the initial Chinese perception of Indian threat and hostility<sup>19</sup>, particularly with regard to

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<sup>16</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 39.

<sup>17</sup> While externally, Nationalist forces in Taiwan backed by the Americans posed a continual threat, internally Peking had to contend particularly with the frontier areas of Tibet and Xinjiang where even historically Chinese empires had found establishing political and military control troublesome, and had therefore left few institutional links between the central government and these regions. *Ibid.*, 48-50, 72-75.

<sup>18</sup> India was significant strategically to the fulfillment of Chinese efforts in Tibet owing to preexisting rights and privileges that the former had in Tibet, including trading agencies, military escorts, and telegraph infrastructure, as well as the easier geographical access to Tibet from India. This meant that most of Tibet’s trade was with India, and moreover necessitated in the early years that Chinese officials travel to Tibet through India. Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 85-86.

<sup>19</sup> Early on the Chinese Communists had shown indications of regarding India and Nehru as a hostile, “running dog” of imperialism, who would persist with the policies of the former British colonialists. This necessitated, as Mao would write to the Communist Part of India (CPI) in 1949 that India too be liberated from the grip of western imperialism. Prithwis Chandra Chakravarti, *India's China Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 11, John Rowland, *A History of Sino-Indian Relations: Hostile Co-Existence* (Princeton, N.J: Van Nostrand, 1967), 82.

Tibet<sup>20</sup>, was quickly assuaged by New Delhi. The invasion of Tibet would briefly instigate a sharp exchange between the two governments, with Peking accusing India of intervention in China's internal affairs under foreign influence.<sup>21</sup> The lack of any further protests from New Delhi, the latter's acceptance of the Seventeen Point Agreement between China and Tibet<sup>22</sup>, as well as the Indian leadership's lack of enthusiasm for Tibetan appeals for independence at the UN, would all moderate fears of India in China. The 1954 treaty over Tibet, wherein India would relinquish most of her special rights and status in Tibet would be the culmination of the process of Indian reassurance of China.<sup>23</sup>

Along with this firming up its position in Tibet, China's military position, and hence bargaining strength in the Sino-Indian frontier region would also rapidly increase as Chinese

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<sup>20</sup> India's insistence on Tibetan autonomy, as Peking moved to "liberate" Tibet was seen in Peking as an attempt by the "reactionary" Indian leadership to forestall "progressive" reforms that the communist regime sought. More serious, Indian (following on the British) policies and intentions were suspected to seek the establishment of Tibet as a buffer zone between India and China, and therefore in cahoots with American, Nationalist Chinese and Tibetan elements seeking to deny Tibet to China. For an account for foreign activities in Tibet over the first decade or so of Chinese communist rule see A. Tom Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, Rev. ed. (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 82-106, 151-165, Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 12-19.

<sup>21</sup> Chakravarti, *India's China Policy*, 30, Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 46-47, Nancy Jetly, *India China Relations, 1947-1977: A Study of Parliament's Role in the Making of Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1979), 15-17.

<sup>22</sup> This agreement between China and Tibet confirmed Chinese control over the defence and foreign relations of Tibet, with the latter promised that there would be no change in either the existing political structure, or the status of the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of the Tibetans.

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed discussion of this period, and India's role in it, see Shakya Tsering, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet since 1947* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Compass, 2000), 33-130. The text of the agreement can be found in *ibid.*, 449-452. Nehru would justify these concessions publicly in India as based on the acceptance of facts, but also his government's desire to not be associated with the extra-territorial rights which resulted from British imperialism. Jetly, *India China Relations, 1947-1977*, 38. All this while moreover, Nehru had played the role of the PRCs constant champion in the international community, pushing for the restoration of China's seat at the UN to the communist regime, as well as supporting China claims to Formosa (Tibet) and playing the role of neutral broker between the Chinese and western powers once war broke out in the Korean peninsula in 1950. Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 28.



troops for the first time in decades pushed up to India's Tibetan frontier in the eastern sector, along with which came improvements in infrastructure further improving China's power projection capabilities on the frontier. More importantly, in the western sector, China would utilize this period of diplomatic inactivity to build up physical presence in the no-man's land of the Aksai Chin, where in 1956 the Chinese government would begin the task of building an all-weather road connecting Xinjiang and Tibet<sup>24</sup>, all the time filling out the disputed area by expanding military presence. No surprise then that Chinese found it useful to avoid any discussion of the frontier issue, at a point when they were engaged in bolstering their position in a piece of territory that they were likely well aware India had clear claims on. Deferment of any discussion on the western sector allowed for a steady build-up of Chinese bargaining strength in the area, without the complications that a diplomatic spat with India would have introduced.

### **Opening the Breach: Staking Chinese Claims and Compromise 1958-1962**

The Chinese strategy of delay became increasingly unviable however with India's abandonment of its own policy of avoidance once it was confirmed in New Delhi in the summer of 1958 that the Chinese road in the western sector did indeed pass through territory claimed by India. While initial Chinese responses to Indian protests would brush off New Delhi's claims, they would acknowledge that "with the elapse of time and after consultations...and a survey of the border region, a new way of drawing the boundary of

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<sup>24</sup> Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 8-9.

China will be decided.”<sup>25</sup> Chou’s response to Nehru’s note of 14 December 1958 would add greater clarity to China’s position by stating that the Sino-Indian border having never been delimited by treaty or agreement, “there are certain differences between the two sides.” The Chinese Premier would reiterate, however, that while his government had not had the time to study the problem and survey the disputed areas, on the McMahon Line Peking found it “necessary to take a more or less realistic attitude,” cautioning nevertheless that China “cannot but act with prudence and needs time to deal with the occasion.” In the meantime, Chou would suggest that as a provisional measure the two sides adhere to the status quo.<sup>26</sup>

Apparently, there was no real urgency felt in Peking even at this point, as there would be no direct communication from Chou for the next several months, even as Nehru in his 22 March 1959 note to Chou would assert that “in most parts it [the boundary] has the sanction of specific international agreements,” asking furthermore that “if any possession has been secured recently, the position should be rectified.”<sup>27</sup> Only on 8 September 1959 would Chou write back acknowledging now that there was a “fundamental difference” between the two parties, accusing the Indian government of applying “all sorts pressures on the Chinese Government, not even scrupling the use of force to support this demand.” He would now assert the contention that the Sino-Indian frontier had never been delimited, and then proceed to detail China’s claims in both the western and eastern sectors which he claimed reflected the true “traditional” boundary between the two countries. Chou would also restate, however, that his government sought a friendly resolution of the dispute based on “the

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<sup>25</sup> Memorandum from Foreign Office of China to the Counsellor of India (3 November 1958), *White Paper 1*, 28.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Chou to Nehru (23 January 1959), *White Paper 1*, 52-54.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Nehru to Chou (22 March 1959), *White Paper 1*, 55-57.

historical background and existing actualities,” pending which the status quo ought to be maintained.<sup>28</sup>

Also now, the Chinese Premier would begin to actively seek negotiations with New Delhi, something he had shown little urgency about in the past. On 7 November, Chou would make a concrete suggestion towards ensuring stability on the frontiers by proposing the withdrawal of the armed forces (not administrative personnel) of both sides to twenty kilometres behind “the so-called McMahon line in the east, and from the line up to which each side exercises actual control in the west.” Chou would further propose that “the Prime Ministers of the two countries hold talks in the immediate future.”<sup>29</sup> Having rejected Nehru’s counterproposal<sup>30</sup> as unfair, since all the withdrawing would have been done by China with only “theoretical” concessions by India, Chou nevertheless renewed his call for talks, with the suggestion that they be held in Rangoon on 26 December 1959.<sup>31</sup> Chou’s persistence on a direct meeting with Nehru would eventually result in latter’s agreement to talk in Delhi in April of 1960. While the talks in Delhi would fail spectacularly, it is clear, as discussed in the

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<sup>28</sup> Note of 8 September 1959, *White Paper 2*, 27-33. Specifically with regard to the McMahon line Chou would write to Nehru: “This piece of territory corresponds in size to the Chekiang Province of China and is as big as ninety thousand square kilometres. Mr. Prime Minister, how could China agree to accept under coercion such an illegal line which would have it relinquish its rights and disgrace itself by selling out its territory-and such a large piece of territory as that? The delineation of the Sino-Indian boundary east of Bhutan in all traditional Chinese maps is a true reflection of the actual situation of the customary boundary before the appearance of the so called McMahon Line.”

<sup>29</sup> Letter from Chou to Nehru (7 November 1959), *White Paper 3*, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Nehru would insist on the status quo ante, which would mean in the east troops were to stay behind the McMahon Line, whereas in the west both sides were to withdraw behind each other’s claim lines. Nehru furthermore saw no need for the maintenance of administrative personnel in that region. Letter from Nehru to Chou (16 November 1959), *White Paper 3*, 46-50.

<sup>31</sup> Letter from Chou to Nehru (17 December 1959), *White Paper 3*, 52-57. Nehru would again rebuff this offer further seeking clarification of Chinese claims, in response to which the Chinese MFA would send a note on 26 December detailing those claims and their basis. *White Paper 3*, 60-82. Based on these claims, Nehru would respond on 5 February 1960, there could be no negotiations. Letter from Nehru to Chou (5 February 1960), *White Paper 3*, 80-81.

previous chapter, that the Chinese Premier sought a resolution in line with the “realities of the situation.” In keeping with Chou’s intimations to Nehru in previous years, this meant a confirmation that China would agree to stick to the alignment of the McMahon Line in the east.<sup>32</sup> In return Chou sought for India to accept that the Aksai Chin belonged to China by virtue of the latter’s obvious control over it. Such a resolution, the Chinese would suggest, could be arrived at based on negotiations to be conducted on the basis of an initial acknowledgment by both parties that the Sino-Indian border had never been delimited.<sup>33</sup>

Spurned by the Indians, over the next year the Chinese continued to convey through various diplomatic channels, including the Burmese leader U Nu, their continued wish to resolve the dispute peacefully, even probing whether the appointment of an arbitrator would be acceptable to India. In 1962, Chinese diplomats would reportedly inform leftist Indian journalists that in addition to accepting the McMahon Line delineation in the east, Peking was also willing to offer New Delhi joint use of their road in the Aksai Chin and the formation of a joint body to consider the delimitation of the frontier in that sector.<sup>34</sup> In a final desperate effort at cajoling India to negotiations, before resorting to war in October

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<sup>32</sup> This was in line with the apparent policy decision made in Peking in the end of 1959 to seek a negotiated settlement with India on the border issue, leading to Mao’s statement to Khrushchev in October 1959 that “the McMahon Line with India will be maintained and the border conflict will end.” Quoted in Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 83, 93-95. In 1960, the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) had decided to bring an end to the dispute through the principle of “give and take” where both sides would be expected to make some concessions towards compromise. *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>33</sup> Chou would develop his six point proposal at a press conference at the end of the New Delhi talks. Noorani, *India-China Boundary*, 227-228. According to Indian records, the Chinese stand was that in these negotiations “neither side should make a territorial claim as a precondition. China is not making any such claim to the NEFA and undertakes not to cross the line up to which Indian control has extended. Similarly, India should recognise that Chinese control extends upto the line shown in the Chinese maps and should not try to cross that line...The Indian claim to Ladakh must be treated in exactly the same bar as the Chinese claim to the NEFA.” Note from FS (Dutt) to Ind. Mission (27 April 60), *PN Haksar Papers*, Subject File 25.

<sup>34</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 95-96, 100-101.

1962, in meetings with Krishna Menon during the Geneva Conference in July 1962, China's representative to the UN, Chen Yi, would hint that his country would be willing to make even further concessions in the western sector.<sup>35</sup>

### **Tibet, the Frontier, and India: Abandoning Delay**

While India's vehement protests had made delay no longer viable for Peking, it was the development of an Indian threat towards the late 1950s that truly incentivised for the Chinese leadership a reconsideration of the frontier issue. This exacerbated perception of threat in turn owed itself not to pressures and demands on the frontier itself, but more significantly to developments internal to China, where a massive rebellion erupted in Tibet in 1959, to be followed soon after by an economic crisis with the disastrous failure of the Great Leap Forward (GLF).

By 1957-1958, the Chinese government had already been putting down Tibetan armed resistance, and had lost control of much of Tibet itself barring Lhasa. In March 1959, the situation significantly deteriorated, with massive demonstrations in Lhasa resulting in armed clashes between protestors and Chinese forces on March 17, which was followed by a full-fledged PLA attack on demonstrators on March 20.<sup>36</sup> In China, the downturn in Tibet was immediately linked to India. Chou had expressed such concerns as early as in 1956-57 in talks with Nehru, stating that a Tibetan "minority under foreign influence... [whose]

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<sup>35</sup> Arthur S. Lall, *The Emergence of Modern India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 156. As early as February 1962, there were reports that the Chinese were willing to abandon their map claims in favour of a resolution along the then existing position in the western sector. Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 52.

<sup>36</sup> Tsering, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 201-203.

activities are mainly carried out from Kalimpong [in India]” were responsible for the brewing trouble in Tibet, activities which the “Government of India should intervene” stop.<sup>37</sup> With the revolt in Tibet, the Chinese government would openly declare that the rebellion had been conceived and executed from Kalimpong, its “commanding centre,” assumedly with Indian connivance<sup>38</sup>, a charge Nehru would vehemently deny.<sup>39</sup> In a May 1959 meeting with ambassadors from socialist countries, Chou would further accuse Nehru of aiming to have Tibet “serve as a ‘buffer’ under the Indian sphere of influence, and become their protectorate.”<sup>40</sup> Aggravating these fears in China of Indian designs in Tibet was the Indian decision to grant the Dalai Lama asylum following the latter’s escape from Lhasa, and even more so the reception he would receive from Indian state officials, and the general public at large.<sup>41</sup> The relative freedom with which the Dalai Lama was allowed to conduct political

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<sup>37</sup> Local officers, furthermore, Chou would accuse, seemed to be sympathetic to the Tibetan cause, even calling Tibet a separate country. During this period, the Dalai Lama was visiting India and Chou would refer also to rumours that the Tibetan leader intended to stay on in India, suggesting an awareness of the already deteriorating situation in Tibet. Talks with Chou En-lai (31 December 1956 and 1 January 1957), *Swjn-Ss*. vol. 36, 594-620. In mid-1958 Nehru would claim that “our relations with China are not as good as they have been in the past, chiefly because they think that we are conniving at the act of Tibetan emigration in Darjeeling, Kalimpong, etc.” Nehru to Apa Pant (11 July 1958), *Apa Pant Papers*, Subject File 6. Nehru’s apparent encouragement to the Dalai Lama during this period to return to Tibet and assert Tibetan autonomy only further embittered Chinese opinion. Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 54.

<sup>38</sup> Maxwell, *India’s China War*, 104, 263.

<sup>39</sup> Statement in Lok Sabha (23 March 1959), *Prime Minister on Sino-Indian Relations: Vol. 1: In Parliament*. External Publicity Division, MEA, GOI: New Delhi, 1962, 11-13.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 60-61. That there was some basis to Chinese claims about Kalimpong, though not necessarily to Indian connivance, is clear from Nehru’s note to Mountbatten in as early as September 1954 claiming that Kalimpong was “an amazing nest of spies. Because of its nearness to Tibet and the constant flow of traffic through it to Tibet and from Tibet, this place has attracted intelligence agents, professional as well as private...” Nehru to Lord Mountbatten (18 September 1954), *Swjn-Ss*. vol. 26, 222.

<sup>41</sup> Chinese actions also evoked much criticism in the Indian Parliament which would not go unnoticed in Peking where India would be accused of interfering in China’s internal affairs and encouraging anti-China slander. Jetly, *India China Relations, 1947-1977*, 59-78.

activities in India<sup>42</sup>, moreover, made the likelihood of a Tibetan government in exile a very real fear for the Chinese leadership.<sup>43</sup> Exacerbating these concerns was the imposition by India of a trade embargo on Tibet in April 1959, which complicated Chinese attempts to stabilize Tibet even further,<sup>44</sup> especially as by the end of 1959 China had begun to enter a period of catastrophic economic downturn with the failure of the GLF experiment.<sup>45</sup>

In the midst of acute trouble in Tibet, the Indian diplomatic escalation of the territorial issue only a few days after the beginning of the revolt in Lhasa, would not surprisingly be viewed in Peking as part of a larger Indian scheme to first spur, and then take advantage of, China's internal troubles. In his 8 September note, Chou would indeed explicitly draw this link by noting that the border situation had become increasingly tense only after the outbreak of rebellion in Tibet. Indian troops, he would state, had not coincidentally now started pushing across the eastern section of the boundary and had in fact

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<sup>42</sup> Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 57-61, *ibid.*, Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol. 3* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 88, Maxwell, *India's China War*, 263. Nehru would acknowledge in a speech to Parliament in September 1959 that while India wanted to give the Dalai Lama "freedom of action within limitations," "no doubt all this must have affected and is affecting the Chinese mind, and perhaps it is due to that and not to the logic or the reasonableness of the Chinese position in regard to India, in regard to our frontiers that they are taking up this rigid attitude." Speech to Rajya Sabha (10 September 1959), *Prime Minister on Sino-Indian Relations: In Parliament*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of External Affairs, Government of India, 1962), 142.

<sup>43</sup> Later, in March 1962, the Chinese government would accuse India of interfering in China's internal affairs "by openly expressing its sympathy for the Tibetan rebels and conniving at their anti-Chinese political activities...the Indian Government even today allows the Tibetan rebels to operate in India in the virtual capacity of an exile government." Note from MFA to Indian Embassy (3 March 1962), *White Paper 6*, 191-192.

<sup>44</sup> The Tibetan economy was still primarily reliant on trade with India for sustenance. Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 82.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, 98-101, Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 20-27.

even overstepped the McMahon Line in places.<sup>46</sup> Later, in explaining the 1962 war, Mao would assert that the problem was never “of the McMahon Line, but the Tibet question,” which the Indians regarded as theirs.<sup>47</sup> This perceived two pronged pressure from India, in Tibet and on the frontier, now posed a real threat to the Chinese leadership, a threat exacerbated by fears of Indian collusion with China’s other major adversaries, the US and the Taiwan based nationalists.<sup>48</sup>

In this context the issue for Peking now became not one of *whether* to address the territorial dispute with India, but one of *how* to do so. The answer to that question was not self-apparent, since logically the Chinese did possess two viable options: buy peace through compromise, or deter India through a demonstration of firmness by ratcheting up diplomatic and military pressure on New Delhi on both the border and Tibetan fronts. A policy of firmness did have some virtues to recommend it. First, given Chinese military strength it was an eminently viable option, and indeed as tensions on the border intensified in October 1959, local PLA commanders would seek Mao’s approval for punitive assaults on Indian positions.<sup>49</sup> For all the pressure that was emanating from India, the fact remained that Indian forces posed little of a direct strategic threat to China in the frontier regions, owing to their

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<sup>46</sup> China on the other hand, Chou would state, had only stationed troops in the frontier to prevent Tibetan rebels from crossing back and forth from India and Tibet. Letter from Chou to Nehru (8 September 1959), *White Paper* 2, 27-33.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 59.

<sup>48</sup> During the period of revolt, the Chinese media would link developments in Tibet to “US imperialism and Chiang Kai-shek agents,” painting Nehru as engaged in a class war with China in collusion with the US. Chou would explicitly draw a link between India’s economic dependence on the US with the former’s attitude towards Tibet and the frontier issue. Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 17-19, 156. By 1960 ties with the Soviet Union were also deteriorating, with the Soviets terminating technical assistance and soon after beginning sale of military equipment to India. For a comprehensive account of the growing ideological Sino-Soviet split see, Lorenz M. Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>49</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 84.



significant military weakness.<sup>50</sup> Second, and relatedly, given China's military predominance, diplomatic and military pressure on India could have served Peking as an effective means to demonstrate the intensity of Chinese displeasure, and therefore as a deterrent to bring Indian actions in line with Chinese interests. Third, firmness by punishing India for its transgressions would have functioned as a reputational signal not only to New Delhi, but also to other external adversaries by demonstrating that internal troubles had not enfeebled the Chinese leadership so as to be unable to firmly resist trouble mongering external adversaries. Finally, a firm stance would have precluded the need to make any, let alone, substantial concessions on territorial claims to which the Chinese leadership did attach some value.

As much as the escalating costs of dispute with India, therefore, explain the timing of China's urgent activity with regard to the territorial dispute, they do not alone seem to explain the choice to compromise per se. Indeed, the fact that the Chinese leadership had even in earlier years indicated a willingness to accept the McMahon Line delineation, which would only be concretized in China's 1960 offer, suggests that the incentive to compromise was not purely a result of the concatenation of threats that China faced in the late 1950s. The Chinese decision to adopt the path of compromise, and the nature of such concessions, I suggest, can be accounted for by the fact that, owing to the minimal commitment problem they faced from the direction of India, the concessions that Peking was willing to make were viewed by the leadership to entail negligible strategic or reputational costs, and rather were

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<sup>50</sup> With Chinese troops moving into the frontier areas following the revolt in Tibet, the military balance only further tilted in China's favour, as even the Indian leadership would be aware. In the western sector the Chinese were in physical possession of the disputed territory, while in the eastern sector they possessed a potent military presence overlooking NEFA. See Chapter 5, and Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 11.

expected to offer the benefits of a positive reputation of generosity, while preserving strategic interests.

