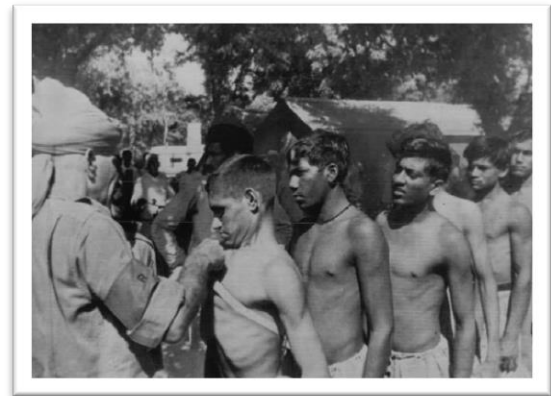




Nehru Era's Defence and Security Policies and Their Legacy

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About The Author



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Nehru Era's Defence and Security Policies and Their Legacy

Introduction

During the nationalist movement and struggle for independence, there was little attention paid to articulation of India's defence and security policies by the Indian National Congress (INC). Allusions to concepts and precepts of defence of an independent India were entirely absent from INC party resolutions and documents or for that matter in the speeches of the political leadership. If at all there was some reference to defence issues, it was in the sphere of developing defence industries as part of an overall plan of industrialization of India. The dominant impulse among INC leadership later led by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was that India's security would be bolstered not only by its natural frontiers but also by its professions of peace and neutrality in the emerging world order. Nehru was more inclined to pay attention to socio-economic development and industrialization rather than strengthen the armed forces. Coordinated development in a sense was an appropriate strategy for the newly independent nation but Nehru failed to pay adequate attention to building up of the armed forces that would protect the sovereignty of the nation.

In defence matters, he chose to be guided by bureaucrats and political leaders who had little or no understanding of strategic and military matters. Influenced by British traditions and mores, he selected PMS Blackett, a renowned British scientist to advise him on development of defence industry and science who later expanded his mandate to advise Nehru on defence and security strategies in which Blackett had no expertise. Whatever recommendations were given by Blackett in his report were largely coloured by British conception of what India should be doing in matters military. There was hardly any independent or original thinking done especially in the context of threats and challenges emerging at that time due to changing strategic environment after the end of Second World War, beginning of Cold War and realities of Communists coming to power in China. Treating China as not an adversary also suited Nehru's economic policies as defence preparations against China would require a much bigger Army and Air Force involving additional defence expenditure. Sage advice of his own military leadership was largely ignored.

There was a lurking suspicion shared by Nehru and some of his political colleagues that a powerful and unified military might pose a challenge to the civil authority. Therefore, during his reign Nehru successively lowered the stature of military leadership in the official Warrant of Precedence and dissolved several defence appointments, structures and mechanisms which could promote conceptual unity, integration and jointness among the armed forces. Krishna Menon, the Defence Minister during Nehru years at the helm of affairs, has been credited more with interfering in promotions and postings of defence officers and appointing his yes men rather than with formulation and pursuance of a prescient defence policy.

Nothing more underscores the lack of Nehru's long term strategic vision than his policy choices during Pakistan's invasion of Kashmir by so called 'raiders' in 1947-48. Firstly, he stopped the advance of Indian troops after they had evicted the outer reaches of Kashmir Valley and were ready to reclaim rest of the Kashmir and secondly, Nehru committed the monumental blunder of taking the issue to the UN where it lies unresolved till date. But what shattered him immensely was his failure in understanding China and his miscalculations about the intentions of China. Nehru's idealism and his perceptions that China would pose no threat to India floundered on the rock of unrelenting realist and hard headed policies followed by Chinese leadership on the question of Tibet and border issues. Since Nehru did not visualize a threat from China, he did not take adequate measures to prepare for the same. All indications of building up of threat from China were overlooked by him despite some perceptive advice by many political leaders including his own Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Looking back, it can be easily surmised that the first decade or so after India's independence was a formative period for Indo-Pak and Sino-Indian relationship that set the tone for many decades to follow. Even after a passage of more than six decades it has been difficult to obliterate or rectify the negative impact of past decisions and strategies adopted then.

Therefore, this paper seeks to critically examine the defence and security policies of Nehru's years and posit that the legacy bequeathed by such policies has left an indelible impression on the policy making establishment and even today some of our defence policies bear the stamp of Nehruvian era.

Approach to Security

References to defence and security were few and far between in the deliberations of INC's political leadership, in the pre-independence era. Though there was general awareness that India has to be built up as a nation but most of the intellectual discussions were on the social, economic and industrial aspects of building a nation. If at all there was some discussion on defence aspects it was development of defence industries as a part of India's overall industrialization effort.

Nehru in his speeches before independence did say that "We have an Indian Army which is brave and efficient, and well-trying in many continents. It is good enough to fight for freedom of the Allies in the battlefields of Europe and it will be good enough to fight if necessary for the freedom of India. When freedom comes, we shall develop our army and strengthen it to make it more efficient than it is today."¹ However, he saw the pre-independence Indian Army as advancing only British interests and had some misgivings about the nationalist credentials especially of the Indian military officers. Nehru alluded to the Army being a mercenary army though not in a disparaging sense but strictly in a legal and technical sense². In his remarks to the Press in 1945, he said that "I am convinced in my mind that it (Army) would have done infinitely better if it was given a national colouring. Nationalist sentiment is bound to have influence."³ Nehru was desirous of removing barriers that isolated Indian soldiers from the people. But that was impractical as long as the British power ruled over India. This disconnect between the Indian Army and the newly emerging political leadership continued to prevail after the independence even when the civilian leadership had assumed command of the military.

In the years leading up to independence, the Indian political leadership was not much involved in the external security issues and decisions as the security and strategic discourse were being dictated by the British. Political discussions were centered on how to dislodge the British and gain independence and less time was devoted on how to consolidate power and safeguard sovereignty once independence had been achieved. Further, during the pre-independence years

¹ Jawaharlal Nehru's Presidential address at the Kerala Provincial Conference held at Payannur on 28 May 1928

² Jagat S. Bright ed., "Important Speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru; 1922-46, Indian Printing Works, Lahore, pp.157-158

³ Ibid.

Nehru saw threat emanating only from the North-West and also visualized that Afghanistan would remain weak. Pakistan and security challenges associated with it were yet to be born. In his opinion Russia also posed no threat because of the type of problems it was beset with it and the international situation that developed after the end of World War II. He observed that “We thus see no danger threatens India from any direction and even if there is, we shall be able to cope with it (politically).”⁴ At no time, military power was considered as useful to achieve political and diplomatic or for that matter any other national objectives.

