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The Sino-Indian Conflict: Outlook and Implications

Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Concurred in by the
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

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The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Defense, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force.

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THE SINO-INDIAN CONFLICT: OUTLOOK AND IMPLICATIONS

SCOPE NOTE

Indian and Chinese military capabilities in the border areas and certain other background material were covered in SNIE 13/31-62, "Short-Term Outlook and Implications for the Sino-Indian Conflict," dated 9 November 1962. The present estimate seeks to examine the broader implications of the situation for future policies of India, Pakistan, Communist China, and the USSR, and for the interests of the West.

THE ESTIMATE

I. INDIA

1. India's policy, both foreign and domestic, will almost certainly be dominated for a considerable time to come by the image of Communist China as the major threat to its national existence. A conviction of Peiping's fundamental hostility and perfidy has emerged among virtually all levels of Indian opinion in the past few months. Concern over new Chinese attacks and fear that these may spread beyond the disputed border area are great. At the same time, there is general gratification with the sympathy and support received from the US and the British Commonwealth and a growing realization that the preservation of India's freedom will be heavily dependent on the West.

2. Within the Indian Government, new, more pragmatic, more pro-Western attitudes are emerging in the wake of Krishna Menon's dismissal. Nehru is being forced to share leadership with younger and more vigorous politicians, many of whom have never approved his ideological predilections. These men, by and large, are probably prepared to pay a higher price than Nehru for national security in terms of internal military costs, cooperation with the US, and even compromise with Pakistan. They will also be less inclined to tolerate Communist activity within India. Finally, their emergence on the wave of the present crisis may over the longer run do much to fill the gap which was considered likely to follow Nehru's departure from the Indian scene.

3. At the moment India is in the grip of a nationalistic fervor which has submerged many local differences in a widespread determination to avenge the country's military humiliation by the Chinese. Under present circumstances, it appears unlikely that for the next year or two at least India will undertake any negotiations with Peiping seriously aiming at a settlement. Rather the trend will be to strengthen the Indian military establishment and the country's overall power position, while seeking at least for a time to avoid new clashes which might further damage the country's military posture. Over the longer term, the Indians will probably come to realize the difficulty of making good on all their territorial claims and may be willing to come to the negotiating table.

4. India will inevitably experience some discontent with the sacrifices required to gear up the nation for a prolonged struggle, some frustration over the difficulty of scoring decisively in the struggle, and some discontent with the pace and scope of Western support. There will also be general nostalgia for the halcyon days of neutralism, continued hopes

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that in some fashion the Soviets will restrain the Chinese, and considerable reluctance to face up to the costs of improving India's relations with Pakistan. Nehru, in particular, is likely to be vacillating and on occasion intransigent.

5. Nevertheless, we believe that a profound change has taken place in India's outlook. New Delhi's disillusionment with the results of its traditional foreign policy is already being translated into impatience with the attitudes of many of its former associates in the neutralist camp. Though Indian fears of a "return of British imperialism" will not disappear overnight, the practical benefits of Commonwealth membership have become obvious, and further strengthening of ties with the UK seems virtually certain. The confidence with which India turned to the US in its hour of peril suggests the persistence of an underlying trust in the US which could be further manifested in the future through greater understanding for the US role in containing Communist aggression in other parts of the world.

II. COMMUNIST CHINA

6. Peiping will remain determined to retain certain strategically important portions of the territory it has occupied, principally the Aksai Chin plateau in Ladakh, and to demonstrate that it will not be pushed around by its weaker neighbor, India. At the same time, it has avoided building up popular pressure for war with India at home, and probably hopes to avoid forcing India to total commitment to the West. Having proved itself to be powerful and dynamic, Peiping probably now wishes to show that its strength does not imply aggressive intent toward the Afro-Asian world. To this end, it will almost certainly continue to emphasize its willingness to withdraw from much of the territory it has occupied and to extol the benefits of negotiations.