### **Explaining the Choice and Extent of Compromise**

The long term possibility of India reneging on commitments made as part of a territorial settlement was perceived to be low to moderate in Peking. While the Chinese had held from the beginning deep seated suspicions of the “bourgeois” Indian leadership’s expansionist intentions<sup>51</sup>, fears which were no doubt confirmed in the lead up to, and during the rebellion in Tibet<sup>52</sup>, such fears were likely moderated by China’s undoubted military superiority vis-à-vis India. Moreover, this distinct military advantage that the Chinese already possessed – they already had one of the largest battle hardened armies in the world in 1949, which would prove its efficacy in Korea soon after – was unlikely to depreciate in the long term as the Chinese leadership resolved their internal political and economic troubles, making China increasingly secure against any potential Indian threats.<sup>53</sup> Reinforcing this material aspect of China’s military confidence, especially against an adversary such as India, were the efficacy beliefs that the Chinese leadership (particularly Mao) held about the utility

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<sup>51</sup> The extent of this perception is evident in the fact that even in the 1990s, authoritative Chinese studies of the 1962 Sino-Indian war would attribute it to Nehru’s persistence with British imperialism which sought to dominate neighbours and establish regions like Tibet as “buffers.” Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 18-19.

<sup>52</sup> Not only were the Indians held responsible from trouble in Tibet and on the frontier, but were even suspected in Peking of actively colluding with the US-Taiwan axis, and/or with the Soviet Union at China’s expense. Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 34-41.

<sup>53</sup> Chakravarti, *India's China Policy*, 154-155.

of the instrument of force, and the importance of strategy and morale, beliefs which had already stood the test of wars against stronger adversaries.<sup>54</sup>

In the absence of strong concerns that China may not be able to hold the Indian leadership to their commitments in the long term, the strategic or reputational imperatives for firmness on the part of the Chinese leadership were limited. In the eastern sector in particular, this was especially the case, making large concessions unproblematic for Peking. Already with the Himalayas serving as an imperious barrier between NEFA and Tibet, the territory below the McMahon Line possessed few physical, strategic properties which would have made it crucial for the defence of Chinese territorial integrity from the potentially expansionist desires of a hostile, “imperialist lackey” India. China’s military predominance on the Tibetan frontier, which imparted on Peking dominant bargaining leverage in the eastern sector despite having allowed uncontested Indian control of the territory below the McMahon Line, only made such risks even more negligible.<sup>55</sup> Illustrating the dominance that PLA troops enjoyed in the frontier areas is the fact that even at the approach of war in 1962, despite all the internal travails that China had endured in recent years and India’s own exertions as part of the ‘forward policy,’ the PLA enjoyed a five-to-one advantage in terms of manpower, as well as qualitative superiority in terms of firepower, boasting of heavy mortars

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<sup>54</sup> For a discussion of this belief in the efficacy of the military instrument, in contrast to Nehru’s belief in the efficacy of persuasion through words, see Andrew Bingham Kennedy, *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru: National Efficacy Beliefs and the Making of Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Also see the chapter on the Korean War in T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>55</sup> No surprise then that from the very beginning, the Chinese leadership would, despite their claims in the region, show little interest in acquiring territory below the McMahon Line, or even resist India’s laboured expansion into NEFA, which had included the transparent police action to acquire control over Tawang in 1951.

and automatic rifles, while Indian troops only had few three-inch mortars, machine guns, and World War I vintage rifles.<sup>56</sup>

With such few risks, there was also little need also for Peking to use territory as a signalling device to build a reputation of firmness. Indeed owing to Chinese military dominance, if concessions – particularly of the size that China was willing make in the eastern sector - were to have any reputational implications, they were likely expected to show China in favourable light to India and other neighbours, by demonstrating Chinese cooperation and generosity, rather than weakness. Such a reputation for generosity, in turn, had become truly urgent with rising Indian hostility, and the growing sense in China of being encircled by enemies intent on exploiting the communist regime’s domestic troubles. By demonstrating generosity on the territorial issues, ceding to India all of the disputed territory in the eastern sector, despite having the strength to demand more, was likely hoped in Peking to effectively elicit reciprocal cooperation from New Delhi in quelling the rebellion in Tibet and stabilizing frontiers, in addition to signalling Chinese benevolence to other neighbouring states.<sup>57</sup>

This reputational calculus also probably helps additionally account for the Chinese insistence on India’s acceptance of the undelimited nature of the Sino-Indian frontier, as a prelude to making concessions. Such an acknowledgment by New Delhi, by attesting to the legitimate right of Peking to contest territory in the frontier region, would have added credence to the fact that China had indeed been generous to India by conceding territory which had nationalist salience for Peking. Accepting India’s claims to NEFA without such an

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<sup>56</sup> Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 77-78.

<sup>57</sup> A PLA document would assert that “to stabilize our south-western border region quickly, we must not only bring stability to the interior (*neibu*), but also to the exterior (*waiibu*). Quoted in Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 85-86. Also, 71-72.

acknowledgment by India, on the other hand, would have potentially had the contrary reputational effect of serving as an acknowledgment to India and the world that the Chinese had been pursuing illegitimate expansionist claims all along.

In contrast to the eastern sector, making anything more than minor concessions in the western sector did have serious strategic costs for the Chinese leadership. Control of the Aksai Chin, as discussed earlier, was crucial to stabilizing Tibet, and this importance for Peking had already manifested itself in the fact that in contrast to the eastern sector where the Chinese had done little to resist Indian control of disputed territory, in the west the Chinese had over the years strengthened their presence, including the building of the strategically important Xinjiang-Tibet highway. The rebellion in Tibet, if anything, only exacerbated the strategic importance of this territory,<sup>58</sup> as well as the risks associated with ceding possession of it to India. While there was certainly little India could do directly or militarily to exploit possession of the Aksai Chin, to concede the entire territory to an India that the Chinese leaders believed was conspiring with western powers to detach Tibet from their possession, was at the least expected to complicate to an intolerable extent China's control over Tibet in years to come.<sup>59</sup> As Garver has noted, the Chinese believed that "Nehru sought to cut the Aksai Chin road as part of an effort to force the PLA out of

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<sup>58</sup> The highway passing through Aksai Chin became central to China's pacification of a Tibet in revolt, especially as it entered the territory through the west, rather than the east where Tibetan rebels continued to be active and threatened Chinese supply routes. Not only was the route significant for bringing in military forces and supplies, but with the imposition of an Indian trade embargo on Tibet such a route assumed great significance for maintaining the stability of the Tibetan economy, the collapse of which was only likely to compound Chinese existing troubles in Tibet.

<sup>59</sup> Also, as Brines suggests, the Aksai Chin had become increasingly important for China's retention of Xinjiang, which was now troubled by an expanding rift between the China and the Soviet Union in that region. Russell Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968), 174-175.

Tibet...Without the Aksai Chin road the PLA would have been much less able to repress the Tibetan splittist rebellion.”<sup>60</sup>

In addition to this strategic aspect, firmness over the China’s claims in the western sector also possessed some reputational utility for the Chinese leadership. Having decided to address the dispute with a spirit of “give and take,”<sup>61</sup> to succumb to the entirety New Delhi’s demands was viewed in Peking as going far beyond reasonableness to a state of abject surrender, especially in the western sector where not only was China’s position on the ground indisputably strong, but where, more importantly, even Nehru had earlier acknowledged India’s legal claims and strategic interest to be negligible. The nature of India’s terms prior to negotiations, by denying China of both territory as well as any *locus standi* over the territories in dispute, while retaining the moral high ground for New Delhi, only made concessions in the west reputationally unacceptable. For Chou, therefore, with the Aksai Chin having “long been under Chinese jurisdiction and is of great importance to China... [having long been the] traffic artery linking up the vast regions of Sinkiang and western Tibet,” India’s demands were “unfair” and far from “equitable.”<sup>62</sup> New Delhi’s position on the western sector was indeed an “absurdity,” and could hardly be considered serious unless the Indian government was prepared to apply the same principle equitably to the eastern sector as well. Barring this, India’s terms were unacceptable to Peking as China was not “a defeated country,” and would “absolutely not retreat an inch from its stand on the questions

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<sup>60</sup> Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 85-87, 90-91.

<sup>61</sup> A participant in the 1960 PBSC meeting would summarize the approach as one where “China should make some concessions, India should make some concessions, [and] in this way reach an agreement through mutual compromise.” Quoted in Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 85.

<sup>62</sup> Letter from Chou to Nehru (17 December 1959), *White Paper 3*, 52-53.

of the Sino-Indian boundary.”<sup>63</sup> “Liberated” China, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) note would therefore declare, while willing to negotiate and settle all boundary issues with her neighbours, would not “allow itself to be plunged back to the position of the injured old China” of having territorial claims imposed on her.<sup>64</sup> The Indian resort to coercive tactics and military pressure in the western sector with the ‘forward policy’ in 1961 only reinforced this Chinese determination to stand firm.

### **The Descent to War and Unilateral Withdrawal, 1962**

Having failed to cajole India into what they viewed as a reasonable and equitable diplomatic resolution of the territorial dispute, the Chinese leadership would eventually resort to a punishing military offensive in October-November 1962, comprehensively demolishing any Indian pretence of being able to contest China’s military might. Towards the end of the first phase of the war (20-25 October) Chou would write to Nehru renewing the suggestion of mutual withdrawal and disengagement from the “line of actual control,” to be followed by negotiations.<sup>65</sup> With Nehru’s refusal<sup>66</sup> would come the second phase of military action, this time completely routing Indian troops all along the disputed frontier. Having

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<sup>63</sup> Note from China MFA to the Embassy of India in China (4 May 1961), *White Paper 5*, 25-26. India’s terms, the MFA would declare, by demanding that China withdraw “from its own territory” amounted to “a summary rejection” of negotiations and a peaceful settlement to the dispute. Note from China MFA to the Embassy of India in China (22 March 1962), *White Paper 6*, 21-25.

<sup>64</sup> Note from China MFA to the Embassy of India in China (11 May 1962), *White Paper 6*, 40.

<sup>65</sup> *White Paper 7*, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Nehru would reply on 27 October that India would be willing to discuss further measures to facilitate a peaceful settlement were China to withdraw to the position existing prior to 8 September 1962. *White Paper 7*, 4-5. To this Chou would reply that by “line of actual control” he meant the line existing on 7 November 1959, that is before India had started establishing forward posts in the western sector. *White Paper 7*, 7-10.

occupied much of the disputed territory, on 21 November China would surprisingly announce a unilateral ceasefire and the decision to voluntarily withdraw from most of the territory recently occupied, to a position 20 kilometres behind the position on the ground as it had existed on 7 November 1959, that is before India had put the “forward policy” into effect.<sup>67</sup> Both decisions, to initiate war after having sued for peace for so long, as well as to unilaterally withdraw from territory China had occupied in the war, demonstrate that reputational considerations continued to motivate Chinese decision making.

In initiating a military offensive, the Chinese leadership sought primarily to put an end to India’s bothersome ‘forward policy,’ having been convinced that New Delhi had no interest in the diplomatic path. As early as May 1960, Chou had intimated Mao about Indian “nibbling” in the western sector, which by 1962 had resulted in a moderate strengthening of India’s military position in the region, with Indian forces having occupied around 3,000 square kilometres of territory.<sup>68</sup> Indications of Soviet willingness to militarily equip India further underlined for Peking the fact that China’s dominant position in the frontier regions vis-à-vis India might not persist indefinitely.<sup>69</sup> To exacerbate Chinese concerns, all this was of course happening as internal troubles were compounding with the failure of the GLF becoming apparent, and unrest brewing in Xinjiang, while Peking was still engaged in ending the rebellion in Tibet. External actors moreover, were seemingly intent on exploiting China’s misfortunes, with the Taiwanese and Americans strongly suspected of planning an assault on

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<sup>67</sup> For the most detailed account of the Chinese decisions and calculus leading to, during and immediately after the war see, Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 107-170. For a more recent, complementary account, also see Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 174-197.

<sup>68</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 176-177.

<sup>69</sup> The Soviet Union, in mid-1960 expanded financial aid to India to the tune of \$500 million. In 1961, Russia sold India 8 Antonov-12 and 24 Ilyushin-14 transport aircrafts, as well as Mil-4 helicopters. There was also a talk of India acquiring from the USSR jet engines and fighter planes. Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 72-75.



the mainland, while relations with Moscow seemed to be deteriorating as well, all of which reinforced Peking's sense of growing encirclement. In the frontier itself, the economic travails, and especially food shortages affecting the troops, and their families in other parts of China, were directly manifesting themselves on the PLA troops' morale and efficiency.<sup>70</sup> The use of force therefore served Peking as useful means of arresting and reversing the decline that China had seen in its position in the western sector, before the Indian position became less easily surmountable.

Were the intentions only to reverse territorial losses, however, the Chinese leadership could have ostensibly confined their military offensive to the western sector. That they would not do so suggests that there were significant reputational goals underlying the initiation of war as well. By demonstrating the full force of Chinese firmness, Peking served to deter India (and possibly even others) from troubling China again for a significant period of time by signalling that there would be no tolerance shown for attempts at coercing China into surrender.<sup>71</sup> Prior to the war, Chinese communications would persistently seek to disabuse the Indian leadership of the impression that the China's internal troubles would translate to vulnerability to coercion on frontier issues. In early November 1961, the Chinese MFA would note "the Indian troops' steady pressing forward on China's borders," and warn that "it would be very erroneous and dangerous should the Indian Government take China's attitude of restraint and tolerance as an expression of weakness."<sup>72</sup> At the end of the month, the MFA would further caution that if New Delhi's logic that it had full rights to create its

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 12-41.

<sup>71</sup> This is Whiting's general account. Mao is believed to have felt that defeating India in war would "create 10 years of border stability." Zhang Tong's (at the time of the war a diplomat in the MFA) account quoted in Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 175.

<sup>72</sup> Note from China MFA to the Embassy of India in China (2 November 1961), *White Paper 6*, 1-2.

posts in the western sector were accepted, “the Chinese Government would have every reason to send troops to cross the so called “McMahon Line” and enter the vast area between the crest of the Himalayas and their Southern foot.”<sup>73</sup> The continuance of India’s activities in the western sector would be noted by the Chinese as “deliberate attempts to realize by force the territorial claims put forward by the Indian Government,” which “is most dangerous and may lead to grave consequences.”<sup>74</sup>

With these early diplomatic warnings doing little to quell intensifying Indian military activities<sup>75</sup>, a decision would be made in Peking to strengthen Chinese signalling, by intensifying the nature of Chinese resistance. First would come the resumption of assertive patrolling in the western sector in April 1962.<sup>76</sup> By May these instructions would be extended to the eastern sector also, and Chou would instruct his military commanders to complete preparations by the end of June for a military offensive against India.<sup>77</sup> What is more, a 16 July note would forebodingly warn that India “will make a fatal mistake if it should think that China is flabby and can be bullied in view of her self-restraint and forbearance and persist in its act of playing with fire in an attempt to assert its territorial claims by armed force.”<sup>78</sup> That

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<sup>73</sup> Chinese troops had been ordered, the note would further state, “to strictly observe this sector of the boundary,” but not send patrols within 20 kilometres of the Chinese side of the boundary. Note from China MFA to the Embassy of India in China (30 November 1961), *White Paper 6*, 4.

<sup>74</sup> Note from China MFA to the Embassy of India in China (1 March 1962), *White Paper 6*, 14-16.

<sup>75</sup> Nehru’s repeated declarations in the India parliament that the creation of new posts which “sometimes go behind the Chinese positions” had progressively strengthened her position would further convince the Chinese that Indian activities had been “fully planned and systematic.” Note from China MFA to the Embassy of India in China (13 July 1962), *White Paper 6*, 85-87.

<sup>76</sup> Note of Chinese Government, *White Paper 6*, 37-39.

<sup>77</sup> Moreover with regard to patrolling, Chinese troops would now be instructed dominate nearby Indian posts without resorting to force, and rather compel Indians troops to withdraw through a show of firmness. Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 184-185.

<sup>78</sup> Note from China MFA to the Embassy of India in China (16 July 1962), *White Paper 6*, 91.

China would be perfectly justified (and would be seen as such internationally) in punishing India's "attitude of great-power chauvinism," had already been made clear. "Anyone in the world with common sense" an MFA note would assert, would ask India the embarrassing and self-explanatory question of why while the Burmese, Nepalese, and Pakistani governments had managed to find a solution for their territorial dispute with China, "the Indian Government cannot negotiate and settle its boundary question with the Chinese Government?"<sup>79</sup> In September 1962, tensions would mount in the eastern sector in the Dhola-Namka Chu area as Chinese troops stationed themselves along the Thag La ridge and moved south to positions opposite Dhola, an action motivated again by the desire to further ratchet up the pressure on India to abandon the 'forward policy' and enter negotiations.<sup>80</sup> The action would be accompanied by a note from Peking stating that "China will welcome negotiations if seriously intended, but will resist, whenever attacked," and that it would bring India no good to pursue a policy of "sham negotiations and real fighting."<sup>81</sup> Another note sent the same day would further warn that "shooting and shelling are no child's play; and he who plays with fire will eventually be consumed by fire."<sup>82</sup>

With India's refusal to adhere to even these warnings,<sup>83</sup> in early October the Chinese leadership would decide on war, with the objectives of, as Fravel has noted, stabilizing the

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<sup>79</sup> Note from China MFA to the Embassy of India in China (31 May 1962), *White Paper 6*, 99-102.

<sup>80</sup> Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 95-100.

<sup>81</sup> Peking would also suggest a firm date of 15 October for when talks could be held, without preconditions. *White Paper 7*, 73.

<sup>82</sup> *White Paper 7*, 67-68.

<sup>83</sup> New Delhi would not only reject the Chinese proposals, but would now also match public statements by Indian leaders promising to evict Chinese forces from occupied territory, with the decision to implement "Operation Leghorn," intended to forcefully remove Chinese posts below the Thag La ridge. Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis*, 130-141, Maxwell, *India's China War*, 294-300.

country's frontier region, to attack "reactionaries," and to create conditions for a negotiated solution to the territorial dispute. This decision to resort to military means, in turn, was driven by the sense in Peking that accommodation and restraint were increasingly being viewed in New Delhi as indications of Chinese weakness, precipitating further Indian brazenness. Chou would now note that "when you have no room for retreat and you do not counterattack, that is really showing weakness and they will believe that you are easily cowed." A decisive offensive, on the other hand, would have disabused primarily India of its misconceptions about China, but was likely expected in Peking to serve as a salutary reputational signal to other external adversaries as well. This reputation building intention behind the offensive would be captured in Mao's statement to the Politburo on 18 October, in which he would explain that if China were to "counterattack one time, then the border will become stable and the boundary problem can be peacefully resolved...But our counterattack is only to warn and punish, only to tell Nehru and the Indian government that they cannot use military means to resolve the border problem."<sup>84</sup>

A reputational logic helps explain not only Peking's resort to force, but also the surprising Chinese decision to offer talks after the first phase of the offensive, and eventually the decision to announce a unilateral cease fire and withdrawal of Chinese troops to behind the McMahon Line. That Peking would decide not to utilize its large territorial gains in the offensive as a bargaining chip to have India agree to what the Chinese thought were eminently reasonable terms, can only be explained by the fact that having convincingly asserted their firmness, the continued occupation of more territory was immaterial to the primary reputational goal of the Chinese leaders. Moreover, that they would do so likely in

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<sup>84</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 190-197.

full awareness that by not imposing a solution on India now they would be relegating the prospect of resolving the dispute to the distant future, suggests that the Chinese leadership continued to be most interested in establishing their generosity and reasonableness with India and in the Afro-Asian world in general. There could be no stronger signal of this than the fact that even after having won a decisive military victory, Peking had decided to not exploit such gains and continued to seek a mutually acceptable negotiated solution to the territorial dispute with India.

That such reputational concerns were important in the Chinese calculus is apparent from the public relations offensive that would accompany the preparations for war, presaged in the 3 October note to the Indian government from the MFA which would contend that it would not be “difficult for the Asian countries and all peace-loving countries to see...that the Chinese Government is sincerely working for a peaceful settlement...”<sup>85</sup> The “international audience,” as Whiting has detailed, “had become a salient target for Chinese exploitation of the border crisis.”<sup>86</sup> Chinese actions and rhetoric would now seek to publicly underline the contrast between Indian intransigence and Chinese reasonableness. On the 6 October one year anniversary of the signing of the Sino-Nepalese boundary agreement, therefore, Chen Yi would declare that “all countries stressing Asian unity are opposed to this [unilateral] practice by the Indian reactionaries,” and as if to emphasize the extent of Indian expansionism, would also declare that were any country (presumably India) to attack Nepal, China would come to her rescue. Within a week, China would also accelerate the till then belaboured movement towards resolving the territorial dispute with Pakistan with the

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<sup>85</sup> *White Paper* 7, 98-99.

<sup>86</sup> The following discussion relies heavily on Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 114-169. All uncited quotes come from Whiting’s account.

declaration of an agreement to proceed with negotiations. Similarly, the first anniversary of the Sino-Burmese boundary agreement would be celebrated as an exemplar of how “any complicated problem...can be settled if the countries wish to settle them and if they adhere to the principle of equality and mutual benefit.”