Nehru's views on armed force did not change much even after independence. Maj Gen. Rudra, Military Secretary at the Army HQs in 1947, when Gen. Lockhart was the C-in-C Army, has stated in his memoirs that when in September 1947 the Army Chief presented a paper on his threat perceptions and plans for defence, Prime Minister Nehru shouted “Rubbish! Total rubbish! We don't need a defence plan. Our policy is Ahimsa. We foresee no military threats. Scrap the Army. The police is good enough to meet our security threats.”⁵

He criticized development of infrastructure in India's North-East as according to his view it was designed to support the British imperialist policies. That development of such an infrastructure was beneficial in integrating such far flung areas with the heartland and also had economic, military and strategic connotations was not adequately appreciated.

In his pronouncements and observations, Nehru visualized no threat from China even after having been taken over by the communists in 1949. Mao's ideology that ‘Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun’⁶ was in absolute contradiction to the non-violent struggle for Indian independence. If Nehru had reflected deeply on Mao's assertions like “*The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universally, for China and*

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Kuldip Singh Bajwa, “Jammu and Kashmir War 1947- 1948: Political and Military Perspective”, p.48. Also see DK Palit, “War in High Himalya: The Indian Army crisis 1962”, p.20

⁶ “Problems of War and Strategy” (November 6, 1938), *Selected Works*, Vol. II, p. 224

for all other countries”⁷ then possibly he would have prepared adequately for all the contingencies involving defence and security of the nation.

Yet, Nehru felt that differences with China can be solved peacefully. Following a non-aligned policy, peaceful settlements of disputes, stress on non-military solutions and disarmament were seen as panacea for ushering in global peace. The practical aspects of adequate military power providing the required edge to coercive diplomacy was lost sight off. The moot question is whether such an approach was sufficient to guard India's national interests. Admittedly, there were competing sectors for the scarce resources of a newly independent nation and development of defence forces received a lower or rather a very low priority.

Evolution of Defence Organisation and Defence Policy under Nehru

The newly independent government embarked on curtailing the powers of the Army from the very first day by abolishing the post of Commander in-Chief (C-in-C) and vesting its powers of Supreme Commander to the President of India. Thus, integration of the three Services under the unified command of one chief was jettisoned. The concept of autonomous services also gave rise to lack of unified thought and precepts on defence and security among the services. This step was to have a long term impact on the psyche of political leadership and civilian bureaucracy. Even after a lapse of over six decades and despite the recommendations by a number of government task forces on security, it has not been possible to reintroduce the concept of an integrated and joint military under either the Chief of Defence Staff or even a diluted version in the shape of a Permanent Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee. The move of abolishing the post of C-in-C in August 1947 was aimed at reducing the chances of a possible challenge from the Army to civilian authority as also to limit the authority and power of the army. Lord Mountbatten had asked his Chief of Staff to restructure the higher defence organisation. He recommended a number of committees ranging from the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), the Defence Minister's Committee (Service Chiefs were members of this Committee) and the Defence Committee of the Cabinet. However, functioning of these committees especially the last two got vitiated in due course with bureaucrats reigning supreme.

⁷ Ibid., p.219

Later, in April 1955, the three Commanders-in-Chiefs of Army, Navy and Air Force were divested of their titles and appointed as Chiefs of Staff of their respective Services which was less prestigious status wise. Further, while in the British arrangement, the C-in-C has direct access to the top most political/civil authority, in the new dispensation Cabinet Committee on Security was to consider the proposals and suggestions of Service Chiefs which were largely routed through the Defence Secretary.

Gradually, the status of military officers was further lowered compared to their civil counterparts possibly to assert civilian authority (superiority) over the military. A new Pay Code of 1948 even reduced the pay scales of Indian Commissioned Officers to the levels of 1939 whereas King Commission Officers (with much smaller numbers) were not touched⁸. Further, the Service HQs were designated as attached offices to the Ministry of Defence and all the proposals emanating from Service HQs were to be reexamined by lower level or much junior officials of the MoD who had neither the knowledge nor the experience in the military matters. HM Patel, a former Defence Secretary had observed in 1953 that the ignorance of civilians about military matters is so complete as to be a self-evident and incontrovertible fact⁹.

So far as defence planning was concerned, the interim government before the independence had visualized an army of 200,000 men, an air force of 20 squadrons of various types of aircraft and a navy of a limited number of cruisers and two aircraft carriers. The threat was visualized largely from the North West. British advisers were instrumental in pushing both the interim government and then later Nehru's government after the partition in arriving at such conclusions. Later, in November 1950 when China had already entered Tibet, Nehru during a debate in the Parliament declared that he had instructed the MoD to reduce defence expenditure and the size of the Army. Consequent to this 50,000 army personnel were demobilized in 1951; there was also another proposal made in March 1951 to downsize the Army by around 100, 000 personnel. Fortunately, the later proposal was not implemented.

⁸ Lorne J. Kavic, *India's Quest for security: Defence Policies, 1947-1965*, (London, University of California Press, 1967), pp. 143

⁹ An IDC for India, USI Journal, April 1954, p.249

Nehru chose a British physicist by the name of Patrick Blackett who was not a military strategist but a defence scientist to advise him on defence policy and prepare a report on India's defence requirements. He was known more for his military scientific developments rather than development of military precepts and concepts. Blackett proffered ideas which were to serve Anglo-American interests in the aftermath of the World War II and ensuing rivalries between the two emerging power blocks. Nehru's own civilian advisers were considered hardly qualified to offer a coherent advice on military development and formulation of defence policy and he also ignored his own military advisers who had adequate experience on defence and strategic issues. Nehru even discussed with Blackett his ideas of non-alignment and other policy issues that troubled him. Blackett had once remarked that "he (Nehru) had a bit too much intellectualism to solve the problem. He spent, from my point of view; too much time talking ..."

The Blackett report's recommended role for the Indian Army was to secure the land frontier against raids from border tribes or from attack by a second-class army. Blackett proposed a defence policy which prepared India for war with a country the size and force of Pakistan, and omitted China and this rhymed with Nehru's ideas. The report was largely based on an earlier pre-independence era report of British adviser Wansborough Jones. According to Blackett, India's defence needs were to be primarily related to threats from the northwest. And technical planning for a small-scale war was the fundamental requirement. He advised against procuring state-of-the art-technology weapon platforms like fighter aircraft, heavy tanks and aircraft carrier task force. He favoured weapon platforms which did not require high performance or high-end technologies; single engine fighter aircraft were considered sufficient for IAF and there was no need for jet fighters. In his scheme, there was no need for long range bombers for the IAF; and precision bombing capability was considered undesirable by him. The future role of Indian Army was not very well defined as according to some analysts it had to be firmly controlled (both politically and financially). His recommendations on defence research and development were oriented towards low and middle technologies as in his view a newly independent nation would not have sufficient economic resources for high-end research. Blackett dismissed India's potential for developing an indigenous capability in the more advanced fields of defence technology, such as chemical and biological warfare, high-performance aircraft, guided missiles,

atomic warfare, millimetric radar and large ship design¹⁰. He favoured self-sufficiency in weapon systems with which the armed forces and defence scientists were already familiar with. Thus, in a manner of speaking, he discouraged development of new and frontier technologies ostensibly because of budgetary constraints.