7. Although the Chinese Communists have the capability to renew the offensive in the Ladakh and NEFA areas at any time, we believe they will wish to avoid the resumption of large-scale military activity. They would, however, almost certainly react sharply should the Indians attempt to re-establish their lost positions by force. A high level of tension will persist for some time, and both sides are taking steps to improve their military capabilities in the border area. Hence, even a minor incident might escalate rapidly into another outburst of fighting at least as large as that which took place in October and November of this year.

III. PAKISTAN

8. Pakistani leaders are apprehensive that the new-found identity of interest between India and the West will undermine their own interests and security. At the same time, they believe the present Chinese pres-

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sure on India and India's virtually complete dependence on the West represent an unprecedented chance to secure an acceptable solution of the Kashmir problem. Despite India's agreement to negotiate the status of Kashmir, Pakistan's leaders have strong doubts that the Indian position will be sufficiently forthcoming to make agreement possible. President Ayub realizes that any settlement will require politically unpopular concessions by both sides and does not seem determined to insist on all of Pakistan's claims. However, Ayub's room for maneuver has been circumscribed by the recent strong outburst of anti-Western and anti-Indian opinion in Pakistan.

9. Whether or not Indian attitudes will change sufficiently to make possible a settlement of the Kashmir dispute is still uncertain. The redeployment of more than half of the Indian troops stationed along the Pakistani border and Nehru's undertaking to discuss the question of Kashmir with President Ayub evidence greater Indian willingness to make progress on Kashmir than ever before. Nevertheless, India's willingness to make any significant concessions will be heavily influenced by the acuteness of India's apprehensions with regard to China and the extent to which the US and UK maintain pressure on it for serious negotiations on Kashmir.

10. Unless progress can be maintained toward an acceptable solution on Kashmir, Pakistani relations with India will become more embittered than ever. If in these circumstances the West were to continue large-scale military aid to India, Pakistan would adopt an increasingly anti-Western stance. Strong pressures would build up for an accommodation with the Chinese Communists and Pakistan's alliance with the West would be in jeopardy.

IV. THE NEUTRALIST CAMP

11. In general, the other Asian and African states with which India has been associated in the "neutralist camp" have conspicuously failed to rally to India's support. These nations, which wish above all to prevent the outbreak of large-scale war, have felt obliged to assist in the ending of hostilities. While pleas for a peaceful settlement of the dispute will almost certainly continue to emerge from the nonaligned nations, these pleas in themselves are unlikely to have significant influence on either India or China.

12. In the longer run, at least some of the neutralist states may recognize (a) that neutralism has not protected India from a Chinese attack which the USSR was unwilling or unable to prevent, and (b) that the West has proved ready to aid a beleaguered neutralist. Though some of these states may be persuaded to adopt less critical attitudes toward the US, few if any are likely to abandon their basic neutralist

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positions unless they themselves come under an immediate threat of direct Communist attack.

V. THE USSR

13. The Sino-Indian conflict has seriously complicated the Soviet Union's relations with India and aggravated its difficulties with China. Under these circumstances, the immediate Soviet objective will almost certainly be to secure an early resolution of the conflict. Apart from this, however, the USSR will place a high value on a continued close relationship with India. While its opportunity to build up lasting influence in the Indian military has virtually disappeared, it will probably continue to supply some military equipment and to maintain its economic ties with India and its support of India's economic development programs.

VI. THE WEST

14. The metamorphosis which India is undergoing will almost certainly continue to open up new opportunities for the West. For the next year or two at least, New Delhi will be more susceptible than ever before to influence by the US and the UK, particularly in the military field. These opportunities will also bring with them new problems. India's reawakened nationalist fervor and desire to avenge its military humiliation could lead it to propose large-scale offensives which would be beyond its capability to carry through. If the West were unwilling to become involved in supporting a prolonged military operation, the consequence could be progressive Indian disillusionment with the West. A less drastic but more difficult problem lies in the necessity of trying to minimize the impact which a new military burden will almost certainly have on India's vital economic development program.

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