Sensitive also to the potentially negative reputational implications internationally of China’s offensive, Chou’s letter to Nehru following the first phase of the war would be accompanied by a communication to several Asian and African countries. This transmission, by laying sole blame for the war on a fictitious Indian offensive of 20 October, and then appealing to “all the peace-loving countries and peoples” that the dispute be resolved in keeping with Chou’s suggestions to Nehru, would serve to deftly signal internationally that China continued to be conciliatory and reasonable even as India persisted with its intransigence, while paving the path to the follow up offensive a month later if it were found necessary. Consequently, in rejecting Nehru’s counterproposal on 7 November, Chou would state in his missive, not coincidentally released publicly, that India’s terms demanded “humiliating conditions such as forced on a vanquished party,” while China herself had “not tried to force any unilateral demand on the Indian side on account of the advances gained in the recent counter-attack in self-defence.” That this letter too was aimed for international consumption is clear from Chou’s extended reference to Asian and African nations having appealed to both sides to “settle their mutual disputes peacefully on the basis of mutual understanding and mutual accommodation,” stating further that he was “convinced that their intentions are good and their viewpoint is correct.”<sup>87</sup> One day before the second offensive, Chou would expectedly send another letter to Afro-Asian leaders detailing China’s case and emphasizing Peking’s peaceful intentions, while India “embarked on the road of military

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<sup>87</sup> *White Paper* 8, 7-11.

adventure” in the expectation that domestic economic troubles and the US supported nationalist threat had weakened China on her Indian frontier sufficiently to present an “opportunity ripe for launching massive armed attacks...”<sup>88</sup>

The decision to publicly announce a unilateral halt to the second offensive, and to withdraw to positions twenty kilometres behind the 7 November 1959 line of control was therefore in keeping with this reputational imperative. With a comprehensive victory, the Chinese leadership had in one swift move addressed their strategic concerns in the western sector, while at the same time demonstrating to India and others that China would not tolerate unreasonable demands and coercive pressures. At the same time, the unilateral ceasefire and withdrawal, and Peking’s continued willingness to make generous concessions and not exploit their undisputed military might, served to maintain the impression of reasonableness and generosity that the Chinese had been seeking to build with India and the Afro-Asian world in general since the late 1950s. The ceasefire would come into effect on 22 November, and on 1 December the Chinese withdrawal would begin, with further demonstrations of generosity to follow as all captured equipment and personnel would be repatriated to India, and there would be little in the nature of boisterous celebration of victory in China.

## **Conclusion**

Contrary to the Indian leadership’s conviction that all Chinese acts from the late 1950s onwards, and especially the initiation of war, had been motivated by an expansionist China’s desire to undermine India’s position in quest for Asian leadership, Chinese decision

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<sup>88</sup> Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 142-143.

making seemed only minimally (if that) concerned about any such rivalry and was driven more by the immediate needs of stabilizing its frontiers satisfactorily, while forging a reputation for reasonableness amongst its international audience, including with India. Indeed, even as the Chinese pursued a deliberate policy of delay on the territorial dispute in earlier years, it was apparent that Peking was willing to make large concessions to India in the eastern sector – the section of the frontier that was most salient to Indian security concerns – in return for Indian concessions to Chinese claims in the Aksai Chin which was crucial to China's hold over a Tibet in ferment. Of course the manner in which the strategy of delay was pursued, particularly early failures to question India's open claims, especially in the western sector, and conveying repeated impressions to New Delhi that China had no territorial quarrel with India, had the unfortunate consequence that when Peking did eventually make its case clear in the late 1950s, the Indian leadership were led to conclude that the Chinese had been acting duplicitously all along.

The Chinese leadership were able to be conciliatory because the relatively low intensity of commitment problems associated with concessions made to India, and the former's dominant bargaining power in the frontier region meant that the compromises that Peking was willing to make were benign strategically and reputationally. Such concessions, furthermore, were hoped to even serve as a reputational benefit for Peking, as demonstration of Chinese generosity, which was hoped would mitigate fears of China in the neighbourhood and thereby elicit more cooperation from India and others. Chinese hopes of a peaceful resolution based on mutual compromise were belied, however, by India's intransigence, and with more moderate attempts at deterrence having failed, the resort to force in October 1962 would stem from the desire to rectify perceived misapprehensions in India that China would succumb to coercive tactics, by building reputation through an unambiguous demonstration



of Chinese firmness. The unilateral ceasefire and withdrawal would, on the other hand, seek to mitigate any possible negative reputational repercussions internationally of China's use of force, and seek to reinforce China's earlier efforts at signalling generosity and the spirit of cooperation to Delhi and other Afro-Asian countries.

While the immediate Chinese aim of using force to deter India and stabilize the Sino-Indian frontier for the foreseeable future had been an undoubted success, if the hope in Peking was that the war and China's conduct in its aftermath would also convince New Delhi of the necessity of resolving the territorial dispute at the bargaining table, such expectations were soon dashed. In India, the humiliation of war had only added to the pre-existing litany of complaints and mistrust of China, leaving New Delhi if anything more intransigent than before, freezing the dispute to this day.

## **Explaining State Behaviour in Asymmetric Disputes**

While the disputes over Kashmir and the Sino-Indian frontier have attracted much attention, both in diplomacy and scholarly work, the South Asian neighbourhood has also been witness to several territorial disputes which have occupied lower profiles, but are nevertheless interesting from a theoretical perspective. These are disputes which have been characterized by significant asymmetries in the size and power of the disputants, with the majority of them featuring China as a challenger to smaller neighbours' (Nepal, Bhutan, Burma and Pakistan) territorial claims. In all of these disputes, Peking initially prevaricated despite the smaller states' repeated calls for negotiations, but beginning in the 1960 all of these disputes were rapidly resolved at China's insistence to the mutual satisfaction of all parties, with the final terms surprisingly adhering for the most part to the claims of the smaller states.

India, the other large state in the region, too was engaged in disagreements over territory with Nepal and Bhutan (apart from the disputes with Pakistan and China). The Indo-Bhutanese issue witnessed earlier negotiations and resolution, again on the smaller state's terms. The dispute between India and Nepal, on the other hand, involving around 140 square kilometers of territory in the Susta area remained unresolved. To this was added later a dispute over an approximately 70 square kilometers large Kalapani area in the Nepal-India-China trijunction, which had allegedly been occupied by Indian troops during the 1962 Sino-Indian war. Given the minuscule scale of the territory under dispute, however, there is little evidence of much urgency or diplomatic activity on the territorial issue by either side during

the period of enquiry.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will focus, therefore, on the cases involving China, as well as the India-Bhutanese territorial issues. Given the relative sparseness of both primary and secondary material with regard to many of these cases, the following discussion is intended less as an exhaustive account of decision making, and more as a 'plausibility probe'<sup>2</sup> for the viability of the theoretical argument of this dissertation.

In each of these cases, in keeping with our expectations, the timing of the desire of either of the parties to raise the issue of territorial claims with the adversary coincided with emergence of threats or costs associated with the dispute. More importantly, the theoretical argument of this dissertation helps account for the somewhat counterintuitive state behaviour and outcomes in these disputes. In all cases, the stronger power invariably made extensive compromises, often conceding to all of the smaller states territorial demands, despite the immense asymmetry of size and power which made it unnecessary for the former to do so. The weaker parties on the other hand, again almost invariably, adopted an attitude of perplexing insistence on their maximal claims, despite the limited strategic or nationalist salience of the disputed territory, at the risk of inviting the stronger adversary's wrath and having a solution unilaterally imposed on them. This tendency of the stronger state to compromise to a much greater extent than necessary, and for the weaker parties to be more intransigent than was likely wise, I suggest can be explained by the importance of the reputational imperative, with the former making extensive compromises in the hope of building a reputation of generosity, with its attendant benefits, while the smaller powers

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the Kalapani issue remained virtually ignored by both parties till late in the 1990s, when the issue first acquired public prominence in Nepal. Rabindra Mishra, "India's Role in Nepal's Maoist Insurgency," *Asian Survey* 44, no. 5 (2004): 635, Leo E. Rose, "Nepal and Bhutan in 1998: Two Himalayan Kingdoms," *Asian Survey* 39, no. 1 (1999): 157.

<sup>2</sup> Jack S. Levy, "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 1 (2008): 6-7.

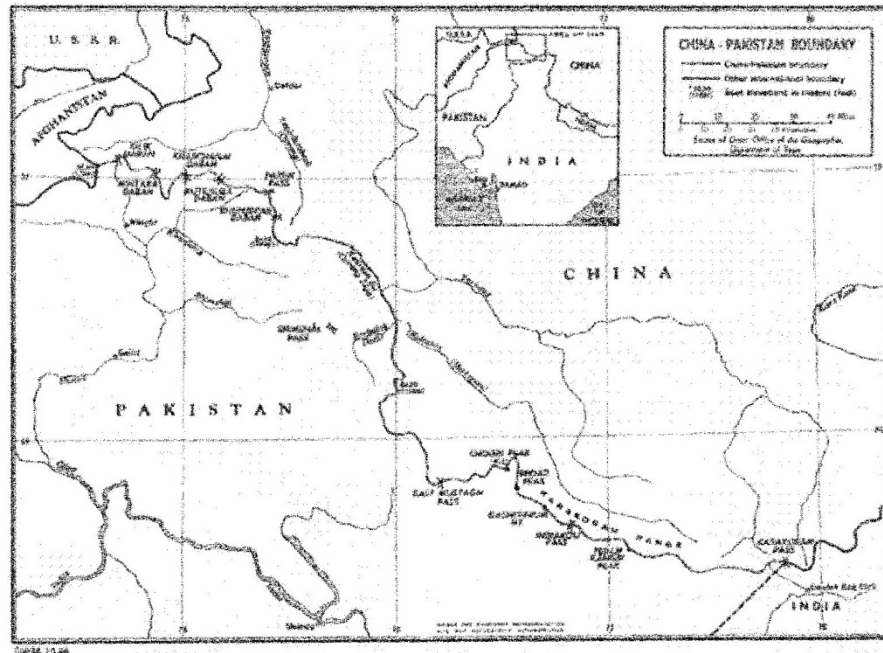
sought to build a reputation of firmness for fear that concessions made too easily now would encourage greater demands, and potentially even an existential threat, by an imposing China in the future.

### **China and the Smaller Neighbours: Disputed Claims**

When the communists came to power in China in 1949, part of the 'lost' territories they intended to liberate included those belonging to the smaller neighbours, including Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Burma. With all these countries, the new regime claimed that frontiers had never been formally delimited, and would therefore put forward extensive territorial claims, sometimes involving a majority or all of the land these already small countries possessed. With Pakistan, China's early map claims showed as much as 100,000 square kilometres of territory in the frontier region with Kashmir as part of China. By the late 1950s these map claims had shrunk to around 15,000 square kilometers and then to around 8,006 square kilometers, with the status of Hunza state, several strategic passes in the Karakorum range, the peak of Mount K2, some grazing fields, and a salt mine being the bones of contention. Of this disputed territory, more than half was already under Chinese possession when negotiations eventually began in 1962.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Hunza lies south of the Karakorum watershed and became a vassal state of Kashmir under British protection in the 1880s. The British included the region within their boundaries, but their 1899 boundary line proposal reflecting this position had never been acknowledged or accepted by the Chinese whose own claims were based on the contention that Hunza had always been a tributary to Chinese authorities in Xinjiang. See Alastair Lamb, "The Sino-Pakistani Boundary Agreement of 2 March 1963," *Australian Outlook* 18, no. 3 (1964): 302-306, Mujtaba Razvi, *The Frontiers of Pakistan: A Study of Frontier Problems in Pakistan's Foreign Policy* (Karachi: National Pub. House, 1971), 166-193.

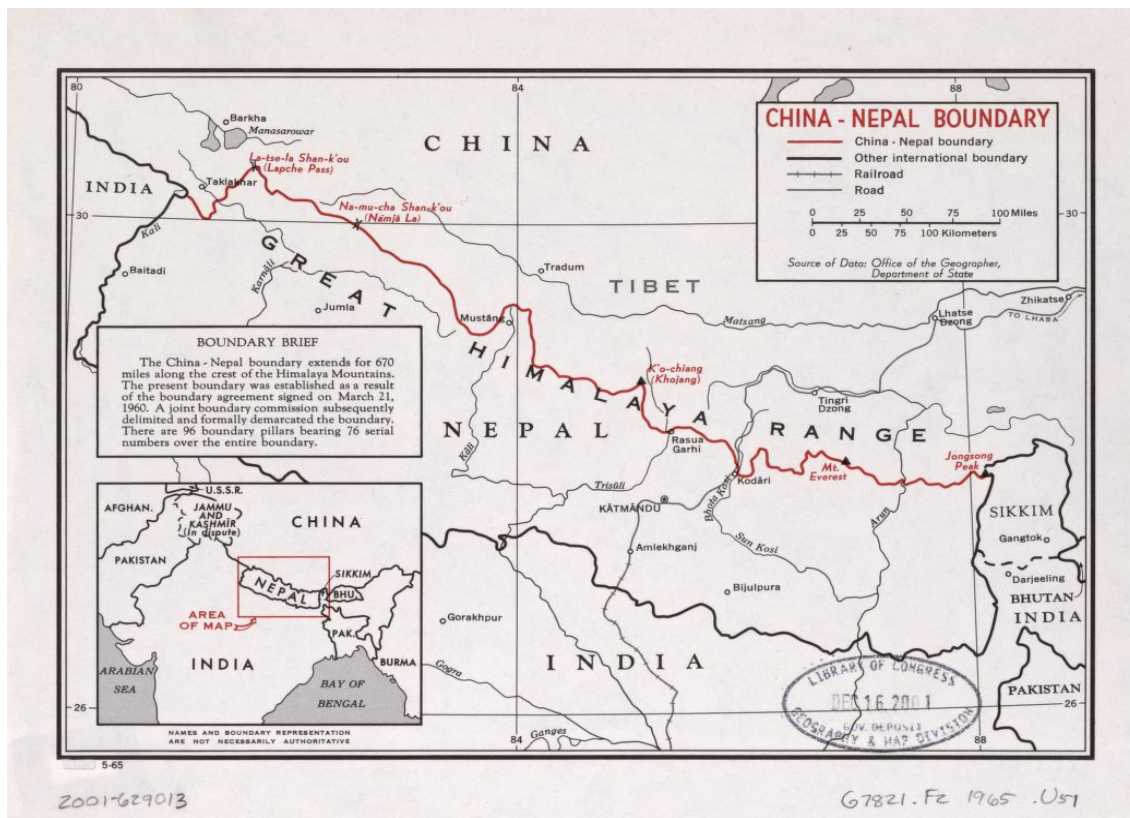


**Map 7.1: China-Pakistan Frontier**

(Source: <http://www.loc.gov/item/2007627235>)

The Sino-Nepalese territorial dispute traced its legacy to an undelimited frontier region, control over which had historically been subject to the vagaries of Tibetan and Nepalese power. The dispute between communist China and Nepal revolved around eleven sectors in the boundary areas, much of which had been incorporated into Nepal in the mid-nineteenth century. The amount of territory disputed was estimated at around 2,476 square kilometers, in addition to which both sides disputed sovereignty over Mount Everest.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation : Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 328-329, Hemen Ray, *China's Strategy in Nepal* (New Delhi: Radiant, 1983), 25, Leo E. Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 235-236.



**Map 7.2: China-Nepal Frontier**  
 (Source: <http://www.loc.gov/item/2001629013>)

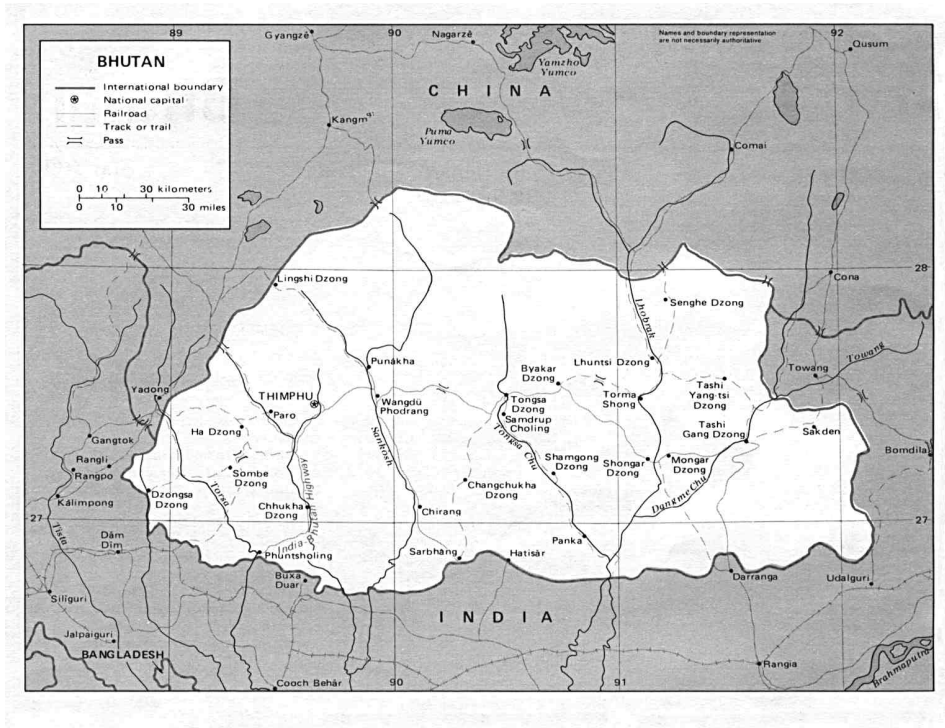
In Bhutan, the Buddhist kinship with Tibet generated early fears that China would eventually lay claim to the entirety of Bhutan as an extension of its sovereignty over Tibet.<sup>5</sup>

While such fears were disabused by Chou in talks with Nehru in 1956-57,<sup>6</sup> Chinese maps

<sup>5</sup> Such fears had existed since the period of British colonial rule when the Chinese were known to liken “the Union of China, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan to the blending of the five colours and compared the position of Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan to that of the molar teeth side by side in a man’s mouth.” T. T. Poulou, “Bhutan’s External Relations and India,” *International & Comparative Law Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (1971): 195. Also see, Srikant Dutt, “Bhutan’s International Position,” *International Studies* 20 (1981): 604-605, Thierry Mathou, “Bhutan-China Relations: Towards a New Step in Himalayan Politics,” *Journal of Bhutan Studies* 2, no. 2 (2000): 389-390. The Indian leadership, intimately concerned about developments in their Himalayan periphery would note “Tibetans boasting about their claims to Bhutan or parts of North-East India.” “North-Eastern Frontier Situation” (5 March 1953), *Sujn-Ss*. vol. 21, 558.

<sup>6</sup> Chou would state in talks with Nehru that “the relations of Sikkim and Bhutan with China differ from those between Tibet and China, because Sikkim and Bhutan were never under China and even the Imperial Power did not recognise Bhutan and Sikkim as being under them.” Talks with Chou En-lai (31 December 1956 and 1 January 1957), *Sujn-Ss*. vol. 36, 600.

nevertheless continued to show, into the 1960s, large parts of Bhutan as part of China, with communist leaders in Lhasa even declaring their intention of “liberating” Bhutan from “imperialist India.”<sup>7</sup> The extent of territory disputed amounts to roughly 1,128 square kilometres in the western sector, and possibly over another 1,000 square kilometers of territory in the Gasa region of Bhutan.<sup>8</sup>



**Map 7.3: Bhutan's Frontiers with China and India**

(Source: [http://images.nationmaster.com/images/motw/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/bhutan.jpg](http://images.nationmaster.com/images/motw/middle_east_and_asia/bhutan.jpg))

The last case involved a dispute over territory along parts of the approximately 2,415 kilometers long boundary between China and Burma which had remained undelimited under the Sino-British boundary agreements of 1894 and 1897. Here, early communist Chinese maps had claimed as part of their country nearly 67,000 square kilometers of territory in the

<sup>7</sup> Valentine J. Belfiglio, "India's Economic and Political Relations with Bhutan," *Asian Survey* 12, no. 8 (1972): 683.

<sup>8</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 328.



Kachin and Wa states of Burma. By the time Burma and China entered into negotiations in the mid-1950s the area under dispute had shrunk, with roughly 1,000 square kilometers of territory along the McMahon Line, as well as the status of several villages (with an area of 482 square kilometres) annexed by Britain in 1911 disputed by the two sides in the northern sector. In the middle sector, the contest was over the 220 square kilometers large Nam-Wan Assigned tract which had been leased in perpetuity to Britain by the Qing dynasty in China in 1897, while in the south the Banhong-Banlao tribal region, 189 square kilometers large, and two smaller areas totalling 18 square kilometers, were under question.<sup>9</sup>



**Map 7.4: China-Burma Frontier**

(Source: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/burma.gif](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/burma.gif))

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 329-330, Harold C. Hinton, *China's Relations with Burma and Vietnam: A Brief Survey* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1958), 40-45, J. R. V. Prescott, *Map of Mainland Asia by Treaty* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1975), 347-353.



## Early Approaches: Small State Activism and Chinese Deferral

Much as in the case of the territorial dispute with India, communist China's approach in the early years with regard to the frontiers with the smaller neighbours was characterized by a policy of delay. While Chinese maps continued to show expansive claims, there were neither any attempts to "liberate" these lands, despite the weakness of these smaller neighbours, nor did the new Chinese government show any desire to enter into talks over the contested claims. On the contrary, in most of these cases it would be the weaker parties who would be the first to seek negotiations with Peking.

Burmese leader U Nu would take up the issue with an unresponsive China as early as in 1950<sup>10</sup>, and do so again the next year, in response to Chinese embassy displays in Rangoon that showed large parts of Burmese territory as part of China.<sup>11</sup> No progress would take place however, due to Chinese disinterest, despite Nu reportedly broaching the issue again in 1954. Only after clashes between the border troops of the two countries in 1955-1956 would China enter talks with Rangoon, and these would languish in a deadlock till 1960 when under Chinese initiative the dispute would be swiftly resolved. Similarly, Nepal would first ask for talks on the territorial issue in 1956, in exchanges between Prime Minister Tanka Prasad Acharya and his Chinese interlocutors. Prior to that year, Nepalese leaders had been unable

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<sup>10</sup> Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (London: Cape, 1972), 211. Even before the communist took power, Burmese leaders were convinced that nationalist China would stake huge claims (amounting to around 70,000 square miles) on Burma soon. Such fears would be assuaged to an extent by the nationalist ambassador in Rangoon stating that China had no intention of seizing any neighbour's territory and would be willing to resolve the issue in a "spirit of negotiation." Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma* (London: Cresset Press, 1962), 520-522.