The three Services chiefs had presented their future plans to Blackett but he considered them too ambitious and not within the capacity of the government's budget. Further, what was most conspicuous by absence from his report was any mention of threat from China. He along with Nehru was aware of the logic that any articulation of possible threat from China would involve allotting additional budget to the armed forces. Blackett in his report stuck to Nehru's discourse. As noted by several analysts, other than some moves made for token defence of North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA), Nehru considered diplomatic process sufficient against potential threat from China¹¹. Another interesting fact is that during his early period as military consultant, Blackett was actively promoting his own scientific projects in India¹²

The Report was accepted by Nehru's government in February, 1949 in its entirety except for some minor difference in recommendations regarding Navy. However, the Report has been criticized on many accounts especially by the military leadership. Many years later, at a press conference to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Defence Research and Development Organisation on 12 January 1984, the then Chief Scientific Adviser to the MOD, Dr V. S. Arunachalam, was openly critical of Blackett's 'ruse' to retard the development of India's indigenous defence capability¹³. This report formed the basis of Nehru's defence and security policies till he was rattled by the Chinese in 1962. Meanwhile, the invasion of Jammu and Kashmir by so called raiders did have a moderating effect on his views on the usefulness of military force.

¹⁰ Chris Smith, "India's Ad Hoc Arsenal Direction or Drift in India's Defence Policy", SIPRI, Oxford University Press, 1994, p.51

¹¹ Ibid., p.53

¹² Robert S. Anderson "Patrick Blackett in India: Military Consultant and Scientific Intervenor, 1947-72. Part One", Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London, Vol. 53, No. 2 (May, 1999), pp. 253-273

¹³ Ibid.,

Nehru's Role in Kashmir Conflict 1947-48

Despite many machinations and intrigues by a number of vested interests, Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir acceded to India on 26 October 1947. Pakistan had already launched an invasion of the Kashmir valley on 22 October using both irregulars (so called raiders) and regular soldiers. In fact this move of Pakistan had made it easier for the Maharaja to decide in favour of accession to India as he had been dithering so far and was keen to have an independent status for J & K State. After the accession, the Indian Army was flown in to Srinagar through massive air transportation of troops. Even when the information about the status of Srinagar airfield was unclear, Maj. Gen KS Thimayya (later the Chief of the Army Staff) was in the first aircraft to land in Srinagar. After securing of the airfield and reorganization of troops, operations were launched against the raiders. The raiders had captured Baramulla and were in the process of advancing to Srinagar. The raiders after capturing Mahura Power House on 24 October had cut off the electricity supply to Srinagar. They had announced that they would celebrate Eid in Srinagar on 26 October¹⁴. A Sikh battalion which had been flown in succeeded in halting the advance of Pakistani forces and recaptured Barmulla on 7 November and cleared the enemy from Mahura and Uri by 14 November. Poonch in the Jammu sector was taken by the Indian Army on 23 November.

While Sardar Patel had handled the problems of Junagadh and Hyderabad with a firm hand, Nehru was excessively involved in the politics of Kashmir and had a soft corner for Sheikh Abdullah and was not well disposed towards Maharaja Hari Singh. Field Marshall Auchinleck, as a Supreme Commander for the purpose of completing the partition of the Armed Forces, had kept Nehru informed of developments in Kashmir as he had information from British C-in-C of Pakistan Army¹⁵. However, Nehru told Patel that anything concrete would only be done after Maharaja released Sheikh Abdullah and other National Conference leaders and declared accession to the Indian Union. Thus valuable time for military preparations was lost; J & K State Forces could only delay the Pakistani raiders and regulars as they were better prepared and armed. In fact, Brigadier Rajinder Singh, the Chief of Staff of the State Forces, on hearing about the advance of raiders gathered together a force of 150 men and moved to Uri. He along with his

¹⁴ VP Menon, 1956, *Integration of Indian States*, Hyderabad, p.455

¹⁵ VP Menon, 1957, *Transfer of Power in India*, Hyderabad, p.452

men succeeded in stopping the raiders for two days when the Indian Army arrived; in the bargain he sacrificed his life along with many of his brave men.

Meanwhile, Governor General Mountbatten who had great influence over Nehru and was privy to Nehru's way of thinking, in a letter written to Sardar Patel on 27 October, 1947 had tried to dissuade Government of India from doing anything much against the raiders as they were presumably there for some loot. He wrote

*"There is no doubt that if we could have sent forces a fortnight ago to Srinagar... the position could have been held with comparative ease. Now I must remind you that the risk is great and that chances of keeping the raiders out of Srinagar are not too good."*¹⁶

However, Patel ignored the advice and caution of Mountbatten and went ahead with air lift of Indian troops to Srinagar for the defence of Kashmir. The military operations to throw back the aggressors continued in which Indian Army fought many battles to reclaim areas in Kashmir valley, Ladakh and Jammu region.

On 31 December, 1947, Nehru's government formally appealed to the UNO about Pakistan's intervention in J & K. Taking the case to the UNO was a strategic blunder; it became part and parcel of the world politics. Instead of castigating Pakistan, Kashmir issue has largely been used by the international community as a stick to beat India with. In the ensuing United Security Council Resolutions, Pakistan the aggressor nation was equated with India. VP Menon, the then Secretary, States Ministry notes that Nehru took the issue to the UNO despite the fact some of his colleagues had misgivings about the wisdom of the step¹⁷. While the issue of Kashmir was under reference to the UNO, Indian military operations continued throughout to regain the lost territories. However, towards end December 1948 Nehru halted the operations much against the advice of his military commanders who were keen to exploit the operational situation in order to clear the aggressors from the entire state of J & K. VP Menon in his memoirs also records that 'the initiative was definitely in our favour along the entire front'¹⁸. Stopping of military

¹⁶ Mountbatten to Patel, letter dated 27 October, 1947, Durga Das ed., Sardar Patel's correspondence: 1945-50, Vol.-I, 1971, Ahmadabad, pp.69-70

¹⁷ VP Menon, 1956, *Integration of Indian States*, Orient Longman Ltd Hyderabad, p.470

¹⁸ Ibid., p.472

operations despite the advice of his military commanders to the contrary and taking the issue to the UN gave rise to a problem that has not been solved till today.