<sup>11</sup> Nu would declare in his country's parliament that he had been told by Peking that such displays were simply a case of old nationalist maps being reproduced and Communist China not having had the time to revise them. He would state nevertheless that his government would seek to have the boundary properly demarcated soon. Hinton, *China's Relations with Burma and Vietnam: A Brief Survey*, 40, Woodman, *The Making of Burma*, 523.

to address the issue owing to the absence of direct diplomatic relations between the two countries, relations which were till 1955 mediated by New Delhi.<sup>12</sup> The Chinese response to the Nepalese request of 1956 would be to defer any discussions, ever as Peking was willing to conclude agreements regarding Tibet and financial aid with Kathmandu.<sup>13</sup> The matter would therefore only be taken up bilaterally when China eventually sought talks in 1960.

In the case of the Sino-Pak frontier, Pakistan would first suggest the existence of a dispute in April 1953 after alleged violations of the border in Gilgit by Chinese troops. Only in 1959, however, would the Pakistan government begin actively seeking negotiations with Peking through diplomatic channels, following President Ayub's declaration in a press conference that his government sought a firm demarcation of the frontier with China.<sup>14</sup> In March 1961, Pakistan would make its request for negotiations formal, which would only elicit a positive response from Peking after a gap of more than a year in May 1962, from which point onwards events would develop rapidly towards the final resolution of the territorial dispute in early 1963.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, while Bhutan was the only one of these smaller countries not to directly broach the frontier issue with China during this period, this was hardly unexpected given the absolute control that India enjoyed over Bhutanese foreign policy and relations.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> S. D. Muni, *Foreign Policy of Nepal* (Delhi: National Publishing House, 1973), 104.

<sup>13</sup> Werner Levi, "Nepal in World Politics," *Pacific Affairs* 30, no. 3 (1957): 246.

<sup>14</sup> At the same time Pakistan officials would begin conducting surveys of the frontier areas in anticipation of border talks. Anwar Hussain Syed, *China & Pakistan: Diplomacy of an Entente Cordiale* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974), 82.

<sup>15</sup> Razvi, *The Frontiers of Pakistan*, 169-173.

<sup>16</sup> As Nehru would convey to his ambassador in Kathmandu, "in the international sense Bhutan is subordinate to India, because she can have no foreign relations and cannot declare war or peace. As a matter of fact Bhutan remains autonomous only because we choose to allow it to remain so." Nehru to CPN Singh (10 September 1949), *Sujin-Si*, vol. 13, 258.

Nevertheless, that given different circumstances Bhutan might have sought to initiate discussions with China is hinted in the apparent Bhutanese pressure on the Indian leadership in early 1961 - no doubt in response to Chinese indications that they would be willing to directly talk to Bhutan - over entering negotiations with China in regard to the Sino-Bhutanese frontier.

That these early years were characterized by greater urgency on the part of the smaller states, and relative disinterest by the Chinese leadership is unsurprising. For China, both inclination and incentive were lacking in these years to address contested claims through force or negotiations. Peking, embroiled as it was with more pressing issues of establishing political stability domestically, while dealing with external threats from Taiwan and the US, could hardly have been expected to impart much priority to disputes which were of much less concern, and hence were suitable to be deferred for later. There was, therefore, likely some truth to Chou's contention to neighbours that other troubles had meant that China had had little time and resources to conduct a survey of the frontier regions, and alter old maps accordingly. The immense weakness of the smaller states and the lack of threat they posed to Chinese interests, further meant that they had little means of pressuring Peking into entering talks, or generating an incentive for the Chinese to regard their requests with any great sense of urgency. Neither did they want to do so for fear of Chinese reprisals, as would be indicated in the eagerness of Rangoon and Karachi to mitigate Chinese concerns about nationalist troop presence in Burma, or the 1954 entry of Pakistan into the American alliance system, by reassuring Peking that they would not tolerate any anti-Chinese activity emanating from their territory.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> To this effect, Burma would actively seek to address the nationalist threat through a mixture of military offensives, and diplomatic attempts to have the KMT troops removed from their territory

For the smaller states in contrast, the incentives were diametrically opposed, necessitating the early raising of the territorial issue. A newly emergent, large and strong communist China on their frontiers served as an immediate source of threat to their security, and even survival, given China's extensive map claims and early Maoist rhetoric which spoke of retrieving territories lost to "imperialistic powers" which had "seized Burma, Bhutan, and Nepal" from China.<sup>18</sup> In Burma, this threat was compounded by fears that the presence of nationalist troops in Burmese territory would provoke Chinese military intervention, fears that were given credence to by frequent violations of the Burmese frontier by Chinese troops.<sup>19</sup> Evidence of Chinese aid to Burmese communist and Kachin rebels only deepened suspicions of Chinese intentions in Rangoon.<sup>20</sup>

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through the good offices of the US and India, and later the UN. For a detailed account of KMT activities in Burma and Burmese response in the period from 1949-1954 see Robert H. Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the Kmt Intervention in Burma* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1973), 10-50. Also Hinton, *China's Relations with Burma and Vietnam: A Brief Survey*, 41. Pakistan similarly would repeatedly reassure Peking that its participation in the western alliance's regional security initiatives was not aimed at China, with the Pakistani PM making it a point to assure Chou in 1955 at the Bandung Conference that were the US to undertake military action against China or launch global war, "Pakistan would not be involved in it, just as it was not involved in the Korean War." Razvi, *The Frontiers of Pakistan*, 167-168.

<sup>18</sup> Srikant Dutt, "India and the Himalayan States," *Asian Affairs* 11, no. 1 (1980): 73, Hinton, *China's Relations with Burma and Vietnam: A Brief Survey*, 49-50.

<sup>19</sup> While over time, Chinese restraint was appreciated in Rangoon, early statements from the PRC stating that they would not abide by the presence of KMT troops in Burma did raise fears of a PLA invasion of northern Burma. Taylor, *Kmt Intervention in Burma*, 29-30. This is evidenced also by the contents of a 1950 note from Nehru to Thakin Nu, which hints at prior communications from the Burmese leader conveying fear of communist China. In this note Nehru would write: "If your attitude to these KMT forces is clear, I do not see why any communist forces should enter Burmese territory. They might have some slight justification for doing so, if you aided and abetted the KMT forces and allowed them to use Burmese territory as a base for operations against China. As you are obviously not aiding and abetting them and in fact have taken some steps to oppose them, no question arises of the Communist armies coming in. Of course they may find some pretext for doing so." Nehru To Thakin Nu (25 June 1950), *Sujn-Ss*. vol. 14-II, 427.

<sup>20</sup> Hinton, *China's Relations with Burma and Vietnam: A Brief Survey*, 41-45. In 1954, Nehru would write to his ambassador in China about Burma feeling "disgruntled at Chinese policies," owing to what was seen as Chinese encouragement for Burmese communist rebels. Nehru to N. Raghavan (9 May 1954), *Sujn-Ss*. vol. 25, 476.

Similar concerns no doubt existed in Nepal and Bhutan as well, given Mao's direct reference to them as 'lost' territories, and increasingly as communist presence rapidly filled into their frontier region with Tibet. The Chinese invasion of Tibet itself would raise fears in the Himalayan kingdoms that they might suffer a fate similar to that of the Tibetans, and in Nepal specifically there would be further concerns about the future of their special rights in Tibet.<sup>21</sup> Finally, for Pakistan as well, the Himalayan-Karakoram barrier had progressively become a less effective barrier to China, and alleged Chinese border violations in 1953 would lead to the foreign minister announcing military reinforcement of the frontier. Continued publications of Chinese maps in the next few years showing large chunks of Pakistan claimed territory as part of China would only deepen this concern. Pakistan's entry into the western anti-communist alliance therefore could ostensibly have at least partly been aimed at securing Pakistan against Chinese transgressions, fears of which had only worsened with the completion of the Chinese road through Aksai Chin, and the emergent trouble on the Sino-Indian frontier. The immediate Pakistani reaction to these developments was to reinforce military presence in Hunza and Baltistan, as well as an attempt by the Ayub regime to initiate a common defense arrangement with India in 1959. With the failure of the latter effort, however, and the increasing disenchantment in Karachi with the US, Pakistan would soon turn to a direct approach to China, and raise the frontier issue diplomatically soon after.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Levi, "Nepal in World Politics," 237-243, Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 195-204. The fact that Nepalese and Bhutanese foreign and defence policies were virtual extensions of Indian foreign policy during this period (a tendency that was itself encouraged to some degree by mutual fear of the Chinese) also of course meant that Indian assumptions about Chinese intentions were adopted wholesale in Kathmandu and Thimpu, as was Indian advice that they desist from official diplomatic relations with Peking until New Delhi had determined it was appropriate to do so.

<sup>22</sup> Nasim Ahmed, "China's Himalayan Frontiers: Pakistan's Attitude," *International Affairs* 38, no. 4 (1962): 481-482, Russell Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968), 180-182.

In addition to this immediate sense of threat, the broaching of territorial issues was further incentivized for these smaller neighbours of China, and delay for Peking, by the recognition that time would do little to redress the asymmetries characterizing their relationship. On the contrary, China's bargaining position could only be expected to increase in due course as political stability and economic growth allowed the Chinese military to flesh out its already imposing presence in the frontier regions. This being the case, the Chinese leadership could comfortably afford to defer their consideration of these frontier disputes, while conversely, persistent fears of Chinese expansionism, and the impossibility that their bargaining position would improve with time, left little incentive for the smaller states to demur too much in calling for diplomatic engagement with Peking aimed at settling the borders.

### **Chinese Compromise and Small State Firmness**

The escalation of costs associated with these territorial disputes would arrest, however, the Chinese preference for delay. The challenge posed by these small neighbours, in turn, was indirect, prompted primarily – with the exception of the Sino-Burmese case - by domestic instability in China's frontier regions, which Peking feared was liable to be exploited by external adversaries. Addressing the domestic threats increasingly required the sanitization of the frontier regions to prevent easy ingress and egress of rebels, but doing so required eliciting the cooperation of bordering states, a task complicated by the increase in Chinese military activity in these disputed areas causing occasional clashes with troops from neighbouring states. Addressing territorial issues now became imperative for China, and Peking would not only initiate negotiations with the smaller neighbours, but also

demonstrate a surprising willingness not only to compromise, but to make extensive concessions, giving up in all cases significantly more than half (if not all) of their territorial claims.<sup>23</sup> The smaller states on the other hand, would for all their early insistence on negotiations prove surprisingly resistant to making any substantial concessions to China despite the fact that their immense weakness and own domestic troubles should have made an expeditious resolution of any disputes preferable. If threat alone incentivized compromise for China then, such incentives ought to have been even stronger in the case of the smaller neighbours.

### ***China-Burma***

The Burmese leaders, as noted earlier, had been seeking talks with China since 1950, most recently in 1954, requests which were treated with little urgency by Peking.<sup>24</sup> In the meantime China had left it to the Burmese government to handle the Chinese nationalist rebels (KMT) in their territory. It would be apparently in pursuit of such rebels that Chinese troops clashed with Burmese troops in the Wa and Kachin States of Burma in late 1955-56, perturbing the Burmese leadership who had in 1954, and then again in 1955 at Bandung, been assured by Chou that Burma had nothing to fear from China.<sup>25</sup> In response to

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<sup>23</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*.

<sup>24</sup> At the end of U Nu's visit in 1954 a joint communique was issued acknowledging the "incomplete delimitation of the boundary line between China and Burma" which needed to be settled in a "friendly spirit," but only "at an appropriate time through normal diplomatic channels," suggesting that there was little urgency attached to the issue. Uma Shankar Singh, *Burma and India, 1948-1962: A Study in the Foreign Policies of Burma and India and Burma's Policy Towards India* (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH, 1979), 181.

<sup>25</sup> *The Nation* (Yangon) would report on 31 July 1956, confirmed by Burmese PM U Ba Swe on 7 August that 1500 Chinese soldiers had seized 750 to 1000 square miles of Burmese territory. George

Rangoon's protests now, Peking would immediately question the legitimacy of a frontier which had been forced on them by the British, accusing Burma in turn of moving into "a large undetermined area in the north," including Hpimaw village, belonging to China.<sup>26</sup>

Having openly challenged Burmese claims, however, the Chinese leadership would immediately agree to discuss the issue during U Nu's visit to Peking in October 1956. Now, despite the earlier repudiation of all British era agreements over their mutual boundary, Chou would offer to settle the dispute largely on the basis of those very same agreements, in a "package deal" which adhered to all of Burma's claims, barring a few minor concessions expected from Rangoon.<sup>27</sup> As U Nu interpreted it, Chou's offer involved acceptance by his government of the boundary as Burma saw it, including the retention by Burma of the Namwan Tract, despite the fact that the permanent lease arrangement under which the British had acquired the territory from the Chinese was clearly "anachronistic." In return, China only sought three Kachin villages of Hpimaw, Gawlum and Kangfang, which had been occupied by the British in 1911. An agreement along these lines was clearly acceptable to U Nu, not least because the British themselves had conceded China's case with regard to the villages Burma was now asked to concede.<sup>28</sup> Initial resistance by Kachin leaders to the ceding of their villages would therefore be quickly assuaged and their acquiescence acquired by the Burmese government.<sup>29</sup>

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McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference, Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956), 59-60.

<sup>26</sup> Daphne E. Whittam, "The Sino-Burmese Boundary Treaty," *Pacific Affairs* 34, no. 2 (1961): 175-178.

<sup>27</sup> Following discussion based on *ibid.*, 178-182, Woodman, *The Making of Burma*, 524-539.

<sup>28</sup> Richard J. Kozicki, "The Sino-Burmese Frontier Problem," *Far Eastern Survey* 26, no. 3 (1957): 34, Arthur S. Lall, *How Communist China Negotiates* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 185.

<sup>29</sup> Singh, *Burma and India*, 189-190.



Despite a resolution being in sight however, the issue would stall for the next three years primarily due to a few additional demands by China. In February 1957 Burmese leader U Ba Swe would make an official offer to Peking of 145 square kilometers of territory in the three villages, in return for the Chinese acceptance of “the boundary line between Burma and China to which the Union of Burma succeeded on 4 January 1948.” Chou would however deny that the Chinese had ever been willing to exchange the Namwan tract for the three villages, because both territories legally belonged to China. While his government did not seek a return of the Namwan tract, Chou would claim that “did not mean that they [China] were willing to make a gift of it to Burma.” Peking would therefore demand an additional 223 square kilometers of territory in the Wa State from Burma in exchange for Chinese concessions in Namwan. Furthermore, the Chinese would claim that the area comprising the three Kachin villages should amount to 481 square kilometers rather than the 145 suggested by U Ba Swe, and dispute the Burmese claim about the watershed forming the boundary in north.

In response, the Burmese leadership would adopt a firm line in internal deliberations and exchanges with China, insisting that the latter accept their offer as it currently stood, or alternatively continue with the perpetual lease of Namwan. U Nu would accordingly inform parliament that his government had “asked that the Chinese side should accept the proposals contained in U Ba Swe’s letter...”<sup>30</sup> Only as a final resort, would there privately be a willingness in Burma to make some concessions in the Wa State, provided however that China accepted all other Burmese conditions.<sup>31</sup> On this issue talks would grind to a halt, and

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<sup>30</sup> Woodman, *The Making of Burma*, 533.

<sup>31</sup> This posture of firmness was indeed encouraged by Nehru, who had been in touch with the Burmese leadership (especially U Nu) throughout. In a May 1957 note, Nehru would inform U Nu

only in mid-1959 would Burma's new leader, Ne Win, seek to reopen negotiations with Peking, offering now a concession of an additional 161 square kilometers in the Wa State, which he would assert was the maximum his government could offer, in exchange for Peking's acceptance of the rest of Burma's terms.

Peking would now, in the context of deepening domestic unrest in Tibet, and fears of increased activity by KMT troops in the Sino-Burmese frontier region, address the dispute with greater urgency and purpose. Chou would therefore write to Ne Win in September 1959 expressing interest in reopening talks based on prior exchanges. His 12 January 1960 missive would show even greater desperation, asking the Burmese leader to immediately visit China so that territorial disagreements could be immediately resolved. Ne Win would arrive in Peking on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January, and by the 28<sup>th</sup> a Sino-Burmese boundary agreement had been signed, setting up a framework for reaching a final delineation of the frontier expeditiously.<sup>32</sup>

The terms of the agreement reflected Ne Win's proposals almost wholesale. The Chinese leadership would accept the British era Sino-Burmese boundary based on the watershed principle, and agree to set up a joint committee to resolve the debate over the extent of the area that Rangoon was to give up. In addition China would agree to give up all mining rights in the Lufeng salt mine to Burma. The work of the joint committee itself Chou would ask to be expedited during his visit to Burma in April 1960, leading to the conclusion of a boundary treaty on 1 October 1960. The final terms would further bear out Burmese terms, with Rangoon conceding 130 square kilometers of territory in the village tracts, around eight more than their initial offer, as opposed to the 482 that the Chinese had initially

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that the Indian Historical Division viewed Chinese claim to the Hpimaw Tract as strong, but there was "no reason why you [Burma] should give this Hpimaw Tract up unless the Chinese give up their claim in the Namwan Tract and Wa border." Nehru to U Nu (14 May 1957), *Sujin-Ss.* vol. 38, 728.

<sup>32</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 84-86.

demanded. In return for the Namwan tract, the Burmese conceded 189 square kilometers of territory in the Wa State, as opposed to Ne Win's initial offer of 161. In addition, Burma gained four villages and ceded two, as well as gained 13 square kilometers of territory in the north while ceding 5 square kilometers of territory in the east, as part of boundary realignments. The final agreement, in essence, involved only minor Burmese concessions, with Peking relinquishing almost all of its own claims which in early years had included a significant chunk of Burma. Most importantly for Rangoon, as U Nu would point out, the agreement had resulted in a Chinese acceptance of a firm boundary with Burma, one that included an acceptance of the watershed as customary boundary, something the British had never managed to achieve.<sup>33</sup>

### *China-Nepal*

The eruption of rebellion in Tibet made the frontier with Nepal of immediate concern to Peking. Hundreds of Tibetan rebels had fled across the frontier into Nepal, where they were suspected to be regrouping for re-entry. Exacerbating such fears of Nepalese connivance in Tibet was the fact that Kathmandu's foreign policy had in the past been a virtual extension of India's, and was likely to continue in that vein with the ascension to power of the transparently pro-India Nepal Congress in May 1959.<sup>34</sup> Congress officials would indeed openly accuse China of having violated treaty obligations to Tibet, and publicly state that events in the region "provided a warning to all the nations of Asia." The party itself

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<sup>33</sup> Whittam, "The Sino-Burmese Boundary Treaty," 179-182, Woodman, *The Making of Burma*, 538-539.

<sup>34</sup> For domestic and foreign policy developments in Nepal during this period see, John Whelpton, *A History of Nepal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 86-107.

adopted a resolution on 2 May 1959 branding Chinese actions in Tibet as “imperialist,” and arguing that it was the “breach of the Chinese promise of autonomy that has caused the Tibetans to rise...”<sup>35</sup>

In this context, the Chinese leadership would forsake their earlier attitude of avoidance towards territorial issues, and during a visit by Dr. Tusli Giri<sup>36</sup> to Peking in October 1959 reportedly convey their interest in peacefully settling their dispute with India, as well as being “reasonable” with Nepal.<sup>37</sup> During Prime Minister Koirala’s visit to China in March 1960, the frontier issues would be dealt with concretely and an agreement reached to delineate and demarcate the boundary “on the basis of the existing traditional customary line.” A joint boundary committee was asked to meet in three sessions, alternately held in Peking and Kathmandu, to give final shape to the frontier.<sup>38</sup>

At the conclusion of the deliberations of the boundary committee, a settlement would be finalized on 5 October 1961 during King Mahendra’s visit to Peking. The outcome would be, as in the Burmese case, for the most part in keeping with Nepali claims, involving

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<sup>35</sup> At the end of Nehru’s visit to Kathmandu shortly afterwards, the joint communique’s expression of the two countries’ shared conviction that “no country should be dominated by another...” further hinted at co-ordination on Tibetan policy between New Delhi and the new Nepalese government. Quotes from Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 219-222. Also Lall, *How Communist China Negotiates*, 196, Muni, *Foreign Policy of Nepal*, 103-104.

<sup>36</sup> Giri was then a minister in the Nepalese government and close confidante of the Prime Minister.

<sup>37</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 84, Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 223. Dr. Giri has also been quoted as stating at this point that he “did not believe that the Chinese would be ready to solve their border problem with Nepal.” Quoted in Muni, *Foreign Policy of Nepal*, 104. If true, this suggests that there was still hesitation in Peking to proceed expeditiously on territorial issue with Nepal, an approach that would be abandoned shortly afterwards.

<sup>38</sup> In the meantime, both sides were to withdraw 20 kilometers from their existing positions to create a demilitarized area, so as to maintain the tranquility of the frontier. This agreement was accompanied by other ones which included the decision to establish embassies in each other capital, and China’s offer of 14 crore rupees of economic aid to Kathmandu, followed by the signing of a Treaty of Peace and Friendship during Chou’s visit to Nepal in late April 1960. Lall, *How Communist China Negotiates*, 196-199, Muni, *Foreign Policy of Nepal*, 105, Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 225-226.

substantial Chinese concessions. According to the final settlement, China conceded to Nepal control over ten out of eleven disputed sectors in the frontier region, amounting to some 2330 square kilometers, receiving in return an area only 145 square kilometers large.<sup>39</sup> This outcome owed itself to the fact that while the Chinese were in a particularly conciliatory mood, the Nepalese by contrast seemed determined to hold firm to their claims. That they would do so in talks with Peking was apparent even as early as in August 1957, when Kathmandu had reportedly intimated to Nehru their intention to use a proposed trade and travel agreement to pressure China into acceding to Nepalese territorial demands.<sup>40</sup> That the Nepalese had continued to hold firm in the 1960 talks is indicated by fact that whereas China had only conceded four of the eleven sectors to Nepal during Koirala's visit, two other sectors were given up later, and by the time of the final negotiations the Nepalese claims to four additional sectors had been recognized by Peking.<sup>41</sup>

A similar dynamic would be evident in discussions over the disputed status of Mount Everest. The Chinese had from an early stage emphasized that that they would be prepared to settle the issue by demarcating the border along the peak, with Mao further proposing joint sovereignty over the mountain with the crest as the boundary line during Koirala's 1960 visit, an offer Chou would repeat in a later visit to Kathmandu. The Nepalese however

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<sup>39</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 91-92, Lall, *How Communist China Negotiates*, 200.

<sup>40</sup> In this note, Nehru would reveal his skepticism at Nepalese intentions to use the trade and travel agreement as a bargaining chip and a pressure tactic to induce the Chinese to discuss the frontier question and "further to agree to hand over a part of what is considered their [China's] territory now to Nepal." The territory in question was 1000 square miles large, which had, Nehru would note, been for long in Tibetan or Chinese possession, leading him to conclude that contrary to Nepalese hopes "delay in ratification of the agreement will not bring any pressure for this purpose on the Chinese Government." "Trade and Travel Agreement between China and Nepal" (23 August 1957), *Smyj-Ss*. vol. 29, 652-653.

<sup>41</sup> All this was in addition of course to Peking's initial concession to the Nepalese contention that the Nepal-Tibet border was to be delimited based on the "traditional customary boundary line." Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 236-239.

repeatedly rejected the proposal, with the King declaring as late as August 1961 that the peak of the mountain undisputedly belonged to Nepal. As a bargain therefore, and in deference to Nepalese insistence, the final agreement would declare that the boundary would “pass through the peak,” a formula which implied joint or divided sovereignty, but would be framed in a sufficiently ambivalent way as to allow Nepal to maintain its claim. Accordingly King Mahendra on his return to Kathmandu after the conclusion of the agreement would be able (and allowed by China) to declare that Everest “continues to be, as it has been, ours and within our territory.”<sup>42</sup>

### *China-Pakistan*

While the Pakistani leadership, both fearful of greater Chinese activity in the frontier regions, as well as reassured by the happy experience of Nepal and Burma in negotiations with China, had been officially seeking talks with Peking from March 1961, the Chinese would only convey a willingness to acquiesce to Karachi’s request nearly a year later. The previous two years had been devoted by Peking to addressing the frontier dispute with India, a task which complicated dealing with Pakistan simultaneously given the nature of the India-Pakistan relationship. With Peking having reached the conclusion by early-mid 1962 that India was a lost cause, however, that barrier to talking to Pakistan was removed.<sup>43</sup> Dealing with this dispute was also incentivised for China by this time, with stability on the frontier with Pakistan having acquired increasing importance in the wake of brewing unrest in

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>43</sup> Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 182-183.

Xinjiang, a severe domestic economic crisis, and the sense in Peking of being encircled by external adversaries (including India) hoping to exploit both.

Progress would now be rapid, with a joint communiqué in May 1962 confirming the agreement to talks, and negotiations beginning on 12 October. On 26 December, both sides would declare that an agreement in principle had been arrived at, and a settlement would be reached in February 1963, confirmed on 2 March of 1963 by the signatures of Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chen Yi, and Pakistani External Affairs Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.<sup>44</sup> The final terms of the agreement differed from the two prior cases in that China ended up receiving a larger share of the disputed territory.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, the agreement did involve substantive concessions by Peking and was indeed considered by the Pakistani leadership and scholars alike as favourable to Pakistan. Compared to initial map claims, by the time of the talks China's demands had already shrunk considerably so that rival claims amounted to around 8,806 square kilometers. Of this, China would receive 5310 square kilometers of territory, land which was already under its control. Pakistan on the other hand, would receive 3497 square kilometers of disputed territory, of which 1942 in the Mustagh (Oprang) region involved a transfer of territory by China, in a departure from the watershed principle to Pakistan's benefit.

In sum, China had abandoned claims to Hunza, while Pakistan received grazing land, the Kharachanai salt mine, and also retained control over Mount K2 and six of seven mountain passes in the Karakoram. Importantly, the final border line largely followed that

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<sup>44</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 97-109, 116, Razvi, *The Frontiers of Pakistan*, 172-176.

<sup>45</sup> Lall, *How Communist China Negotiates*, 182.

proposed by Pakistan in the first place.<sup>46</sup> In response to virulent criticism from India that Pakistan had surrendered Kashmiri territory to China, Pakistani officials would contend that the disputed territory had always been marked in their maps as undefined, and moreover that the claims to territory conceded to China were given up by even the British.<sup>47</sup> As Lamb has therefore argued, with the 1963 agreement “Pakistan has lost nothing at all,” and only received China’s acceptance of a boundary alignment which the British themselves had tacitly accepted since the First World War. The fact that in return China had transferred some land, and surrendered claims to Hunza which they had never done before, indicated on the part of the Chinese, a “degree of moderation which deserves more credit...”<sup>48</sup>

### ***China-Bhutan***

While there was no progress on the resolution of the Sino-Bhutanese dispute during this period, owing largely to the Indian refusal to allow direct talks between the two countries<sup>49</sup>, one can still conjecture that barring the obstacle posed by India, developments would have likely progressed in a manner similar to the Sino-Nepalese case. For China, as in

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<sup>46</sup> Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 202-205, Lamb, "The Sino-Pakistani Boundary Agreement of 2 March 1963," 299, Razvi, *The Frontiers of Pakistan*, 176-181, Syed, *China & Pakistan: Diplomacy of an Entente Cordiale*, 87, Francis Watson, *The Frontiers of China* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1966), 166. Of these works, Brines’ is the only one which suggests that the deal was of doubtful value for Pakistan, even if the Pakistani government itself argued to the contrary. According to Brines, by conceding the territory that Pakistan did to China, “a primary means of holding the Chinese in check had evidently been bargained away by Rawalpindi.”

<sup>47</sup> Indeed, according to Ayub Khan, when he had earlier shown Pakistan’s proposed boundary (which was what the final result reflected) to Nehru, the latter had commented on the solution being ideal were China to acquiesce to it. Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters: A Political Autobiography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 163.

<sup>48</sup> Lamb, "The Sino-Pakistani Boundary Agreement of 2 March 1963," 306.

<sup>49</sup> Leo E. Rose, "Bhutan's External Relations," *Pacific Affairs* 47, no. 2 (1974): 197.



the case with India and Nepal, the revolt in Tibet involved the escape of numerous rebels into Bhutan where, given the religious kinship between the Tibetans and the Bhutanese and the Indian influence over Thimpu, Peking would not have been remiss to fear that the rebels would be treated well and facilitated. Furthermore, that one of the strongholds of the Khampa rebellion in Tsona was located in proximity to the border with Bhutan, to which Chinese forces would extend their offensive in the spring of 1960, made the Sino-Bhutanese frontier an increasingly salient and combustible one from the Chinese perspective.<sup>50</sup> Conversely for Bhutan, fears of Chinese territorial ambitions had only exacerbated with developments in Tibet in 1959, which not only brought Chinese troops to the Himalayan kingdom's frontiers, but also resulted in the Chinese occupation of several Bhutanese enclaves in western Tibet, portending the possibility of further Chinese expansion in the future.<sup>51</sup>

That these concerns had generated urgency on both sides to address the frontier issue is evident. In 1959, an increasingly perturbed Thimpu would directly protest to Peking about the latter's extensive cartographic claims, which might have led to negotiations but for the furious reaction of New Delhi which would insist that according the 1949 treaty Bhutan could only conduct relations with the outside world through India as an intermediary.<sup>52</sup> At around the same time, the PM Jigme Dorji of Bhutan would publicly state that while his country would continue to be "guided" by India, they saw little need for India to conduct

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<sup>50</sup> Bhutan had furthermore, no doubt to Peking's consternation, imposed a total ban on Tibet several months before India did so in 1960. Levi, "Nepal in World Politics," 393-395.

<sup>51</sup> Dutt, "Bhutan's International Position," 611, Rose, "Bhutan's External Relations," 194-197. As Bhutan's intermediary to the outside world, Nehru would raise the issue of Chinese maps showing "sizable areas of Bhutan as part of Tibet" in his 26 September 1969 note to Chou. Poulou, "Bhutan's External Relations and India," 201.

<sup>52</sup> Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol. 3* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 206.

and intermediate Bhutanese external relations, hinting perhaps that Thimpu sought flexibility in dealing diplomatically with not just the US, UK and the USSR, but also China.<sup>53</sup>

By the early 1960s this Chinese connection to Bhutanese assertiveness with India assumed greater substance. By this time not only was Peking in the process of reaching amicable solutions to territorial issues with Nepal and Burma, but had also in 1960 made overtures towards Bhutan seeking direct negotiations.<sup>54</sup> That the Bhutanese did consider reciprocating is clear from Dorji's request that he be included in the April 1960 talks between Peking and New Delhi, a request that would be denied by Nehru. The Bhutanese king would also declare now that his country was a "sovereign, independent state," and if she so desired, "can have direct negotiations with China."<sup>55</sup> Such statements were taken seriously in New Delhi where Subimal Dutt, the Indian Foreign Secretary, would conclude that "the Bhutan administration are determined to take advantage of our present difficulties with China to secure for themselves untrammelled right to conduct their external relations..."<sup>56</sup>

Confirming all this would be Nehru's revealing 9 February 1961 meeting with the Bhutanese monarch. In it a disconcerted Nehru would state that "as the Maharaja knew, China was not prepared to discuss with India the border dispute between Bhutan and China." This being the case, Nehru would insist that the "only straightforward attitude for Bhutan would be to tell China to discuss with India" the Sino-Bhutanese dispute, and cautioned that "any step which the Maharaja would take to change the present position

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<sup>53</sup> Belfiglio, "India's Economic and Political Relations with Bhutan," 682-683.

<sup>54</sup> Prithwis Chandra Chakravarti, *India's China Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 157-158, Rose, "Bhutan's External Relations," 197, 204-205.

<sup>55</sup> Poullose, "Bhutan's External Relations and India," 205.

<sup>56</sup> S. Dutt to PM (3 February 1961), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 46, 49.

would strengthen the Chinese stand and this would be bad.” Indicating Indian concerns that the Bhutanese were looking upon the Chinese offer of talks with favour, Nehru would further warn the monarch that “it is quite possible that China would be encouraging Bhutan in the immediate future. Ultimately, however, Bhutan would be entirely outflanked. China will offer good terms to Bhutan and seek to come into Bhutan. Once China is there it will expand and at that stage Bhutan will find it difficult to hold back China.”<sup>57</sup>

Eventually, a significant break in ties with Delhi would prove too much of a cost to bear for Thimpu to deal directly with the Chinese whom they had little affection for, and little trust in, in any case.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, were it not for this Indian constraint it is likely that Bhutan would have willingly entered talks with China when the latter showed an inclination to do so in the early 1960s. Furthermore, all indications suggest that Bhutan’s willingness to do so was predicated on the expectation, based on the Nepalese and Burmese experience, as well as possible direct hints from Peking, that the Chinese would make the sort of concessions that they had in the case of their other smaller neighbours, that is that the Chinese would give up most, or all, of their territorial claims in Bhutan.

### **Explaining Chinese Compromise and Small State Firmness**

While the timing of China’s attention to frontier disputes with the smaller state is readily explicable by the concatenation of internal and external threats, the decision to compromise itself, and especially the extent to which the Chinese leadership did so, is less

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<sup>57</sup> Record of PMs Talk with Maharaja of Bhutan (9 February 1961), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 46, 137.

<sup>58</sup> Rose, "Bhutan's External Relations," 198.

amenable to being accounted for by this vulnerability alone, given that Peking did logically possess other viable options in addressing the relatively less intense threat (compared to India for instance) that these smaller neighbours posed.

China could have, for one, reasonably and relatively costlessly, pursued more unilateral means of stabilizing these frontiers. Barring the one with Burma, these borders were fairly short in length, and therefore likely more manageable for the PLA troops once they had filled out into these regions.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, to the extent that such missions involved transgressions into disputed territory, there was little that these smaller neighbours would have been able or even willing to do to resist Chinese forces. A unilateralist approach to stabilizing the frontier therefore posed few material costs for Peking, while making unnecessary any compromise over territory that the Chinese believed they had legitimate claims to. A firm approach, while deterring these smaller states, could also have served to cheaply demonstrate firmness to other more potent adversaries, while further diverting domestic attention away from the failure of the GLF.<sup>60</sup> At the least, even while being conciliatory, the Chinese leadership could have, given their dominant bargaining strength, have reasonably demanded a far larger share of the disputed territories than they agreed to receive in the final settlements.

The decision to compromise in the first place, and the extent to which Peking agreed to compromise, is an even greater puzzle given the behaviour of the smaller states. If internal

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<sup>59</sup> Indeed in this the smaller neighbours themselves, particularly Burma from the early 1950s, and Bhutan in the 1960s, had evidently been of some assistance by seeking to ensure that rebels either did not enter their territory, or having entered were not allowed to carry out rebellious activity against China. Taylor, *Kmt Intervention in Burma*. In Bhutan's case the refugees that did enter were often pushed into India. Dutt, "Bhutan's International Position," 608.

<sup>60</sup> For discussions of the diversionary purposes of external conflict see Jack S. Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique," in *Handbook of War Studies*, ed. Manus I. Midlarsky (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 259-288, T. Clifton Morgan and Kenneth N. Bickers, "Domestic Discontent and the External Use of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36, no. 1 (1992).

and external threats are sufficient to elicit compromise, this should have been even more of a case for the smaller states like Burma who, in addition to the perennial fear of larger neighbours, were dealing with their own internal rebellions, some of them encouraged by Peking. That despite this they would show little propensity to make even moderately larger concessions, in return for a settled border with a clearly superior adversary, and with little means to actually coerce China into making the necessary concessions, points to the inadequacy of threat alone in determining decisions to compromise or practice intransigence in addressing territorial disputes.

The theoretical argument made in this dissertation suggests that the tendency for the stronger state to compromise, and compromise well beyond what its bargaining strength required, and conversely for the weaker states to be firm despite the potential risks of doing so, owes itself to the perceived long term strategic and reputational implications of compromise. In the cases discussed in this chapter, an exploration of the historical record makes apparent that reputational concerns played a particularly significant role in shaping state behaviour.

### **The Reputational Imperative and Chinese Behaviour**

China's extensive compromises, made in a context of internal and external vulnerability, were facilitated by the immense asymmetry that characterized its relations with the smaller neighbours. This massive asymmetry in size and military capabilities ensured for Peking that the weaker adversaries posed no long term prospect of renegeing on a territorial settlement, thereby diminishing any fears in China about either the strategic or reputational costs of these concessions.

Not only was compromise facilitated, however, by the absence of such concerns, but was importantly also incentivized for Peking by the expectation of acquiring a positive reputation through generous concessions. With China's dominant bargaining strength in the frontier regions, not only were concessions unlikely to convey weakness, but indeed were hoped to serve as demonstrations of China's generosity from a position of overwhelming strength. Indeed, in making large concessions, and even conceding most or all of the smaller states' claims, the more potent Peking expected the signal of generosity to be. The territorial agreements therefore meticulously ensured that they "did not bear the clear marks of overweening Chinese power."<sup>61</sup>

With Burma consequently, by 1960 the Chinese leadership had significantly relaxed their earlier stand against making a 'gift' of territory, seeking to thereby highlight what they had sought to stress all along: that while China could have legitimately demanded more territory given historical claims, Peking was prepared to be magnanimous because of its distaste for "great nation chauvinism."<sup>62</sup> With Nepal similarly, not only would the Chinese leadership make magnanimous concessions, but would also agree to accept both the watershed principle (as in the Burmese case), as well as the Nepalese contention that there existed a "traditional customary boundary line."<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, as Lall has pointed out, even on procedural issues related to the boundary committee meetings, the Chinese would allow Kathmandu to host the first and third sessions, instead of assuming the mantle of senior

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<sup>61</sup> Lall, *How Communist China Negotiates*, 188.

<sup>62</sup> Whittam, "The Sino-Burmese Boundary Treaty," 182.

<sup>63</sup> These principles, interestingly, were the very ones that China had refused to agree to India's case, leading India to officially welcome the Sino-Nepalese agreement hoping that the same principles would be agreed to by China in the case of the Sino-Indian frontier. Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 239, Yaacov Vertzberger, *Misperceptions in Foreign Policymaking: The Sino-Indian Conflict, 1959-1962* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 116.

partner and insisting that talks be held in Peking.<sup>64</sup> In Bhutan's case, while little of a concrete nature can be said, the Chinese insistence on bilateralism certainly suggests this reputational calculus at play. By demanding direct talks with Thimpu, surely in awareness that New Delhi would never allow them, the Chinese could on the one hand highlight their reasonableness in contrast to India's almost imperialistic grip over Bhutan.<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, bilateralism was also necessary so that any concessions made by Peking unambiguously signalled their generosity, whereas the same concessions made via India could have been presented by the latter as a result of their firmness in defense of Bhutan's interests. Finally, this reputational imperative is best alluded to in Chou remarks following the Sino-Pakistan territorial agreement, when he would state that "since China is bigger than these neighbouring countries...China always made more concessions to the opposite party in the process of mutual accommodation in order to seek a settlement of the question."<sup>66</sup>

The terms of the settlements themselves, especially with Burma and Pakistan, were additionally significant in this regard. By eliciting the smaller states' acquiescence to regard the frontiers as previously undefined, the boundary agreements represented an outcome of negotiations between post-colonial states, unbound by previous imperial history. In doing so these terms validated on the one hand the propriety of China's initial claims, thereby attesting to the genuineness of generosity on the part of the Chinese leadership, and on the other hand, by removing any imperial and 'unequal' markers attached to the borders, also

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<sup>64</sup> Lall, *How Communist China Negotiates*, 199.

<sup>65</sup> Dutt, "India and the Himalayan States," 77.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 198.

preserved Chinese pride and ‘face,’ making large concessions even more acceptable for Peking.<sup>67</sup>

The potential benefits of such a reputation for generosity, in turn, had multiplied for the Chinese leadership beginning in the end of the 1950s. First, and most directly, a demonstration of Chinese generosity was hoped to elicit reciprocal cooperation from neighbours in addressing Peking’s domestic troubles. All agreements with smaller states were therefore accompanied by some kind of explicit recognition of China’s sovereignty over the renegade provinces of Tibet and Xinjiang, as well as tangible measures to cut down potential sources of direct and indirect assistance to the rebels, including joint operations to restrain and undermine the latter’s activities in the frontier regions. In the case of the Sino-Burmese settlement, this involved an agreement to coordinate action against KMT troops in Burmese territory seeking to exploit China’s troubles, whereas with Nepal in addition to measures to undermine the Tibetan rebel movement across borders, Peking would seek the expeditious construction of road connecting Tibet and Nepal, meant ostensibly to overcome Tibet’s economic isolation as a result of the Indian economic embargo.<sup>68</sup>

Second, a positive reputation had become crucial for the Chinese leadership in countering the possibility of external isolation, and the prospect of smaller neighbours being co-opted by China’s external adversaries. From 1955, at Bandung, Chou had sought to convey to neighbours China’s benignity, by explicitly committing that in dealing with frontier disputes Peking would “use only peaceful means,” and that in the meantime his government

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<sup>67</sup> Lamb, "The Sino-Pakistani Boundary Agreement of 2 March 1963," 311-312.

<sup>68</sup> For detailed discussion of these terms see, Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 20-21, 83-119. On the road agreement with Nepal see Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 239-242.



was “willing to maintain the present situation” without prejudice to either side’s claims.<sup>69</sup> By 1960, increasing instances of Chinese troop intrusions into neighbouring states, and public accusations from India about Chinese expansionism, threatened to undermine the goodwill built up at Bandung, and reignite fears of China in Asia. The decision now to rapidly resolve all frontier issues, and making generous concessions in the process, served therefore to stem the prospect of increasing isolation and encirclement of China.

This reputational logic also accounts also for the curious timing of China’s compromises. Rather than open talks soon after the March 1959 eruption of rebellion in Tibet, which should have been the case if Peking’s sole concern was to counteract the domestic threat, the Chinese leadership would only initiate talks towards the end of 1959, when frontier clashes had become more frequent, and the dispute with India had reached high levels of acrimony. Compromise was therefore in a sense inextricably linked to the fast deteriorating relations with India. By reassuring the smaller neighbouring states, Peking sought to both preclude the prospect of tensions and conflict with India engendering fear and hostility across the rest of China’s periphery, as well as cajole and pressure New Delhi into being more conciliatory. The most intense period of Chinese activity on frontier issues with the small neighbours would therefore come shortly after it had become clear that Indian leaders were unwilling to enter talks without preconditions, and immediately prior to the Chou-Nehru talks in April 1960. In March moreover, with China and Burma having agreed on the principles for resolving their dispute, during a stopover at Rangoon on his way to

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<sup>69</sup> Luke T. Chang, *China's Boundary Treaties and Frontier Disputes: A Manuscript* (London: Oceana Publications, 1982), 42, Neville Maxwell, "Sino-Indian Border Dispute Reconsidered," *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 15 (1999): 905-906. In explaining China’s attitude to the territorial dispute with Burma in the National People’s Congress in July 1957, Chou would emphasize the need to “promote Sino-Burmese friendship and the solidarity among Asian and African countries” as reasons to adopt an accommodative attitude. Lall, *How Communist China Negotiates*, 186.