Apparently Nehru was more worried about his own and India's image at the international level. From Paris he had written to Patel suggesting a plebiscite in Kashmir (and even Hyderabad which had already been merged but situation was still simmering). He was more concerned about how western countries were going to view "what India stands for and is going to be. We have, therefore to keep this fact in mind in regard to any step that we take in both these places".¹⁹ Conversely, Nehru was less seized with defence, security and integrity of India as a nation. Further, it was Mountbatten who had planted very innocuously the idea of taking the Kashmir issue to the UN in the mind of Nehru²⁰ which bore fruit in end December 1948. Mountbatten in a letter written to Nehru on 15 August 1948 acknowledges encouraging Nehru to go to UNO and the criticism which was heaped on Nehru because of this action²¹. Of course, the letter was full of double talk and ambiguities which any sharp and experienced politician should have been able to discern. In the end it was strategic naivety of Nehru which affected his decision on crucial national security issues.

The ceasefire between India and Pakistan became effective from 1 January 1949. NV Gadgil, a Cabinet Minister for Works and Mines in Nehru's first Cabinet, while discussing Kashmir writes that

"If our army had not received instructions to stop fighting before that date, it would have cleared the raiders from whole of Kashmir....The restraint imposed upon army was motivated by the hope that Pakistan would be satisfied with bit of Kashmir occupied by it. Of course, some of us opposed this point of view. But many of us (Cabinet members) treated Kashmir as the personal affairs of Nehru...I am afraid Nehru is responsible for the prolongation of problem through his willingness to compromise at every stage during his first five years...Had Vallabhbhai been the man to handle the Kashmir question, he would have settled it long ago. At least he would have never stopped with a partial control of Jammu and Kashmir. He would

¹⁹ Nehru to Patel from Paris, letter dated 27 October, 1948, Ibid., pp249-250

²⁰ NV Gadgil, 1968, Government from Inside, Meerut

²¹ Copy of letter from Lord Mountbatten to Pandit Nehru dated London, 15 August 1948, in Durga Das ed., "Sardar Patel's Correspondence 1945-50: Volume 1", Navjivan, Ahmedabad, 1971, pp.220-222

have occupied the whole of the State and would never have allowed it to be elevated to international importance.”²²

Another issue which had grave security implications was arrest and release of Sheikh Abdullah on charges of treason as he was found involved in anti national activities. The Prosecution Counsel between August 1953 and April 1958 presented evidence that Sheikh along with the other 22 accused collaborated with Pakistani officials to overthrow the Government with violence. Explosives and arms were arranged from Pakistan for blowing up military and government installations and other important targets of strategic significance. Nehru had been provided the necessary proof before Sheikh was put behind the bar again and a case against the Sheikh and his allies instituted in 1958. The trials that began in 1959 continued till 1964 when the results of the trials were expected. However, in a controversial decision taken by Nehru, the case was withdrawn. Sheikh and other accused were released and the cases against them dropped in a decision that had adverse impact on national security. After the release, not only did the Sheikh stay with Nehru at his official residence in New Delhi, but was also allowed to proceed to Pakistan in finding a modus vivendi on Kashmir issue. Fortunately or unfortunately, before Sheikh could return back from Pakistan, Nehru was no more as he breathed his last in May 1964.

However, the moot point is that Kashmir problem remains unsolved. After the 1947-48 conflict there were Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971 but there was no decisive outcome as far as the Kashmir question is concerned; Kargil War also did not solve any issue. The military situation prevailing on the western front during 1971 War was also not exploited to force a positive outcome on Kashmir. Additionally, it was the failure of Nehru in appreciating threat from China that has continued till date to traumatize the nation. He had almost convinced himself that India should not do anything which could be considered as provocative by China. This thought process has unfortunately continued to persist with our politico-bureaucratic set up even after a lapse of over five decades. Largely, even today India continues to follow a pacific approach in its dealings with China.

²² Ibid. pp.72-73

Nehru's China/Tibet Policies

When Chinese communists gained power in 1949, Nehru believed that they posed no threat to India as they would be busy consolidating internally and both were against colonialism and imperialism. Even when the Chinese entered Tibet in October 1950, he continued to believe that a serious threat from China did not exist. His notions were also coloured by internationalism and spirit of non-alignment which he espoused to a great degree at the Bandung conference in 1955. While the Chinese Premier who also attended the conference was very reserved and careful in his remarks, Nehru talked of a special relationship with China. Chou en Lai was able to convince others that Chinese communism was reconcilable with Asian nationalism.

Valabhbhai Patel in his letter of 7 November 1950 written to Nehru had cautioned him about the Tibet question and had asserted that 'Chinese government has tried to delude us by professions of peaceful intentions'. He had even gone to the extent of saying that the final action of Chinese (entering Tibet) is little short of perfidy. He was also not appreciative of the role of the Indian Ambassador in Beijing's 'who had been at great pains to find justifications for Chinese policy and actions'. India had done everything including championing the cause of Chinese entry into the UNO. He was very precise in pointing out development of threat to India from two directions. He observed in his letter that

*"Chinese irredentism and communist imperialism are different from the expansionism or imperialism of the western powers. The former has a cloak of ideology which makes it ten times more dangerous. In the guise of ideological expansion lie concealed racial, national or historical claims. The danger from the north and north-east, therefore, becomes both communist and imperialist. While our western and north-western threat to security is still as prominent as before, a new threat has developed from the north and north-east. Thus, for the first time, after centuries, India's defence has to concentrate itself on **two fronts simultaneously**. Our defence measures have so far been based on the calculations of superiority over Pakistan. In our calculations we shall now have to reckon with communist China in the north and in the north-east, a communist China which has definite ambitions and aims and which does not, in any way, seem friendly disposed towards us".*

Not only did Sardar Patel dwell on the military threat posed by Chinese entry into Tibet, he also outlined in detail its ramifications on internal security situation in India. He recommended a military and intelligence appreciation of the Chinese threat to India both on the frontier and to internal security. Reconsideration of retrenchment plans and long-term considerations of India's defence needs, improvements of India's infrastructure along the frontiers, improving intelligence were some of the measures he had recommended in his letter. He also was of the view that India should stop advocating the question of Chinese entry into UNO.