New Delhi, Chou would explicitly note that the Sino-Burmese agreement “would be advantageous for discussing the problem with India.”<sup>70</sup>

Hence also the intensity of China’s public relations activity in the months prior to the 1962 offensive against India, as discussed in the previous chapter. In addition to opening talks with Pakistan, which was sure to embarrass New Delhi, the Chinese would also now publicly query: “since the Burmese and Nepalese Governments can settle their boundary questions with China in a friendly way through negotiations and since the Government of Pakistan has also agreed...to negotiate a boundary settlement, why is it that the Indian Government cannot negotiate and settle its boundary question with [China]? Such a commonsense query is indeed rather embarrassing – but it is useless to get furious with China.”<sup>71</sup>

### **Reputational Concerns and Small State Firmness**

While China’s massive asymmetric advantages in size and bargaining strength, in a context of being faced with a concatenation of internal and external threats, facilitated and incentivized for Peking the making of large concessions, the same asymmetry also explains the surprising firmness of the smaller states. To the leaders of these states, the credibility of any Chinese commitments on territorial issues was suspect not only owing to the latter’s

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<sup>70</sup> A *People’s Daily* article from February had already posed the question: “Why cannot events that have happened between China and Burma also occur between China and other Asian countries?” implicitly but obviously pointing to India. Chou had also reportedly told U Nu that “we can completely solve the Chinese-Indian border problem according to the principles for solving the Chinese-Burmese border problem.” Quoted in Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 88-89. Similarly, following the agreement with Nepal the *People’s Daily* would state the agreement to be “strong proof that any unresolved conflict between Asian and African countries can be settled.” Quoted in *ibid.*, 92.

<sup>71</sup> Note from China MFA to the Embassy of India in China (31 May 1962), *White Paper 6*, 101-102.

dominant size and military capabilities, but also because of their suspect long term intentions, manifested in Peking's traditionally expansive territorial claims on its neighbours. It was important therefore for the likes of Burma, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan that no concessions be made which would either exacerbate strategic vulnerability, or convey weakness to the dominant neighbour, for fear that doing so would only encourage a potentially existentialist threat of Chinese expansionism.

Given these considerations, it is not surprising that the smaller states would demand outcomes reflecting their claims, and show great hesitation to make even minor territorial concessions, despite their anxiety to resolve these disputes. Such firmness, moreover, cannot be attributed solely to some symbolic-nationalist attachment to territory, given that these frontier regions were for the most part either uninhabited, or comprised especially in Burma's case troublesome ethnic minority populations. The Burmese leadership's ready willingness to concede three Kachin villages to China and the absence of any domestic ferment in Pakistan over the Sino-Pakistani frontier issue suggests the relatively low resonance these territories had on domestic publics in these countries. Only the status of Mount Everest exercised some real symbolic salience in Nepal, while the remainder of the disputed territory evoked less domestic attention, a tendency that was further moderated by the fact that public animosity in Nepal was generally directed at China's rival in the region, India.

Strategic considerations were similarly unlikely to be paramount for the smaller states for the most part. Only for Burma, the Namwan tract, as the site for the only road connecting the Kachin and Shan states was strategically important, as were some of the mountain passes in the Karakoram for Pakistan. Barring these areas however, for a couple of reasons, none of territorial concessions that the leaders of these small states were reluctant to

make were likely to unduly undermine the strategic viability of their countries. First, the amount of territory Peking eventually asked for during negotiations, and the smaller states continued to dispute, was fairly insubstantial, sometimes amounting to only a few square kilometers. Second, and more importantly, given the immense asymmetry characterizing the relationship between China and the smaller states, the strategic advantages in favour of Peking were already so large that even major concessions of territory on the one side or the other were unlikely to alter the strategic defensibility of the weaker party to any significant extent.

What, however, does appear to be a common thread across small state decisions to remain firm on their claims is the reputational imperative. Indeed it could be argued that given the immense gap in material capabilities, the only means through which leaders in the smaller states could conceive of deterring a potential Chinese existential threat was by establishing a reputation for firmness. Hence the rejection by Burma of Peking's offer to maintain the *status quo* after Chinese troops had entered the Wa State in 1955-56, an offer that Nehru would describe (an assessment likely shared by U Nu) as setting a dangerous precedent in arguing that "the previous unilateral change in the status quo should be allowed to exist and then the matter discussed."<sup>72</sup> Rangoon's willingness to let the dispute stagnate over the minor territorial issues which Chou had raised in 1957 also stemmed from this reputational concern, given U Nu's belief that Chou and he had reached a prior understanding on the basic terms of a settlement in 1956, which Peking was now renegeing

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<sup>72</sup> "Chinese Incursions into Myanmar" (26 August 1956), *Smyth-Ss.* vol. 34, 386. As early as 1953, Nehru had in fact written to the Burmese leader warning that the Chinese "do not respect those who show weakness. We have to be both friendly and firm." Nehru to Thakin Nu (6 March 1953), *ibid.* Vol. 21, 534-535. At U Nu's request, Nehru would also write to Chou suggesting that "Burma is a relatively a small country...and Burma naturally feels a little apprehensive of both these countries [India and China]...it is up to us to function in a way to remove all apprehension from the mind of Burma..." Quoted in Woodman, *The Making of Burma*, 527.

on. According to Indian records, China's new demands in 1957, however small, had led to "suspicion of China in Burma," and a feeling in Rangoon that "the Chinese Government is playing some kind of game with them about their frontier and not acting up to their word."<sup>73</sup> Of particular suspicion for the Burmese was the Chinese attempt to drift from the watershed principle on the northern boundary, an acceptance of which by Rangoon was feared would lead to later Chinese claims on territory on the Burmese side of the watershed. Rangoon would therefore refuse to budge from its demand that the Chinese government accept the watershed principle without conditions, as well as cease to demand any more territory than the Burmese had already agreed to concede.<sup>74</sup>

The Nepalese would similarly seek to signal their firmness to the Chinese through their stand on territorial issues. In this they were encouraged by Indian officials who would advise Kathmandu in October 1959 that "in their anxiety to settle their problems with China they should not give the appearance of having been scared."<sup>75</sup> Nepalese Prime Minister Koirala would accordingly declare in one of his first public statements in Peking in March 1960 that "notwithstanding its size or might if any power attempts to occupy or control even an inch of territory of another Asian country, such attempts will definitely disrupt peace in

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<sup>73</sup> Nehru to RK Nehru (15 July 1957), *Smyj-Ss*. Vol. 38, 693.

<sup>74</sup> Woodman, *The Making of Burma*, 534-535. Even the major concession that Burma was willing to make, that is the concession of three villages in Hpimaw area, was based on an acceptance that the Chinese claims there were indeed strong. This would be confirmed by the Indian Historical Division which would attest that even the British had conceded Chinese claims to the territory. Nehru to U Nu (14 May 1957), *Smyj-Ss*. vol. 38, 728.

<sup>75</sup> S. Dutt to PM (19 October 1959), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 4, 80. Prior to the March 1960 talks, New Delhi would specifically advise the Nepalese leadership that they "should adhere to their stand that their boundary was never in dispute. It is traditional and well known and based on unchanging geographic features." S. Dutt to PM (20 February 1960), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 4.

the world.”<sup>76</sup> Having elicited Chinese acknowledgment that the frontier between the two states was “traditional,” and having agreed to the formation of a joint boundary commission, Kathmandu would create a major diplomatic fracas over the Mustang incident in 1960<sup>77</sup>, relenting only after the Chinese had apologized and agreed to pay an indemnity to Nepal.<sup>78</sup>

With a territorial agreement overwhelmingly favourable to Nepal agreed to, King Mahendra’s audacious statements during his September-October 1961 trip to Peking, would make the reputational motivation underlying Nepalese firmness amply clear. The King, in public statements, would surprisingly refer to China’s history of expansionism, quoting Liu Shao-chi on China’s “tendency to ignore just and rightful claims, and the rights and susceptibilities of her small neighbours.”<sup>79</sup> He would further express his hope that China would not “repeat past mistakes,” and “take lessons from history and not adopt the path of encroachment upon and interference in the political sovereignty and territorial integrity of her neighbours.”<sup>80</sup> Such statements conveyed that the Nepalese had refused to take Chinese expressions of benignity at face value, and that their firmness in the territorial dispute was premised to a significant degree on the desire to deter any expansionist thoughts in Peking.

Finally, while there is no similar direct evidence of Pakistani behaviour being driven by reputational considerations, one can conjecture that Ayub’s attempt at getting India to

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<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 225.

<sup>77</sup> In June 1960, Chinese troops in pursuit of Tibetan rebels would clash with Nepalese troops in the Mustang area, killing one and capturing seventeen Nepalese troops.

<sup>78</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 93, Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 228.

<sup>79</sup> Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 238. Mahindra would state the hope that “there will be no chance for any unfriendly behaviour calculated to spoil our good relations,” on China’s part. Quoted in Muni, *Foreign Policy of Nepal*, 120.

<sup>80</sup> Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, 238.

join a joint-defense system<sup>81</sup>, presumably aimed at China, as well as the willingness of Islamabad to officially push for talks only once it had become clear in the early 1960s that the Chinese were willing to make significant concessions towards resolving disputed boundaries, suggests that the Pakistani leadership was both skeptical of Chinese intentions, and keen to push for an agreement that precluded the possibility of making concessions which would demonstrate weakness in the face of overwhelming Chinese power. Once it was clear, however, that China would be reasonable, there was every incentive for the Pakistani leadership to push through with a territorial agreement as part of budding alignment with Peking, against their now common adversary, India. While for China, the agreement served to further embarrass India and resultantly shed even better light on Peking, for a Pakistan increasingly disenchanted with the returns from the military pact with the US, making a switch of its affections towards China was now doubly attractive, reflected in the urgency that the Pakistan leadership attached to the resolution of all territorial disputes.

### **Reputational Concerns in Indo-Bhutanese Relations**

In addition to those featuring China, the other asymmetric territorial disputes which saw diplomatic activity in the region during this period were the ones involving India and Bhutan. Two sets of territorial issues have featured in Indo-Bhutanese relations. The first was Bhutan's claim to a meager 83 square kilometers of territory in the Dewangiri strip in Assam, territory that had been ceded by the Bhutanese to British India in the Sinchula treaty

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<sup>81</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 63.

of 1865.<sup>82</sup> Soon after Indian independence in August 1947, the Bhutanese would ask New Delhi for the negotiation of a new Indo-Bhutanese treaty, as well as the return of Dewangiri, in aid of which Thimpu was willing to forgo its annual subsidies from India. With India's acquiescence, talks would commence in 1949, with the new treaty maintaining the essence of the prior Anglo-Bhutanese treaty in ensuring that Bhutan would remain an Indian "protectorate" in all but name.<sup>83</sup> More to the point for our purpose, New Delhi willingly ceded the Dewangiri strip to Bhutan, and rather than abrogating the annual subsidy to Bhutan, quintupled the amount. Bhutan's two basic demands, the recognition of its independence, and the restoration of its territory, were therefore met in the 1949 agreement.<sup>84</sup>

A second, more indirectly territorial issue, impinged on the nature and limits of Bhutanese sovereignty. Indian maps had from early on represented the frontier in a way where Bhutan was shown as lying within India's international boundaries.<sup>85</sup> While New Delhi considered such a representation as clarifying Bhutan's subordinate status to India, Indian officials had apparently anticipated, or been probed by the Bhutanese, on the issue in as early as 1955, leading Nehru to comment that his government would not "object to Bhutan being shown outside our international boundary," but would also not take the initiative, or

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<sup>82</sup> The 1910 treaty would also further concretise the role of Bhutan as "protectorate" of British India, with the former retaining internal sovereignty while agreeing to conduct its external relations according to the "advice" of the British. Belfiglio, "India's Economic and Political Relations with Bhutan," 681, Leo E. Rose, *The Politics of Bhutan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 64-68. As Poulouze points out, this treaty was fundamentally aimed at containing a Chinese threat. Poulouze, "Bhutan's External Relations and India," 196.

<sup>83</sup> Dutt, "India and the Himalayan States," 603, Kapileshwar Labh, *India and Bhutan* (New Delhi: Sindhu Publications, 1974), 229, Poulouze, "Bhutan's External Relations and India," 202-203.

<sup>84</sup> Rose, "Bhutan's External Relations," 193.

<sup>85</sup> Dutt, "Bhutan's International Position," 610.



“encourage Bhutan to get some kind of sovereign and independent international status.”<sup>86</sup> By the beginning of the 1960s, Bhutan would become more assertive on the issue, with agitated protests against maps in India’s white papers and official reports on the Sino-Indian frontier issue continuing to represent Bhutan as part of India.<sup>87</sup> Again, New Delhi would quickly relent with Foreign Secretary Dutt suggesting that India “should not be equally rigid on all points. Where we can make a concession to Bhutan’s feelings without damage to our real interest, we should do so unhesitatingly. This applies, I think, to the manner of delineating Bhutan’s frontier.”<sup>88</sup>

Just as in the case of China’s disputes with the smaller neighbours, the Indo-Bhutanese case illustrates the importance of reputational concerns in the decision making of leaders in both states. For India, tiny Bhutan’s acquiescence to being “guided” by India its international relations being of prime importance, there was every incentive for New Delhi to appear benevolent towards Thimpu. The cession of territory in 1949 therefore, while hardly substantial, was nevertheless defended by Nehru in parliament along reputational terms. Contending that the concession itself was only a minor rectification of frontiers of no major consequence to India, Nehru would also make clear that India’s concession was aimed at developing a “psychological feeling of oneness and kinship” in the Bhutanese people. Indeed, rather than doing injury to India, the concession did “something which a great

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<sup>86</sup> Nehru to Foreign Secretary (10 June 1955), *Sujn-Ss*. vol. 29, 314.

<sup>87</sup> In contrast the Chinese maps had properly shown the boundary between Bhutan, and India and China as international boundaries. Poulse, "Bhutan's External Relations and India," 202.

<sup>88</sup> S. Dutt to Joint Secretary (E) (2 June 1960), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 43, 55.

country should always do – to show how it looks upon its little brothers in a friendly generous way and protects and helps them to grow.”<sup>89</sup>

Similarly, in addressing complaints about Indian maps in the early 1960s, a reputational concern was evident in New Delhi’s thinking. Already aware of Bhutanese apprehensions of India, indications now that the Chinese were willing to negotiate directly with Bhutan, and presumably make generous concessions, meant India was in danger of appearing less generous, and even imperialistic to its neighbours in comparison to China.<sup>90</sup> This prospect was particularly troubling at a time when Nehru had been seeking in previous years to integrate Bhutan more closely to India by offering financial and technical support for road development linking Bhutan and India.<sup>91</sup> In recognition of this problem, Nehru would publicly declare during a visit to Bhutan that while “some may think that, since India is a great and powerful country and Bhutan is a small one, the former might wish to exercise pressure on Bhutan,” this was in fact far from India’s intention.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, in New Delhi it was also recognized that were Bhutanese fears not assuaged swiftly, a forceful demand from Thimpu to alter treaty relations would prove irresistible because “world opinion would not understand our attitude,” and “China will take it as a triumph of her stand...”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> “Rectification of the Assam-Bhutan Boundary” (7 August 1951), *Sujn-Ss*. vol. 16-I, 508. Dutt, “Bhutan's International Position,” 609.

<sup>90</sup> This concern would show in discussions in the Indian government with regard to Nepal as well, with Dutt writing to Nehru that while the Nepalese were engaged in strategy of “competitive wooing” of China and India, the Chinese themselves were likely to “take a specially favourable attitude towards Nepal in order to impress opinion in other countries...” S. Dutt to PM (19 October 1959), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 4.

<sup>91</sup> Belfiglio, “India's Economic and Political Relations with Bhutan,” 676.

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 682.

<sup>93</sup> S. Dutt to PM (3 February 61), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 46, 49-50. This was despite a preference to ideally let the issue remain dormant for a while, again for reputational reasons, with fears that even if the issue were resolved to Thimpu’s liking, “there is a risk that this dispute will get

While the Indian sensitivity and concessions to Bhutanese demands were shaped by the expectation of creating a positive impression, in contrast, tiny Bhutan's tendency to deal firmly with India, and Thimpu's willingness to entertain the prospect of talks with Peking only once the latter had demonstrated its desire to be generous, stemmed from concerns that compromise would demonstrate weakness. From early on, as Rose has pointed out, there was "cause for strong apprehension within Royal Government circles" of independent India's, as well as communist China's future intentions.<sup>94</sup> Towards India in a particular, an Indian official would note, there was "extreme suspicion and distrust."<sup>95</sup> Indeed, how central reputational concerns were to Thimpu's conduct would be conveyed in a note by India's liaison to Bhutan, Apa Pant. The Bhutanese leadership, Pant would note, had "expressed some kind of a fear of Indian 'expansionist tendencies'! Thus even as regards help for their necessary and urgently required development, Bhutan is in a way afraid of approaching India...This feeling of shyness or fear has been so acute that even in very small matters the Bhutanese are still afraid of 'giving in' or losing face."<sup>96</sup> This fear and concern for 'face' was apparently nowhere more true than on issues of territorial integrity.

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some publicity and the outside world might receive the impression that we are having boundary disputes with all and sundry." S. Dutt to JS (E) (25 January 1961), *Subimal Dutt Papers*, Subject File 46, 175.

<sup>94</sup> Rose, "Bhutan's External Relations," 193.

<sup>95</sup> The prevailing feeling in Bhutan and Sikkim towards India, Nari Rustomji, the Dewan of Sikkim, would note was: "Why can't we be left alone to manage our affairs? India has enough to attend to putting her own house in order without having to go about advising other people how to manage theirs." Rustomji to Apa Pant (23 August 1955), *N.K. Rustomji Private Papers*, Subject File 5.

<sup>96</sup> "India's Relations with Sikkim and Bhutan," *Apa Pant Papers*, Subject File 9.

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the asymmetric territorial disputes in the South Asian neighbourhood resulted in outcomes which are counterintuitive from a traditional IR perspective. In all cases, the overwhelmingly stronger power surprisingly conceded on practically all of its own claims, while the weaker states adopted intractable positions on their own claims at the risk of jettisoning resolution of their disputes, and worse evoking the larger neighbour's wrath. This despite the fact that it was the smaller states that had initially shown the greatest inclination to enter talks, even as the larger neighbour preferred deferment of the dispute to a later date.

In these disputes the same bargaining context which made it viable, and even preferable, for the larger state to make major concessions, had the contrary effect on the smaller states, rendering firmness the more advisable course of action. Central to this story were the divergent perceptions of state leaders of the reputational implications of compromise. For the larger states, their dominance in size and military strength made the strategic and reputational costs of compromise negligible. On the contrary, the expectation that larger concessions from a position of strength would signal generosity, incentivized compromise for the stronger state seeking to elicit cooperation and friendship from the smaller neighbours during periods of internal and external troubles.

The very weakness of the smaller states, on the other hand, made long term concerns about the larger adversary's intentions very real, necessitating an insistence on terms which both preserved their strategic interests, as well as built a reputation for firmness. Hence the insistence on practically the entirety of their terms, and the willingness to risk prolonging the dispute indefinitely were such terms not agreed to by the stronger state. In each of these

cases therefore, the weaker state would invariably, and surprisingly, emerge with a territorial settlement more favourable to its claims, having elicited extensive concessions from the stronger challenger.

## Conclusion

### Summary

This dissertation began with the aim of overcoming an important lacuna in the scholarly work on state behaviour in territorial disputes in the South Asian region. While much ink has been expended on the study of these disputes, particularly the Kashmir and Sino-Indian cases, there has been surprisingly little sustained theoretical inquiry to provide a generalizable account for why states, both big and small, in the region have chosen at different times to pursue policies involving varied extents of compromise or intransigence on their territorial claims. To the extent that at least some of these works do offer theoretical insights, the familiar reliance on the salience (economic, strategic, or symbolic-nationalist) of the territory to explain state behaviour has been unsatisfactory in accounting for the large variations in state policies across time and cases. Perhaps more importantly, such accounts have also left some puzzling empirical anomalies unexplained. Why, for instance, have state leaders in some cases chosen to be intransigent over territory of self-admittedly little salience, while showing willingness to make large concessions on territory of much greater importance? Similarly, what explains the tendency of the stronger party in a territorial dispute to often make larger concessions than its bargaining position requires, and conversely the proclivities of the weaker party to adopt intractable positions despite have little strength to defend such a posture effectively?

This study has sought to address these gaps and empirical anomalies, by proposing a theoretical framework to account for state behaviour in territorial disputes across the region, including not just the more prominent disputes between India and Pakistan, and India and

China, but also the asymmetric disputes in the region pitting the large and small states. The essence of the argument is that decisions to compromise or be intransigent on territorial claims, and the extent of each, are significantly shaped by the expected long term strategic and reputational implications of such choices. Especially when state leaders perceive commitment problems, that is, the ease and willingness with which an adversary is expected to be able to renege on a territorial settlement in the future, to be high, they are likely to be wary of making any concessions which either concede strategic ground or engender a reputation of weakness. Making concessions therefore is easiest when commitment problems are absent, the more dominant a state's bargaining strength is, and the less subject it has been to intense coercive pressures (especially the use of force), because compromises in such a context can both preserve strategic interests and be expected to signal a reputation of generosity from strength, rather than capitulation owing to weakness. The reputational logic is the particularly innovative aspect of this theoretical account, and the framework as a whole serves to suggest that the popular emphasis on salience, particularly nationalist salience, in the study of the region's disputes might be overstated and subject to reassessment.

The empirical record from the region bears out the theoretical hypotheses offered in this dissertation. The case studies demonstrate that from 1947-1965, state behaviour in territorial disputes in the South Asian neighbourhood was shaped to a significant degree by leaders' perceptions of the long terms implications of their actions. The trigger to activity on these territorial claims often stemmed from the immediacy of threats to territorial integrity or claims, and the costs associated with the disputes. When such threats or costs were minimal, and expectations sanguine about the impact of time on bargaining position, as was the case with both China and India for much of the 1950s, leaders demonstrated a distinct preference

for delay. When such threats and costs were immediate and apparent, however, as was the case for the smaller states and in the Kashmir dispute throughout this period, and in the Chinese case from the late 1950s onwards, delay became unviable prompting states to actively address the disputes.