Prime Minister Nehru's Note of 18 November 1950 on China and Tibet apparently answered some of the matters raised by Sardar Patel. The general refrain of the Note was that Nehru preferred to continue with his erstwhile appreciation of threat from China. He was of the view neither India nor any other power could prevent China from taking over Tibet. India should take a long term view since China was going to be our close neighbor for a long time. He believed in the Chinese assurances of 'regional autonomy and religious freedom'. Further, he said that in 'no event India should sponsor Tibet's appeal to the UNO'. Nehru felt that 'it is exceedingly unlikely that we may have to face any real military invasion from the Chinese side, whether in peace or in war, in foreseeable future'. In fact, he very emphatically ruled out any major attack on India by China. His thought process was also influenced, as mentioned earlier, by the logic that if we really feared an attack from China this would 'cast an intolerable burden on us, financial and otherwise, and it would weaken our general capabilities'. However, as the events proved in the later years, this perverse logic did not help in mitigation of the real threat. Even if there was genuine lack of resources, a sound perception of military threat from China would have helped in allotting priorities in development of military capabilities in a phased manner. The gap of twelve years that occurred between 1950 and 1962 when China eventually fought war with India over the boundary question could have been better utilized for preparing our defence if a realistic politico-military appreciation of the developing threat from China had been done.

Nehru's acceptance of China's entry into Tibet without any remonstrations, speedy recognition of People's Republic of China, supporting Beijing's claim to the Chinese seat at the UNO were all based on the premise that China posed no threat to Indian interests²³. India also failed to protest signing of an agreement between China and Tibet in May 1951 "for the peaceful

²³ See Lorne J. Kavic, "India's Quest for Security; Defence Policies-1947-1965", University of California, 1967, p44

liberation of Tibet" which provided for the integration of the Tibetan army with the Chinese forces²⁴. The agreement violated the letter and spirit agreement of 1914 between Tibet and India. Continuing with his appeasement policies, Nehru concluded the much famous Panchsheel agreement where all the earlier treaty rights of India in Tibet were renounced without any privileges in return. Though, some preparations were undertaken in NEFA and Ladakh as a consequence of China's entry into Tibet, these were barely minimum and the whole idea was not to provoke China by own actions. These actions were precautionary measures that consisted of increasing numbers of posts along the border, sending of intelligence personnel to monitor activities along the border, improvement of some roads and tracks. Diplomacy was considered as the best tool to attenuate possible security challenges from China.

Coming back to the Panchsheel Agreement of April 1954, what was very surprising from the view of a pragmatic strategist that India's extra territorial rights in the shape of military escorts at the Indian trading outposts at Yatung, Gyantse and Gartok; post offices, telegraph offices and telephone services were foregone without a quid pro quo. According to Nehru, these rights were anachronistic and were reminiscent of the colonial past. Some of these justifications were echoed and expanded upon later by Nehru's advisers including army officers like Lt. Gen BM Kaul. Naming of six passes in the agreement was seen as a reflection of a degree of agreement by China on Sino-Indian border issue; however, these passes were in the middle sector. In fact, this agreement offered no benefit to India; instead it negated all the previous treaties like Simla Convention of 1913²⁵. With the signing of the treaty, Tibet became part of China though Beijing did mention grant of autonomy but evidently this was in name only. India could have at least asked for acceptance of McMahon line as border in the bargain. As brought out by Claude Arpi, China got India's stamp of approval for their occupation of Tibet²⁶. HM Patel, Defence Secretary and Cabinet Secretary during Nehru era opined that "in the circumstances of 1954, this amounted to the counter-signature by India to the death warrant of Tibetan independence."²⁷

²⁴ HM Patel, "Defence of India", RR Kale Memorial Lecture, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Asia Publishing House 1963, Bombay

²⁵ For a detailed treatment of the subject see Claude Arpi, "Born in Sin: The Panchsheel Agreement; Sacrifice of Tibet", pp.111-123

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ HM Patel, "Defence of India", RR Kale Memorial Lecture, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Asia Publishing House 1963, Bombay

That a buffer state between India and China had been removed which would pose strategic challenge to India was not adequately appreciated.

During the Parliamentary debate on the Panchsheel Agreement, Nehru persisted that “in my opinion we have no better thing than this since we became independent. I have no doubt about this. I think it is right for our country, for Asia and for the world”. This was also the era of ‘Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai’ a policy slogan that was espoused by Nehru since 1950 but this concept was soon to receive some hard knocks. Before the ink was dry on the Panchsheel agreement, the first of series Chinese military incursions commenced that led to the Sino-Indian war of October 1962. Nehru naively believed that with the signing of Panchsheel Agreement he had secured from China the existing frontiers between India and Tibet. HM Patel had observed that there was "the belief that the five principles guaranteed Chinese good neighbourliness and acceptance of the McMahon line frontier and other existing frontiers between India and Tibet." What actually happened was that India's frontiers with Tibet became more vulnerable. Further, Chinese maps had already started showing large swathes of Indian territory as Chinese. In October 1954 Nehru had taken up the case of such maps with Chou En-Lai which he said were merely reproductions of pre-liberation maps and the government had no time to revise them. Nehru accepted these explanations; Chinese later put forward their own conceptions of where Sino-Indian boundary stood after construction of the Aksai Chin road.

The road construction activity in Tibet had commenced with great speed in the mid-fifties. The Aksai Chin road's survey was carried out by Chinese in 1955 and the actual construction took place in next two years. Nehru also ignored information received through military intelligence about Chinese plans to construct a road through Aksai Chin linking Tibet with Xinjiang. Sydney Wignall, a Welsh mountaineer had worked for Indian military intelligence gathering information about Chinese activities during his expeditions to remote areas on the northern borders in the Himalayas. Wignall was briefed by ‘Singh’ (an Indian military intelligence officer) about the Chinese presence in Western Tibet and the possibility of the existence of a military road. The Indian Military Attaché in Beijing had also made some references about China's plans in Aksai Chin in his reports. Wignall was therefore asked to get proof of the existence of the road; though Chinese captured him and his companions during his so called expedition, he was later released

by the Chinese thinking that he would not survive the tough weather conditions. However, he eventually survived and reported witnessing construction of the Aksai Chin road to military intelligence. The Army authorities informed the Prime Minister and V. K. Krishna Menon, the Defence Minister²⁸.

Wignall was later told by his army contact that his material was shown to Nehru by one of senior officers. He was criticised by Krishna Menon in Nehru's presence for 'lapping up American CIA agent-provocateur propaganda.' Thus, the information that was available in 1955 was dismissed as CIA's propaganda as it did not suit Nehru's discourse on China. Though, much later, in the spring of 1958, two Indian patrols were sent to confirm the layout of the road (one of which was captured by Chinese frontier guards) it was not until October 1958 that a formal protest was launched with the Chinese about the construction of the road. The construction of the road through India's territory was a clear indication of China's aggressive intentions.

Meanwhile, incorrect Chinese maps depicting wrong Sino-Indian boundary continued to appear in Chinese and some other publications. Nehru protested to Chou En-lai through a letter of December 1958. Chou En-lai in his reply of Jan 1959 rejected the Indian notions of where Sino-Indian boundary lay; specifically, he rejected McMahon line as the boundary and mentioned that the 'issue was not raised earlier because the time was not ripe'.

There were also some disturbances in Tibet during the period leading upto the flight of the Dalai Lama in March 1959. Chinese troops had been suppressing forcefully the Tibetan resistance movement. Nehru down played simmerings in Tibet against the Chinese in order not to provoke China. This was precisely the time when The Dalai Lama faced with Chinese atrocities had to flee Tibet. The Dalai Lama crossed over to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh on 31 March 1959 and was granted asylum due to widespread support of Indian public opinion to Tibetans.

²⁸ See Claude Arpi, "Sydney Wignall and the Chinese Built Aksai Chin Road", *Folks Magazine*, December 2012. Sydney Wignall in his book 'Spy on the Roof of the World' has given details of his sojourn to the Western Tibet and his activities for providing information about Aksai Chin road to Indian military intelligence.

China expressed its unhappiness through a well-designed series of border intrusions into Indian territory. On July 28, 1959, Chinese troops intruded into Eastern Pangong Lake, took into custody half a dozen Indian policemen there and established their post at Spanggur. In NEFA, the Chinese cleared two Indian posts of Khinzemane and Longju (5 to 6 Kilometers South of McMahon line) in August 1959; the Assam Rifle personnel occupying these posts were forced to vacate. These aggressive actions on the part of the Chinese could no longer be kept hidden from the public and found reflection in parliamentary debate. Nehru cautioned China through a note and Army was handed over the task of looking after NEFA-Tibet border. Yet, Nehru was hopeful that China would be more reasonable on the border question and there could be settlement with minor adjustments along the border.

Again in the third week of October 1959, Chinese ambushed an Indian patrol in Kongka Pass in Ladakh sector killing a number of personnel and capturing the remainder. Indian public opinion was aroused by such brazen Chinese aggression and an emergency Cabinet meeting was convened to discuss the developments along the borders. Nehru also gave assurances during a debate in Rajya Sabha that “We are committed from every point of view to defend our country, to preserve its integrity, to preserve its honour and self-respect...almost at any price which has to be paid.” But was Nehru ready to pay any price after he had possibly appreciated the threat from China to India’s integrity? What was the extent of preparations?

State of Defence Preparedness Leading up to 1962 War

So far the defence preparations had largely been made to meet the threat from Pakistan with India’s Northern borders receiving little attention. Now another dimension of military threat had been added with visualization of danger from China in Ladakh, Sikkim-Bhutan sector and NEFA. Poor infrastructure in these areas inhibited quick deployment of troops in these areas in addition to the logistical difficulties in maintaining them. Even the weapons and equipment with the Army was of World War II vintage and was in the process of being upgraded (e.g. .303 Rifle was to be replaced with a semi-automatic and an older version of infantry and artillery mortars with newer versions). The Army did carry out some Sand Model exercises in the period leading to 1962 War with China in order to train for the likelihood of such an eventuality. Plans for readjustment of troops were made and executed based on the military appreciation of the likely

threats to Ladakh, Sikkim-Bhutan and NEFA areas and other places along the Northern borders. Even a division (17th Division) was raised in the period 1959-62 to meet the challenge from China. However, the requirement appreciated was more than that (three Divisions). There was shortage of officers also. Kavic has pointed out that *“This relative complacency about a Chinese military threat was characteristic of government’s attitude towards the country’s security as a whole”*²⁹.

The budget for defence forces had also been restricted over the years with Nehru having said that request for fund from Army when projected by the MoD to Defence Committee of the Cabinet could possibly be agreed to by the Committee to the extent of one-tenth what was asked for³⁰. The additional allocations required to meet the challenge of the newly developed threat from China were not catered for.

The Indian Army had made several proposals to the government especially after the entry of China in Tibet in October 1950 about raising Special Forces for surveillance and other operations in high altitude areas along the northern borders. These proposals were ignored by the government. In 1951-52, the Army HQ had ordered preparation of a military manual on Chinese infantry tactics based on the UK and US militaries’ experience in Korea. However, when Nehru came to know about such a project, he issued orders to stop the publication of the manual even though it was for restricted use of the military. This was in keeping with the dominant refrain of Nehru’s policies of not provoking China.

Meanwhile, the Army had opened a Jungle Warfare School in 1958 and added a course on guerilla tactics at Infantry School, Mhow. Gen. KS Thimayya was allowed to make a trip to Italy for study of Alpine troops organisation and tactics in the later half of 1958. On return, he made proposals to the government for raising of mountain divisions. Keeping in vein with the government’s attitude, both Nehru and Krishna Menon rejected the proposal as not in line with the policy. Nehru again ruled out any large scale attacks by China. Further, they felt that the economic burden of acceptance of proposal would be enormous.

The civil-military relations had also deteriorated with the Defence Minister Krishna Menon interfering with promotions and transfers of senior defence officers and his general conduct also

²⁹ Lorne J. Kavic, “India’s Quest for security: Defence Policies, 1947-65”, University of California Press, 1967, p. 89

³⁰ Ibid.

did not go down well with the Indian military. Nehru was privy to all such happenings but did not caution his Defence Minister. This was also the time when Gen. Thimayya-Krishna Menon controversy on Thimayya's resignation arose where neither Nehru nor Krishna Menon could come out with unsullied image.

While all this was happening, Nehru launched an operation in December 1961 to evict the Portuguese from Goa. He was criticized for 'stamping on a mouse in the house while a lion was roaring at the door'. Many others have accused him of attempting to draw public's attention away from what was happening on the Northern borders as also to assuage nationalist sentiment that was gathering steam against the Chinese aggressiveness in Ladakh and NEFA sectors. Another important facet of the entire inglorious saga was that many of the intrusions and incidents at the Northern borders were kept hidden from the public much in the same vein as what has been happening in the recent years. Generally, the avowed aim of the government of the day was that any transparency might inflame public's nationalist tendencies affecting the solution of the problem.