The decision on *how* to deal with the disputes, however, and whether (and to what extent) be conciliatory or intransigent on territorial claims, was influenced to a significant extent by prognostications of the future. When a combination of the adversary's military prowess, and hostile intentions, made the credibility of its commitments suspect, leaders showed disinclination towards making territorial concessions which would either surrender a strategic advantage, or reputationally signal weakness to an adversary. While the strategic consideration was most apparent in Pakistan's efforts to acquire Kashmir, and China's insistence on retaining the Aksai Chin area, more interesting is the fact that in many cases decision making was motivated not by material-strategic considerations, but by reputational ones. Assessments of the reputational implications of compromise, in turn, were shaped to a significant degree by the relative bargaining positions of the disputants in the theatre of dispute, and on whether or not the challenger had resorted to what were viewed as coercive or unilateral means to alter the status quo.

This account makes explicable, for instance, the otherwise puzzling intransigence of the Indian leadership over the self-confessedly unimportant territory of Aksai Chin in the western sector of the Sino-Indian frontier, particularly after 1958 prior to when the eastern sector had been the center of attention of the Indian leadership. It was therefore not some unreasonable pig-headedness on the part of Nehru, or overwhelming domestic pressures alone, but rather a strong fear within the Indian government that such large concessions would only encourage more demands from a stronger, and potentially aggressive and



duplicitous China, which made a package deal proposed by Peking unacceptable in New Delhi. Such concerns also help explain the failure of India and Pakistan to resolve their dispute over Kashmir through the patently reasonable mechanism of a plebiscite early in their dispute. Importantly, the case studies of the dispute suggest, neither did contested nationalisms render Kashmir indivisible, nor did some fundamental insincerity of the Nehru government, as critics have concluded, preclude the conduct of a plebiscite or compromise on India's part in these years. Rather, till 1954, the plebiscite option languished owing only to each side's prerequisites to a vote in the state, conditions which were motivated by the strategic and reputational logics suggested in this study. Only after 1954, when the US-Pakistan military pact severely compounded the long term Pakistani threat to India, did New Delhi withdraw the plebiscite offer, but again owing to an exacerbation of the perceived strategic and reputational costs of major concessions on Kashmir for the Indian leadership.

Hence also the surprising intransigence of the smaller states in their disputes with China, with demands that a large part of their claims be met, and their refusal to make even minor concessions in some cases, despite the dubious strategic and nationalist salience of the territories in question. Burma, notably, would even demonstrate a willingness to tolerate deadlock with China, despite being itself faced with serious domestic challenges. That the smaller states would risk such firmness, despite possessing little military capability to justify their stand, suggests the potency of the reputational imperative in their decision making.

Finally, two instances of the resort to force against India, by China in 1962 and Pakistan in 1965, were driven in important ways by the reputational imperative. While there were definite material gains that both initiators had desired through the use of force, there was also a strong rationale, particularly in the Chinese decision, of using force to demonstrate firmness in the face of India's perceived unilateralism, and thereby eliciting from New Delhi

a more conciliatory approach to the territorial dispute. Peking's puzzling decision to first use force, and then unilaterally withdraw from all of its claimed territory in the eastern sector, can only be accounted for by this desire to first demonstrate firmness through force, and then signal to India and other neighbours Peking's generosity through the unilateral withdrawal.

In contrast to the previous cases, when more sanguine expectations about an adversary's capabilities and intentions made the latter's commitments more credible, with little to fear for the long term, state leaders were more amenable to compromise. Such compromise, and more of it, was indeed incentivised further when the state possessed dominant bargaining strength in the theatre of contention, in the expectation that large concessions from a position of strength would be reputationally beneficial by signalling generosity. The Chinese leadership would therefore, somewhat counter intuitively, do little to exploit their undoubted superiority vis-à-vis the smaller neighbours to acquire nationalistically salient 'lost' territory. Rather, in a context of mounting domestic and external travails, Peking would make large territorial concessions to the weaker neighbours, in most cases agreeing to virtually all of the latter's territorial claims. With a more formidable India too, Chinese decision-makers would only seek to retain strategic territory in the Aksai Chin, expressing willingness to concede in return territory nearly three times larger to New Delhi. India, similarly, would make concessions to Bhutan on territorial issues in the hope of demonstrating generosity. Even with regard to Kashmir, until the 1954 US-Pakistan military pact promised to significantly transform the military balance in the region in Pakistan's favour, the Indian leadership showed a willingness to leave the fate of the state to its population, even if that meant Pakistan's acquisition of Kashmir, with strategic and reputational concerns however shaping the terms under which New Delhi was willing to

conduct a plebiscite. These purported demonstrations of generosity in turn were expected in Peking and New Delhi to curb small state fears, and elicit more cooperative attitudes from them in dealing with internal and external challenges to territorial integrity that the larger states faced at particular points in time.

### **Limits of Nationalism and Domestic Politics**

None of the previous discussion of course means that strategic or reputational concerns, or systemic concerns and variables, alone tell us the entire story. Other factors such as nationalist concerns have no doubt influenced outcomes, and it would be remiss to suggest that political leaderships seeking to retain power domestically could make decisions on issues as sensitive as territorial disputes with no regard for their domestic reputations. Indeed, that domestic politics does matter is vividly illustrated in the fact that developments internal to states often served as triggers to address territorial disputes seriously, as was the case with China in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Nevertheless, the case studies do suggest that the emphasis on nationalism in its psychological or domestic political avatars, in explaining decision making in territorial disputes is, while eminently intuitive, overstated. Therefore, while the grievance of being deprived of land and influence during the “century of shame,” did evoke in Chinese leaders a nationalist desire to correct past wrongs by retrieving “lost” territories, Peking in fact desisted from acting on such impulses despite having the military capability to do so. Similarly, the Indian adoption of a largely intransigent posture on territorial claims vis-à-vis China prior to the emergence of any domestic political pressures, and New Delhi’s early willingness to pursue a conciliatory policy with regard to a territory of high nationalist

salience in Kashmir, points to the inadequacy of nationalism based accounts. Even for Pakistan, as our case study demonstrates, the ideological attachment to Muslim Kashmir did not make the desire to acquire the territory indivisible, with independence for, the internationalization of, or a plebiscite in Kashmir being acceptable to Pakistani leaders at various points.

Moreover, in all cases, even when domestic pressures were undoubted, decision making was not driven by the political opposition and public opinion alone, and rather policy choices were often made independently of these pressures. Nationalist concerns, therefore, often served less as determinants of policy, and more as a mechanism reinforcing stands that leaderships had often already adopted. Considerations, strategic or reputational, which often made it problematic for national leaders to make concessions, in turn, also often fomented domestic pressures for firmness. This was the case in India, with regard to the territorial dispute with China in the later 1950s, and in Pakistan for much of the duration of the Kashmir dispute. While domestic pressures no doubt impinged on the thinking of state leaders, it cannot therefore be said that such pressures moved decision makers in directions fundamentally different from their own original proclivities or preferences. Indeed, it could even be conjectured that in certain cases, for instance Nehru's decision to release white papers of correspondence with the Chinese government to the Indian parliament, political leaders reluctant to compromise themselves may have seen benefit in encouraging domestic pressures in order to bind their own hands, and thereby pressure the adversary to be more conciliatory.

Indeed the question of how demands of reputation building internationally and domestically interact with each other in the making of crucial foreign policy decisions suggests itself as a promising area for further enquiry. Under what conditions are political

leaders able to make tough foreign policy decisions, such as compromises on territorial claims, and yet able to sell them domestically, and under what conditions do the domestic costs of international concessions become unacceptably high? The framework presented here has suggested that contextual factors at the systemic level, having to do with perceptions of an adversary's capabilities, intentions and actions shape these dynamics to some degree. Nevertheless, factors more rooted in the domestic politics and institutional structures of states also not doubt impinge on this question, and are ripe for greater exploration.

### **The Importance of Reputation**

The case study findings in this dissertation have several implications for the theoretical study of territorial disputes, and international relations in general. The most important conclusion is that reputational considerations do indeed play a significant, and independent, role in the decision making of state leaders. When considering the implications of their actions, state leaders care not just about material-strategic consequences, but also about the reputational signals that their actions might convey to an adversary. Every so often, as the case studies have shown, such concerns often outdo the strategic logic in explanatory power. The privileging of strategic/material mechanisms over reputational ones that much of the most prominent scholarship in IR engages in is therefore unsatisfactory.

Indeed the intensity with which state leaders often consider the issue of their reputations is exemplified in the fact that even weak states with little military capability tend to adopt intractable positions on their territorial claims for reputation building purposes, despite the immense risks associated with such a posture. It could indeed be conjectured that in such cases, leaders look at reputation building as particularly important, in deterring

potentially expansionist, stronger neighbours, by compensating somewhat for the absence of actual material capabilities. Firmness and reputation building may therefore be perceived as a cheap, alternative means of gaining security. Similarly, and on the other hand, the desire for a reputation of generosity and reasonableness has often been central, as in our cases, to the rather puzzling tendency of larger states to make large concessions on territorial claims in disputes with adversaries who had little capability to actually resist the unilateral imposition of a solution by the former.

Research findings that reputations do not form as state leaders expect, does not therefore indicate that reputation as a concept itself is useless. Rather, it points to an urgent need to conceptualize reputation better, in order to both discover how state leaders think about reputation, as well as rectify misconceptions they might hold about how reputations form. Extant understandings of how reputational concerns influence state leaders might be too simplistic, and there is much merit in plumbing further into the complexities of the issue. This dissertation has served to tread this path by seeking to better nuance the concept of reputation as it has been conceptualized in earlier works on reputation in territorial disputes, and has demonstrated the merits of doing so. It has done so by, first, expanding the scope of situations under which state leaders are expected to care about reputation by suggesting, and demonstrating, that leaders care not only about signalling reputation to other (third party) challengers, but often only to the immediate adversary. This means that the reputational imperative manifests itself even when a state is engaged in a single territorial dispute.

Second, the framework, by identifying important aspects of the bargaining context which actually shape the reputational calculus, and thereby exacerbate or mitigate reputational concerns, proposes more specific expectations about conditions under which states are, or are not, likely to lay stress on reputation building, making compromise less or

more likely. Finally, conceptualizing reputation in this more nuanced way allows building on the obvious, but surprisingly less discussed, insight that reputations are indeed of multiple kinds. Actions that in certain contexts would be expected by leaders to signal weakness may in other situations signal generosity and a spirit of cooperation, a positive reputation that states have been shown to desire as much as they seek to avoid a negative one of weakness. The fact that the Chinese leadership made large territorial concessions in disputes with smaller neighbours, while engaged in multiple disputes, illustrates vividly how the prospect of signalling generosity can motivate substantial compromise.

More work is of course required to further specify when and how reputations matter for state leaders, and what other considerations influence such a calculus, and test such expectations against a larger and more global set of cases than this dissertation has sought to do. Doing so would not only help scholars better explain state behaviour, but also complement the work on the formation of reputations by providing researchers with better developed baseline theories of the reputational basis of decision making to contend with.

### **Reputations in Enduring Rivalries**

Reputational considerations may also have something to tell us about the persistence of territorial disputes and rivalries, such as the India-Pakistan and Sino-Indian ones in South Asia. The ‘security dilemma’ which has been said to imperil cooperation in an anarchic international system, might indeed function not only on a material level, but also at this reputational plane, a phenomena which can be termed as a ‘reputational dilemma’. Consequently, policies and actions that state leaders undertake to minimize the reputational costs of compromise for themselves often seem to have the sometimes inadvertent

consequence of exacerbating the reputational fears of an adversary, making concessions on the latter's part even less likely.<sup>1</sup> The strategic interactions, or action-reaction cycles, of two states seeking to address territorial issues at the minimal reputational cost therefore can have the consequence of progressively ratcheting up these concerns, imbuing the dispute with more and more intractability.<sup>2</sup> With time such interactions make commitment problems increasingly intense, and the perceived reputational costs and long term implications of compromise potentially dire for states.

Such dynamics seem to have contributed to the transformation of territorial disputes in South Asia, which initially appeared to be amenable to some difficult but practical compromises, into increasingly complicated and intractable rivalries. In Kashmir, the initial resort to force by Pakistan in the form of a tribal invasion (motivated itself by a deep distrust of Indian intentions in the state and beyond), became central to heightened reputational concerns in New Delhi, which manifested themselves in the terms the Indian leadership would set for a plebiscite. Such terms, in turn, were read in Karachi as a reaffirmation of India's insincerity, and malign intentions towards Pakistan's very existence, necessitating a rejection of those terms, even at the cost of having to reject Nehru's offer of a plebiscite in 1953, a vote that Pakistan was sure to prevail in. Instead, Pakistan entered a military pact

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<sup>1</sup> This is in keeping with Jervis' 'spiral' model of the descent to conflict. See Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 58-113.

<sup>2</sup> This is reminiscent of the perverse and dysfunctional crises learning dynamics identified by Russell Leng, wherein imbued by realpolitik beliefs, and in response to earlier failures, policy makers automatically adopt more coercive influence strategies, which in turn invite similar responses from an adversary, thereby progressively raising the reputational stakes for the contestants, and making each successive crisis more contentious and violent. In the India-Pakistan context this has meant that "far from showing signs of improved crisis management, each successive Indo-Pakistani crisis escalated to a more violent conclusion than its predecessor." Russell J. Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crises : The Soviet-American, Egyptian-Israeli, and Indo-Pakistani Rivalries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 270. Vasquez's 'steps to war' explanation proposes a similar dynamic involving realpolitik tactics in explaining the descent to war in territorial disputes. Paul Domenic Senese and John A. Vasquez, *The Steps to War: An Empirical Study* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).



with the US in 1954 which transformed the whole context of the dispute to such a fundamental degree from New Delhi's perspective, that compromise along the old lines became unviable.

India's renegeing on the plebiscite offer, largely due to fears that the strategic and reputational costs of making large concessions to Pakistan had become too high, resulted eventually in yet another resort to war in 1965 by Pakistan, aimed as much at demonstrating resolve as to physically acquire the disputed territory. This repeated resort to force, now in the context of the budding Sino-Pakistani friendship, only exacerbated the reputational imperative in New Delhi to adopt a posture of increasing firmness on Kashmir. By 1965 therefore, owing to a significant degree to a progressive ratcheting up of the reputational stakes for both contestants, the Kashmir dispute had become far less amenable to resolution than it appeared to be at its origin in 1947. More crises and wars in later years, including the war of 1971 which removed from Pakistan its eastern wing (now Bangladesh), several military crises in the 1980s and 1990s including the war in Kargil in 1999, Pakistani sponsorship of terrorist activities across the border, as well as the nuclearization of the subcontinent have been both manifestations of, and contributors to the reinforcement of these dynamics, only further complicating the prospects for resolution.<sup>3</sup>

In the Sino-Indian dispute similarly, what objectively appeared a reasonable solution, a package deal involving recognition by both parties of the other's claims to territory of most interest to them, became progressively problematic over time. The reputational challenges Peking posed to New Delhi were only exacerbated by what the Indian leadership viewed as China's unilateral and forceful entry into territory in the western sector in 1958, and Peking's

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<sup>3</sup> For discussions of the varied dimensions of the enduring rivalry dynamics of the India-Pakistan conflict see specifically Chapters 1-5 in T. V. Paul, *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

later presentation of claims which Nehru had understood to have been given up by the Chinese leadership as a quid pro quo for Indian concessions on Tibet in 1954. The adoption of a firm stance on the prerequisites to any negotiations by the Indian leadership in this context, and the resort to limited military measures through the ‘forward policy,’ had a strong reputational logic attached to it, intended to avoid any impression in Peking that New Delhi would succumb to Chinese strength and pressure. The Chinese resort to force in 1962, in turn, had its own reactive reputational logic aimed at signalling to India that intransigence and military force will be repelled ruthlessly, and seeking to encourage New Delhi to adopt a more conciliatory approach. While the eventual unilateral withdrawal by Chinese troops soon after the offensive sought to present Peking’s benign intentions, nevertheless, the practical consequence of the use of force was to only heighten reputational fears in the Indian leadership (and domestic public) making talks, let alone compromise, only more unviable for the next several decades.

### **Implications for the Present and the Future**

What does this research and its findings mean for the period beyond the scope of this study, particularly for the contemporary state of the Kashmir and Sino-Indian disputes? It cannot be denied, as stated above, that the passage of time has complicated the dynamics of these disputes only further. Domestic political constraints on political leaderships are likely more potent today, than they were in first decade or so of these disputes, for several reasons. First, repeated crises and wars have not only created ‘reputational dilemmas’ as discussed above, but also generated and exacerbated, particularly in the defeated parties,

public memories, narratives and discourses of the adversary's hostility and treachery.<sup>4</sup> In India, the scars and shame associated with the Chinese offensive in 1962, and in Pakistan the Indian 'fraud' in Kashmir, and then the mutilation of country itself in the war of 1971, have undoubtedly imbued disputed territories with even greater nationalist salience than they initially possessed. Second, present day governments enjoy neither the political dominance, nor the unquestioned legitimacy, that a Nehru or a Jinnah, or even Mao, held in the early years after independence, which makes them even more susceptible to domestic political constraints, and may render strategic and reputational concerns as factors which only further complicate the prospects for peaceful resolution of the intractable disputes in the region.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, what this dissertation has also shown is that the implications of nationalism and domestic opinion have often been overblown, and that the resolution of disputes over territory, even those of nationalist importance, may be possible if solutions proposed are sensitive to both the strategic and reputational interests of disputants, making settlements both acceptable to the political leaderships, as well as domestically sellable. This in turn makes it possible for us to move away from viewing these territories as indivisible, to conceiving of conditions under which genuine compromise may indeed be possible.

In this regard, one major development in the region over the years may be the relative diminishing (at least in comparison to the early years) of the intensity of commitment problems. While all major parties to the disputes, India, Pakistan and China have become

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<sup>4</sup> In Pakistan, for instance, educational curricula have been used to serve the purpose of myth-creation. Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 67-68, 101, 107.

<sup>5</sup> Such an argument for the Kashmir case is made, for instance, by Robert Wirsing, *Kashmir in the Shadow of War: Regional Rivalries in a Nuclear Age* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 219-223. Ganguly and Bajpai have similarly pointed to there being "no sign that any Indian leader or party today has the courage and persuasive powers to change the public's mind" on resuscitating a plebiscite. Sumit Ganguly and Kanti Bajpai, "India and the Crisis in Kashmir," *Asian Survey* 34, no. 5 (1994): 413.

progressively stronger militarily, a signal development has been the acquisition of nuclear weapons by all these states, which makes them more secure, at least existentially, by increasing the potential costs of full scale conflict. For Pakistan, nuclear weapons may have diminished its perennial, and existential, insecurity vis-à-vis India, by compensating for the continuing large asymmetry between the two states in size, as well as conventional military and economic capabilities.<sup>6</sup> Similarly in India undisputed economic growth has been actively converted to greater military, including nuclear, capabilities, which is hoped to ensure in New Delhi the long term preservation of the country's territorial integrity against Pakistan, and especially China. These developments, by somewhat mitigating fears in these states of an adversary renegeing on, and exploiting a territorial settlement in the future, may make compromise towards the actual resolution of extant territorial disputes more viable for the participants.

### *Kashmir*

With regard to Kashmir specifically, this mitigated commitment problem, along with the concretization of Indian military and political dominance in Kashmir, and South Asian generally, might render it possible for New Delhi to make concessions which might satisfy Pakistan's strategic and reputational anxieties. Such concessions seem unlikely to involve transfers of territory, or mechanisms (such as a plebiscite) which may result in such transfers,

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<sup>6</sup> One Indian scholar has concluded that the "India-Pakistan conflict is the consequence of Islamabad's frantic quest for balance with India," and that behind Pakistan's "insecurity lies in the natural imbalance of power in South Asia." Rajesh Rajagopalan, "Prospects for Peace in South Asia," *The Hindu*, 26 April 1999. For a discussion of some of instability generating challenges associated with the acquisition of nuclear weapons in South Asia see, Dinshaw Mistry, "Tempering Optimism About Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia," *Security Studies* 18, no. 1 (2009): 148-182.

but nevertheless might involve some kind of relaxation of Indian sovereignty over the state in order to accommodate Pakistani interests. Such an outcome could be sold at home by New Delhi as demonstration of Indian generosity towards Pakistan and the Kashmiri people from a position of strength. In Pakistan on the other hand, to the extent that Indian concessions mitigate the strategic threat – possibly through a drawback of Indian military presence in Kashmir – and at the same time impart Islamabad with some semblance of symbolic parity in the disputed state, compromise may become both acceptable to its leadership, as well as explicable domestically.

Indeed secret, ‘back channel’ discussions between New Delhi and Islamabad in two instances, first in 1999 and then from 2004-2007 indicate the exploration of a solution along such lines, something which would be inexplicable had nationalist or strategic concerns rendered the territory indivisible for the political leadership. Indeed the first of these initiatives came less than a year after the May 1998 nuclear tests by both countries, surprisingly initiated by the ostensibly anti-Pakistan, Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in India. In nine rounds of secret talks between emissaries of the two countries’ Prime Ministers from 3 March to 27 June 1999, according to the testimony of the Pakistani representative, Niaz A. Naik, the Indians seemed to have been eager to find a solution to the dispute expeditiously.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the latter seemed to have shown some genuine interest in a proposal by Naik to pursue a resolution which would partition the Indian portion of Jammu and Kashmir along the Chenab, handing over to Pakistan the highly valued Valley of Kashmir. These talks would collapse however with the Indian discovery of the Pakistani military intrusion in Kargil in June 1999, but as Wirsing has suggested, did demonstrate that “given suitable circumstances the elected leaders of India

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<sup>7</sup> The details of Naik’s account can be found in, Wirsing, *Kashmir in the Shadow of War*, 25-36.

and Pakistan are quite capable of engaging one other in dispassionate, imaginative, and constructive dialogue about Kashmir...”<sup>8</sup>

In 2004<sup>9</sup>, now under a military regime, Pakistan reportedly entered secret talks seeking a “paradigm shift” on Kashmir, based on the premise, as the then Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri put it, that the *raison d’être* of Pakistani policy being “permanent security,” the acquisition of nuclear weapons ensured that “war was no longer an option for either side.” In these talks it would be clear, not surprisingly, that while Pakistan would never accept the existing LoC as the permanent border, India would be equally reluctant to agree to any transfers of territory. A solution therefore, both sides would agree, needs to involve what the Indian PM Manmohan Singh would term making “borders irrelevant,” by allowing for the free movement of people and goods from both sides of LoC, with Kashmir itself to be made highly autonomous. With a recession in violence, it was envisaged that both sides would gradually withdraw their military troops from Kashmir, and at a still later point, once these measures had proved sustainable, convert the LoC into the international border. Furthermore, on issues of joint interest, a “joint mechanism” involving Kashmiris, Indians and Pakistanis was mooted, which the Pakistani negotiators sought to be akin to a plan for shared governance. As then Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharaff would later recount, “I wasn’t just giving concessions – I was taking from India as well.” By early 2007 both parties had reportedly come perilously close to agreement, only for a precipitous drop in Musharaff’s popularity at home, unrelated to Kashmir - which eventually led to his ouster in

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 35. Wirsing, in the same book, also reveals his surprising assessment based on extensive interviews that amongst the elite at least in Pakistan, there seems to be a broad based acquiescence for Pakistan to make substantive concessions towards resolving Kashmir, and a belief that public opinion would be amenable to such an outcome. Ibid., 175-180.

<sup>9</sup> These ‘back channel’ talks are recounted in detail in Steve Coll, “The Back Channel: India and Pakistan’s Secret Kashmir Talks,” *The New Yorker*, 2 March 2009.

2008 - putting paid to the effort. The fear in Pakistani government circles that Musharaff's own unpopularity at home would make an otherwise sell-able solution domestically unviable, made putting off the issue to a later date unavoidable.

Concessions of this nature on India's part would become even more feasible, from the perspective of our theoretical framework, the more Pakistan were to desist from its reliance on asymmetric strategies of coercion, including what New Delhi views as state sponsorship of terrorism. Were this to happen, and India's recommendation of normalizing bilateral (including economic) relations prior to resolving the Kashmir imbroglio implemented, the new context of bonhomie would likely facilitate more willing concessions by an Indian government.<sup>10</sup> In New Delhi fears would be removed that any substantive concessions would be read in Pakistan and domestically in India as succumbing to Pakistani pressure tactics and terrorism. Rather, Indian compromise could be presented both at home and abroad as a demonstration of Indian generosity, rewarding Pakistan's good behaviour and sincere efforts at bringing about peace and cooperation in the subcontinent. Not surprisingly then, India's enthusiasm for the above discussed talks began in earnest only following demonstrable evidence that the Musharaff regime was serious about curbing anti-India terrorism emanating from Pakistan, and would depreciate rapidly with a string of terror attacks on Indian targets following the collapse of the Musharaff government, most prominently on the Indian Embassy in Kabul, followed by the 2009 attacks in Mumbai.

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<sup>10</sup> This is in keeping with the contention of a prominent scholar on the dispute that "to insist on Kashmir's umbilical linkage to positive change in India-Pakistan relations is to put the proverbial cart before the horse, that substantial progress toward a more positive relationship can be made *without* there first having been agreement upon terms for a final settlement of Kashmir and, indeed, that India and Pakistan *must* abjure final settlement of Kashmir and agree to its indefinite shelving as a first principle in any agreement toward and improvement in their relationship." Wirsing, *Kashmir in the Shadow of War*, 219.

The dilemma of course lies in the fact that in the Pakistani state apparatus the insistence has traditionally been on a diametrically opposite position, requiring a resolution of Kashmir before a comprehensive normalization of bilateral relations. Such an emphasis is also understandable given fears in Islamabad that having normalized relations and retired its asymmetric pressure tactics<sup>11</sup>, there is no guarantee that New Delhi would not renege on its commitment to find a fair solution to Kashmir. While India would have lost the incentive to make concessions, with fewer costs associated with conflict with Pakistan, Islamabad would have abandoned resources which had been built up over decades at great cost, in an effort to coerce India into making substantive concessions on Kashmir.<sup>12</sup> A commitment problem therefore can be seen to play into, and complicate, the very sequence of steps both side expect to be taken before a mutual resolution for the Kashmir dispute can be found. Nevertheless, despite these continuing challenges, hope springs from the fact that, as this discussion suggests, a final solution to the India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir may not be as insurmountable as nationalism based accounts would have us believe.

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<sup>11</sup> T.V. Paul has argued that such tactics have been central to creating a “truncated asymmetry” in the subcontinent, allowing a weaker Pakistan to keep the dispute alive. T. V. Paul, "Why Has the India-Pakistan Rivalry Been So Enduring? Power Asymmetry and an Intractable Conflict," *Security Studies* 15, no. 4 (2006).

<sup>12</sup> Such a quandary also likely explains the puzzling resort to war in Kargil just as bilateral relations seemed to have acquired some semblance of cordiality. As Leng suggests, since “peace and stability favor the continuance of the status quo...Pakistan needed to find a means of reigniting the flames of the rivalry.” Russell J. Leng, "Realpolitik and Learning in the India-Pakistan Rivalry," in *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry*, ed. T. V. Paul (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 118.



## *The Sino-Indian Dispute*

In contrast to Kashmir, the Sino-Indian territorial dispute, despite having persisted for as long, has not involved the same kinds of tensions and prospects for conflict. Indeed, for nearly two decades now there has been relative stability along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with both governments having agreed in the early 1990s to institute Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) aimed at preserving the status quo, while continuing to explore diplomatic paths out of the impasse.<sup>13</sup> With few immediate costs associated with the dispute at present therefore, and given the fact that both India and China hold territory that is of most salience to them, it is no surprise that both sides are satisfied to tread softly, and even delay resolution of the dispute to more opportune days in the future. With India's growing military might additionally mitigating the long term concerns that India faced about the enforceability of Chinese commitments, one would expect an eventual solution to the dispute reflecting the existing status quo. The 2005 'guiding principles' for settling the dispute agreed to by the two countries seem to suggest as much.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, that China and India will increasingly rival each other globally and regionally in the coming decades<sup>15</sup>, also means that reputational considerations will continue to influence state behaviour, including on the issue of the territorial dispute. Indeed, the

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<sup>13</sup> One these developments, see Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu and Jing-Dong Yuan, "Resolving the Sino-Indian Border Dispute: Building Confidence through Cooperative Monitoring," *Asian Survey* 41, no. 2 (2001).

<sup>14</sup> For the text of agreement see, "Text of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question," *The Hindu*, 11 April 2011.

<sup>15</sup> For able discussions of the potential challenges posed to India by China's rise see, Harsh V. Pant, "India in the Asia-Pacific: Rising Ambitions with an Eye on China," *Asia-Pacific Review* 14, no. 1 (2007): 54-71, Harsh V. Pant, *The Rise of China: Implications for India* (New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2012).

intense attention that reports of renewed Chinese activity on the frontiers, and growing engagement by Beijing in India's neighbourhood have attracted conveys the kind of long term fears of China in the Indian body-politic that are likely to influence New Delhi's conduct on the territorial issue in the years to come. For India, therefore, while growing strength is certainly reassuring, an acceptable solution to the frontier question might still require concessions, symbolic or material, beyond the current status quo by Beijing. To concede the status quo in a final settlement of the dispute, without any Chinese concessions in the western sector, even symbolic ones regarding the principles of negotiation, might be problematic for New Delhi in representing a blanket acceptance of China's earlier aggression, and therefore as a signal of India's continuing weakness. Particularly in the context of a budding rivalry, a demonstration of weakness on the territorial issue will be feared to set a negative precedent for other issues in the long term, thereby making it both undesirable in government circles and a difficult sell domestically. In the absence of a Chinese willingness to makes such concessions, however, the maintenance of the existing, unresolved status quo on the frontier will likely continue to be the most probable prospect for some time to come.

For China, on the other hand, recent talks of asserting claims south of the McMahon Line are likely a bargaining tactic to get India to acquiesce to the status quo all along the frontier. There are no overwhelming strategic or reputational gains for which Beijing can be envisaged to renege on its prior commitment to adhere to the McMahon Line delineation in the eastern sector in return for Indian accommodation in the west. Indeed, the posing of such renewed claims is likely to be even considered reputationally damaging in Beijing, at a time when as China rises rapidly its leadership has sought to reassure the regional and global community about its intentions to rise peacefully. Seriously resurrecting Chinese claims would very likely signal regionally and globally the very impression of Chinese aggressiveness

that Beijing seeks to avoid.<sup>16</sup> A resolution to the Sino-Indian frontier issue along the status quo, as initially proposed by Chou in 1960, and then again by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s, is likely to continue being acceptable to the Chinese leadership, but whether Beijing would be willing to make any concessions beyond that is questionable.

### *Asymmetric Disputes*

The same logic also leads to the expectation of an eventual toning down of Chinese rhetoric and activity in the South China Sea disputes involving China and some Southeast Asian states. Regardless of Beijing's recent assertiveness, and resultant tensions, if the past is any guide the Chinese leadership are likely to prefer building a reputation of benignity, rather than one of malignant aggressiveness which would complicate China's strategic neighbourhood, and its global rise in general. The smaller states on the other hand, can be expected to be much more assertive on their claims to the offshore islands, for fear of setting precedents of weakness vis-à-vis a rising, and potentially more assertive, China.

It is unlikely therefore, that China will persist in pushing the entirety of its claims, let alone resort to force in addressing these disputes. Rather, given China's position of undisputed strength, and the absence of any long term strategic or reputational costs to compromise, Beijing can be expected to eventually seek a negotiated compromise with the Southeast Asian neighbours. Such a compromise might even involve significant and generous concessions on Beijing's part, especially as a reputation for benignity in the neighbourhood becomes increasingly valuable to counter other external efforts, especially by

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<sup>16</sup> The initial exposition of the idea of 'peaceful rise' was articulated in Zheng Bijian, "China's 'Peaceful Rise' to Great-Power Status," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 5 (2005): 18-24.

the US, and possibly by India, to balance China's rise in the Asia-Pacific. Indications in this direction have already been apparent in recent years, with the agreement by the states involved to a preliminary code of conduct in 2002, and the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 2003, which committed Beijing to not using force in these disputes.

That these offshore islands are valuable for their economic worth, in fact makes them eminently suitable for a compromise solution, which might involve some kind of arrangement for a sharing of the revenue from resources found in the disputed areas. The 2000 fisheries agreement between China and Vietnam in the Gulf of Tonkin, by relying on precisely such a formula, serves as a useful precedent for the resolution of other maritime disputes in the South China Sea.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, in the midst of a public and acrimonious spat between China and the Philippines over the Scarborough Shoal in April-May 2012, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson asked that Manila "show sincerity and meet the Chinese side half way," just as other officials in Beijing have expressed a willingness to agree to joint development of the disputed areas in the South China Sea, and responded positively to a proposal from a Philippines mining company for joint offshore drilling with the China National Offshore Oil Corporation.<sup>18</sup>

A similar desire to establish its generosity in South Asia as it rises to global prominence, has likely infused recent Indian efforts to expeditiously resolve all outstanding issues, including relatively minor territorial ones with Bangladesh on terms which avoid an impression of Indian imposition. Such an effort had been made as early as in 1974 via the Indira Gandhi-Mujibur Rahman Land Boundary Agreement which sought to resolve the fate

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<sup>17</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation : Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 315-316.

<sup>18</sup> Ananth Krishnan, "China Warning over South China Sea Amid Philippines Demonstrations," *The Hindu*, 11 May 2012.

of hundreds of enclaves along the India-Bangladesh border. The agreement however was never ratified in India, and little serious effort was made to revive it afterwards, until in September 2011 when the Indian and Bangladeshi Prime Minister's signed a new agreement aimed at bringing the dispute to a satisfactory conclusion. The agreement involves the swapping of Indian enclaves in Bangladesh with the latter's enclaves in Indian territory, with New Delhi agreeing to not be compensated for the nearly 40 square kilometres of net loss in territory that such an agreement would involve. While a minor concession, the Indian willingness to agree to, as a scholar of the dispute has put it, an "uncompensated cession of undisputed territory," points on the one hand to a positive precedent in settling the Sino-Indian boundary issue, and on the other the "imperative of good neighbourliness" and generosity which has motivated India's recent conduct vis-à-vis Bangladesh, in return for which the Indian leadership no doubt expects greater sensitivity from Dhaka to New Delhi's security and other concerns in its neighbourhood in the years to come.<sup>19</sup>

## **Extending the Research Agenda**

### *Inter State Territorial Disputes*

The most obvious extended implication of this study is the expected applicability of the argument to cases beyond the limited geographical and temporal scope of our case studies. As the theoretical framework is presented in a general manner, one would expect its

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<sup>19</sup> Sourabh Gupta, "India and Bangladesh: Calculus of Territorial Dispute Settlement," *East Asia Forum*, 20 October 2011. Website: <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/10/10/india-and-bangladesh-calculus-of-territorial-dispute-settlement/>. For a discussion of the problems that have bedevilled India's relations with Bangladesh in recent years see, Harsh V. Pant, "India and Bangladesh: Will the Twain Ever Meet?," *Asian Survey* 47, no. 2 (2007): 231-249.

postulates to apply equally to decision making in other inter-state disputes, regardless of time or place.

Evidence related to the failure of the Sino-Soviet territorial dispute to be resolved in the early 1960s, and the eventual descent to military clashes in 1969, suggests the importance of considerations highlighted in this dissertation. Particularly interesting is the fact that, it was the stronger power at that point, the Soviet Union which proved unwilling to make symbolic concessions towards resolving the dispute, a dynamic that is worthy of greater enquiry. During talks in 1964, both sides had reportedly agreed to dispose the disputed islands in the Ussuri, Amur and Argun rivers on the *thalweg*<sup>20</sup> principle, with Moscow agreeing to concede around 800 square kilometres of island territory in total, and Peking dropping its demand for the return of territory ceded in the ‘unequal treaties.’ However, talks would grind to halt on the back of the Chinese insistence that in return for their concessions, the Soviets acknowledge the “unequal” and illegitimate basis of prior treaties, which the latter refused to countenance.<sup>21</sup>

Central to the curious Soviet refusal to make an apparently symbolic concession seemed to be a commitment problem, which made such a concession a potential liability. Even a symbolic concession such as this, Moscow feared, might encourage irredentism in Peking at a later date when China was potent enough to challenge the Soviet Union. According to George Ginsburgs, “the Soviets apparently felt that they were being asked to gamble for too high a stake – first concede the “illegitimacy of the conventions creating the

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<sup>20</sup> The *thalweg* principle creates a riparian boundary along the median of the main navigational channel of a water body.

<sup>21</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders*, 119-123. Chou reportedly informed Kosygin that China “recognizes the border which exists in accord with these treaties,” even though they were unfair. Chien-Peng Chung, *Domestic Politics, International Bargaining and China's Territorial Disputes* (London: Routledge, 2004), 77.

present frontiers and thereafter trust that the Chinese would consent to preserve the frontier's former contours..." Further, the prospect that "public opinion would undoubtedly credit the successful outcome to the moderation and generosity of the Chinese team," was according to Ginsburgs, unpalatable to the Soviet leadership.<sup>22</sup>

Similar considerations are also likely to have played, and continue to play, a role in the Arab-Israeli conflicts, including on the question of a Palestinian state. The 1978 Camp David accords, for instance, involving Israel's decision to return occupied territory in Sinai to Egypt, in return for Cairo's diplomatic recognition of Israel, is particularly worthy of exploration in this regard. That Israel was willing to give up territory which provided it with strategic depth against an adversary perceived to pose an existential threat, indicates not just the value attached by Israeli leaders to diplomatic recognition by a major Arab state, but also to the crucial role of the United States as a guarantor in mitigating the commitment problem bedeviling the Egypt-Israel relationship, making possible concessions on each side which were otherwise unlikely. Underlying at least some of the obstacles to the formation of a Palestinian state, and the distribution of territory and other provisions between such a state and Israel towards that end, are likely to similarly lie long term concerns related to the problems of credible commitment, and resultant strategic and reputational fears on both sides of the divide.

Further case studies would serve not only to test the extended validity of the argument made here, but perhaps more importantly would also help better nuance the theory by answering questions such as whether these strategic and reputational concerns are uniformly salient across time, or enjoy particular importance during the early years after

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<sup>22</sup> George Ginsburgs, *The Damansky/Chenpao Island Incidents: A Case Study of Syntactic Patterns in Crisis Diplomacy* (Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University, 1973), 23-24.

state formation, when nation states are most insecure, and yet to form reputations abroad. Alternatively, exploration of other cases could be used to derive more propositions about contextual factors which further influence the reputational calculus of states leaders, thereby making compromise in territorial disputes more or less likely.

### *Intra State Territorial Disputes*

The present argument should also be extendable to what has been the core of research on reputation in territorial disputes: intra-state separatist conflicts. One implication of the argument made here is to suggest that reputational fears in states do not have to be premised on the existence of multiple challengers. Decisions to either violently resist separatist demands, or make some political concessions in the aid of peace, may not necessarily be linked to the existence of other potential challenger groups. The second implication of the theoretical argument made here is that, contrary to extant reputational arguments, even when leaders care about reputation owing to single or multiple separatist challenges, all concessions do not become unviable. All concessions are therefore not likely to be perceived by decision makers as equal, and carry identical reputational costs. The fact that in the face of multiple separatist challenges, the Indian and Burmese states have shown a willingness to make concessions short of independence to ethnic separatists, which China has generally been loath to do, points to the complexity of this issue.

Indeed, preliminary evidence from research conducted by this scholar on Naga separatism in India in the mid-1950s, points to the validity of the argument made in this dissertation in explaining state responses to separatism. In addressing the Naga rebellion, Nehru's government would be driven by much the same reputational logic that characterized



its thinking on India's inter-state territorial disputes. For Nehru, it was unquestionable soon after the outbreak of rebellion that "real solution will require a political approach and an attempt to make the Nagas feel that we are friendly to them and that they can be at home in India," and to this effect, he was clearly willing to make concessions short of independence. However, his government could only do so, Nehru would contend, from a position of undisputed strength, which meant that "the present is not time for the political approach, because it may be construed as a sign of weakness."<sup>23</sup> The first priority was therefore "resisting violence and breaking the bone of the resistance movement," because making any political concessions or commitments before having done so was "likely to be regarded as the precursor of approaching surrender...and tend to further stiffen their [the rebels'] backs..."<sup>24</sup>

Only once he felt that Indian forces were succeeding in breaking down military resistance, did Nehru decide to "give fresh thought to this matter," and be "prepared to consider any reasonable approach to this problem which promises a settlement."<sup>25</sup> As Nehru would note at this point again, his only worry throughout had been that "hostile elements should be encouraged in their hostility in the future and imagine that by violence and killing they can gain their ends," and since "they must have realized by this time that they cannot

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<sup>23</sup> Nehru to Bisnuram Medhi (13 May 1956), *Smyh-Ss*. vol. 33, 172-173. This was particularly so in dealing with the Nagas for whom "weakness is something approaching a sin. Friendliness of course should always be there, but no step which appears to be a surrender through weakness." Nehru to Fazl Ali (9 September 1956), *ibid.* vol. 35, 136.

<sup>24</sup> "Military Aspect Essential at Present" (23 May 1955), *ibid.*, vol. 33, 183. The government sought to make it perfectly clear that "we are not going to negotiate with anybody on the basis of threats and violence." "Naga Resistance and Government Actions" (30 May 1956), *ibid.* vol. 33, 189.

<sup>25</sup> Nehru to G.B. Pant (13 December 1956), *ibid.* vol. 36, 236; Nehru to Fazl Ali (22 January 1957), *ibid.* vol. 36, 242; Nehru to Fazl Ali (24 February 1957), *ibid.* vol. 37, 246.

coerce the Government of India into doing anything because of their violence,” time appeared to be “ripe for a fresh attempt to be made...”<sup>26</sup> Once a settlement was reached, Nehru would envisage, India could withdraw forces from the Naga areas to the more important Pakistan frontier “without any loss of prestige,” as the act made from a position of strength “might well appear as a generous gesture showing confidence in the Nagas.”<sup>27</sup>

A final area for further fruitful research lies indeed at the interstices between secessionist and inter-state territorial disputes. As the case studies in this dissertation have shown, states may often be faced with both internal and external challenges to territorial integrity, which are in many cases linked to each other. State responses to such a combination of challenges has varied widely however, with Peking choosing to compromise externally so as to avoid making even moderate concessions at home, whereas Indian and Burmese leaders displayed a general preference for making concessions at home, over conceding territory to an external challenger. Why this is so, and especially how considerations identified in this dissertation play into choices of compromise in one domain rather than the other, is an intriguing question worth of further enquiry.

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<sup>26</sup> Nehru to Fazl Ali (3 March 1957), *ibid.* vol. 37, 251.

<sup>27</sup> “Necessity of Withdrawing the Army” (23 May 1957), *ibid.* vol. 38, 259. “Our approach has all along been” Nehru would state “friendly, but a friendly approach means nothing at all unless it is also a firm approach. Otherwise, the friendliness is only supposed to be weakness and fear. Therefore, it has to be firm and at the same time a friendly approach.” “Dealing with the Tribal Areas” (23 July 1957), *ibid.* vol. 38, 267.

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