In the light of the continued aggressiveness of Chinese troops and their advances, Nehru decided to adopt a 'Forward Policy' which involved establishing a number of isolated forward posts as a deterrent to Chinese activities. The objective was to show own presence in hitherto unoccupied areas and thus assert own claims to disputed areas. The assumption was that China would not challenge Indian posts by 'force of arms'. Under this policy, several Indian posts were set up by end December 1961 in Ladakh and NEFA sectors. Nehru viewed such developments positively and in November 1961 remarked in Lok Sabha that 'progressively the situation had been changing from the military point of view and we shall continue to take steps to build up these things so that ultimately we may be in a position to recover such territory as in their position'. However, such an adventurist policy was based on the premise that Chinese would not react forcefully to such Indian actions. In the spring of 1962, Krishna Menon, stung by criticism of being soft towards China, ordered further advances to show that he was tougher than Nehru. More troops were inducted into Ladakh for implementing the new phase of the 'Forward Policy'.

Lt. Gen Henderson Brooks in his report on 1962 War which has been leaked to media in March 2014 observed that *"It is imperative that political direction is based on military means. If the two are not co-related, there is a danger of creating a situation where we may lose both on material*

and moral sense much more than we already have. Thus, there is no short cut to military preparedness to enable us to pursue effectively our present policy aimed at refuting the illegal Chinese claim over our territory". The Report also critical of military leadership and though unable to examine the relationship between the MOD and Army HQ as access to their record was denied Henderson Brooks questioned the poor planning of the then Chief of General Staff Lt. Gen. BM Kaul who later was to lead newly formed IV Corps to disaster in the then NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh). Quality of intelligence input by the then IB Director and his undue influence on Nehru in instigating him to adopt 'forward policy' based on the wrong assumption that Chinese would not react were some of the other strictures past by Lt. Gen Henderson Brooks in his report.

Chinese reacted by warning that unless India withdrew its aggressive posts the Chinese guards would take appropriate defensive actions. Several incidents occurred in both Ladakh and NEFA between the Spring of 1962 to the beginning of the War in October 1962. In beginning of October 1962, the Chief of General Staff, Lt. Gen. BM Kaul (he was considered as an acolyte of Nehru; he had more of staff experience than fighting) was sent to command the NEFA Corps at Tezpur. Around 12 October, 1962, Nehru stated that he had ordered the Army to throw out the Chinese from Indian territory. After several clashes, China launched massive offensives in NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh) and Ladakh, India was ill prepared for such level of attacks. Chou En Lai had mentioned in 1962 the necessity of teaching India a lesson. The rest is history; how India lost the war because of wrong assumptions, unsound policies of Nehru, mistaken calculations about Chinese intentions and capabilities and above all not developing own military infrastructure and capabilities, not controlling his own Defence Minister who interfered in matters better left to military leadership and who allowed civil-military relationship to deteriorate that sapped the morale of military.

Nehru's statement on the floor of Lok Sabha on 8 November 1962 that 'this type of aggression was a thing of the past' only indicated that how credulous he had been. India under the helmsmanship of Nehru had turned out to be thoroughly unprepared, in both military and non-military spheres. As a matter of fact, it appeared that India was fighting a phony war. Though Nehru contributed in a major manner to the failure of China/Tibet policies and the ensuing debacle the Congress Party was more inclined to blame the Defence Minister, Krishna Menon in

a bid to mitigate the guilt of Nehru. Menon was blamed for politicizing the army, interfering with internal matters of the military and having underfunded the military. When the military situation deteriorated rapidly on Northern borders especially in NEFA, Nehru, in a reversal of policies pursued so far appealed for military help from the USA and UK. On 19 November, Nehru asked for air support in terms of bombers/fighters from Americans and the British. But Chinese announced a unilateral ceasefire on 20 November. Ironically, Nehru had been a vehement critic of the Western bloc which came to India's help and provided military equipment for the likelihood of renewed fighting in summer of 1963. The non-aligned group whose strong votary was Nehru, turned out to be of not much help and such nations only gave advice to India to adopt a practical approach and reduce tensions.

The scar left by the humiliating defeat in 1962 war has been difficult to erase. On the 50th anniversary of Sino-Indian war in 2012 and even in earlier years, several analysts based on the benefit of hindsight have reflected on the reasons for our failure in 1962. While there are some who have found reasons for Nehru in adopting such policies as he did, they have found it hard to not to completely disregard Nehru's role in formulating and implementing India's defence and security policies which led to the debacle in Himalayas³¹.

It was only in the aftermath of the colossal defeat that the Indian government realized that 'military weakness had been a temptation to the Chinese, and a requisite military strength may be a deterrent'. The then Union Minister for Planning, Gulzari Lal Nanda had announced that "India has henceforward to remain on a constant vigil and a state of complete readiness for every eventuality....From now on, defence and development must be regarded as integral and related parts of the national economic plans". This proves the point that the defence had been neglected hitherto before. In the following years, the defence forces were considerably expanded; modernisation of weapons and equipment got a boost. Air Force was sanctioned forty five squadrons with plans for induction of modern aircrafts of various types. Similarly, Navy also

³¹ For instance see K. Subrahmanyam, "Nehru and the India-China Conflict of 1962"; he has blamed our decision-making structures and processes rather than Nehru. He also states that from the beginning Nehru had reservations about China but the moot point is if that was so did he take any measures to guard against such reservations? The answer is in the negative. He also makes a point that it is difficult to accept the thesis that Nehru neglected the Chinese threat and offers some unconvincing logic. After defending Nehru completely, in the concluding inference he does reluctantly agree though with a qualifier that "he failed partly in their (policies) implementation and partly for reasons which could never have been anticipated, such as local command failure."

received attention. There was expansion of Research and Development Organisation. Some of the measures undertaken were instrumental in defeating Pakistan in the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965. However, disillusioned with China's perfidy, Nehru died in May 1964 bringing to an end what could be said to be the formative era of India's nationhood which left indelible impressions on the politico-bureaucratic set up that was to follow.

Conclusion: More the Things Change more they remain the same

Have we learnt any lessons from our experiences in Nehru era and in the subsequent years? India frittered away its militarily advantageous position towards the end of Indo-Pakistan War of 1971 when we failed to exploit the operational situation in the Western Front that could have given us back our territory. This was much like towards the end of 1947-48 Indo-Pak conflict when Indian forces were ordered to stop operations. After the cessation of hostilities in 1971, we allowed Pakistan a victory on the negotiating table when India could have at least forced the Pakistan's Prime Minister Zulfikar Bhutto in the Simla Agreement of 1972, to convert the cease fire line into a permanent border as we had over 90,000 Pakistani soldiers in our custody. Some specious argument from Bhutto as to what face will he show to Pakistani public was accepted as a justified explanation. Our politico-bureaucratic psyche apparently is averse to following hard policy choices in pursuit of our well cherished and identifiable national interests. Leeway given to Bhutto then and his single minded pursuit of building an Islamic bomb that was successful has created more obstacles for settling the Kashmir issue favourably from Indian point of view.

Like Nehru allowed Sheikh Abdullah and his cohorts to travel to Pakistan and exchange views with the Pakistan's leadership and others much in the same way we have allowed Hurriyat leadership and other hostile and anti-national elements to not only confer with officials of Pakistan's High Commission in New Delhi but also to travel to Pakistan, obviously for purposes that would be contrary to India's national interests. It is a well known fact that such Kashmiri leaders have met those very leaders who sponsor terrorism both in Kashmir and all over India. It needs to be remembered that Sheikh Abdullah, in what is known as Kashmir Conspiracy case, was charged with treason for arranging to supply arms and explosives sourced from Pakistan as part of a conspiracy against the State. Despite the proof presented to Nehru about the

involvement of Sheikh Abdullah in the conspiracy, he got him released and sent him to Pakistan under the mistaken belief that something good might come out of the visit.

Currently, the present Government is again inclined to follow soft policies against Pakistan based on professions of peace by the newly elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, knowing very well that Pakistan's India and Afghanistan policies are dictated by the military and security establishment. Plans by the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to visit Pakistan based on the invitation extended by Nawaz Sharif have not been entirely discarded even when India has been waiting for Pakistan to deliver on the masterminds of 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attacks. It is quite evident that there has been no fundamental change in perceptions of Pakistani establishment that it is only cross-border terrorism that moves India to engage with Pakistan and possibly give some concessions to Pakistan especially on Kashmir.

While India has somehow managed to handle military and security threats from Pakistan, it is the ever expanding Pakistan-China nexus that presents an invidious and most dangerous threat to India's security. It is since quite a few years back that the army started propagating a military doctrine to meet the threat of 'Two Front War'. As a throwback to the Nehruvian policies, the government was more inclined to handle such threats diplomatically rather than spend additional defence funds for raising and equipping of requisite military formations and necessary air support. The report 'Non Alignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in Twenty First Century' authored by a group of eminent experts that included a member from NSA, Mr. Shiv Shankar Menon's staff and where NSA also attended some of the deliberations of the group while talking about military capabilities has opined that *"we need to be clear about what kinds of offensive capabilities will be useful. The prevailing assumption that we should raise and deploy a 'mountain strike corps' against China is problematic. For it simply risks replicating all the problems with our existing strike corps under worse geographic and logistic conditions."*³² In short, it is not only the economic burden of raising such forces but the mindset about provoking China reminiscent of Nehru era persists. The report also talks of instigating an insurgency in areas after they have been captured by the Chinese forces which connotes a defeatist attitude. Such a repeat of defeat will be unpardonable in our country.

³² Para 173 of the report titled "Nonalignment 2.0

Further, what needs to be noticed is that since 2008 not only PLA has improved its posture in Tibet, it has undertaken a number of incursions across the Line of Actual Control. This stance of assertive PLA in Tibet has been made possible by the massive build up of logistic structure in Tibet to include extensive railway network and over 58,000 kilometres of roads. The roads have been built up to Indian borders and have also penetrated Nepal. This would ensure smooth induction of the PLA troops in any contingency. This contrasts with our poor civil and military structure even after a lapse of over six decades. No doubt India has recently embarked on activating its old airfields along Sino-Indian border and the MOD has chalked out a plan for building extensive road net work and other infrastructure facilities but our record in implementing plans and projects has so far been very tardy. Thus the asymmetrical situation with China that existed in past during Nehruvian times and thereafter has not been rectified.

Incursions by the PLA in Depsang and Chumar areas of Ladakh sector also reveals the government's disinclination to reveal such incidents along the border to the public which conforms to its past practice of withholding such information from the public lest it may embarrass the government in some manner or the other. Apparently, the Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid and later Defence Minister Mr. AK Antony have visited Beijing subsequent to these incidents in April and June 2013 which seemed from all angles as conciliatory gestures to China's aggressive policies in line with appeasement policies of Nehru. While Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA) signed with China during PM Manmohan Singh's visit is a 'feel good' agreement it may not address the trust deficit with China and the possibilities of recurrence of incursions cannot be ruled out.³³ Transgressions and incursions by PLA near Chumar area of Ladakh sector have continued in January to March 2014 indicating that BDCA and a host of other agreements between India and China may not be of much consequence. Only a strong military and diplomatic posture would contribute to deterrence against the Chinese assertiveness.

The deficiencies in terms of both military capabilities and defence equipment continue to plague our forces. Basic wherewithal like ammunition deficiencies, improvement of ammunition

³³ Gurmeet Kanwal "A Feel Good Agreement with China: It Fails to Address the Rote Cause of Face-offs on Border", *The Tribune*, December 07, 2013

dumps as brought out by the current and previous Army Chiefs, continue to persist. There are large scale voids which has also been described as 'critical hollowness' in the army that includes tanks running out of ammunition, obsolete air defence systems and lack of essential weaponry, and lack of critical surveillance and night-fighting capabilities for infantry and special forces. There is inadequate HUMINT in the border areas and depth and breadth of ELINT, COMINT and satellite cover for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance needs to be enhanced.

There have been some improvements in defence organization, structures and processes but the civil-military relations leave lot to be desired. Similarly, there is a lack of integration and jointness in our armed forces. Even though Naresh Chandra's Task Force in their report recommended the institution of the post of a Permanent Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee, the government has shot down that proposal which in any case was a climb down from the Chief of Defence Staff recommended earlier by a Group of Ministers in 2001. HQ Integrated Defence Staff created for enhancing jointness and integration does not have adequate powers or wherewithal to enforce jointness or integration. Even NAM 2.0 report has recommended many relevant structural changes in the Ministry of Defence to improve civil-military relations but there seems to be lack of political will to implement such recommendations; the shibboleths of past that military might somehow establish ascendancy over the civil or political set up fail to go away.

There is a strong sense of déjà vu that is palpable in the current political approach to defence and security policies which leave India vulnerable to China's rising military capabilities and its assertive policies across the Line of Actual Control. While China has been single mindedly pursuing its long term objectives in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh sectors, Indian response to China's strategy remains confused and subdued. Further, Pakistan would be too happy to join China in any adventure against India. While diplomatic approach would be of some help, the government needs to take urgent action to mitigate the gap in military capabilities along the Indo-Tibetan borders that is becoming wider with the passage of time. Long historical and cultural tradition shows that China only respects power and it is only the strengthening of India's comprehensive national power that would deter China's assertiveness along our borders.

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