

毛泽东如何对待中印边界问题
Mao Zedong on Sino-Indian Boundary Dispute

Translated by Hemant Adlakha

Honorary Fellow, ICS, and Associate Professor,
Centre for Chinese and Southeast Asian Studies,
JNU, New Delhi

haidemeng@gmail.com

Summary

Following PLA's decisive victory over the Indian forces in the 1962 "self-defensive counter war," Mao Zedong was asked to give his assessment of the PLA's remarkable feat. Mao replied: "Shaking the mountain is easier, shaking PLA is not!"

Translator's Note

Following the standoff between India and China along the LAC in Ladakh, just as it was during the Doklam standoff in the summer of 2017, select Party-run media outlets in particular and other mainstream official media in general in the P R China has been flooded with commentaries and articles on China's "self-defensive" counter-attack against India in 1962. Interestingly, a large number of these writings are focused on Mao Zedong as a brilliant war strategist and extraordinary military strategist. Needless to mention, the entire credit for China's victory in just 30 days and the PLA having taught a lesson to the Indian army, are attributed to great visionary Mao Zedong. The article below is one of many such commentaries.

Source: <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/150477992>

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Mao: “Over the years, we have taken several measures to seek a peaceful resolution to the Sino-Indian border issue, but India won’t budge. The armed conflict by India was deliberately provoked and intensified, in order to deceive. Since Nehru was hell-bent upon war, we had no choice but to oblige. I don’t want to sound rude...we resorted to counter-attack with the twin purpose of warning India and as a punitive measure; only to tell Nehru as well as to the Indian government that it is not at all feasible to resolve the border issue by resorting to military means.”



Mao and Nehru

Photo: The Print.in

In 1962, Mao Zedong-led Central Military Commission took a strategic decision, with Liu Bocheng, Long He and Luo Ruiqing in command, combat commanders Zhang Guohua and Ding Sheng will carry out a 3-pronged “self-defence counter-attack” on India. It was a battle between the PLA and Indian Army, fought at a high altitude of 4,000 meters above sea level. The battle was fierce and violent, but it was a typically low intensity local clash, the first since the Second World War.

The outcome of this war was far beyond the imagination of people in the West: the PLA rushed in a rainbow-like momentum, and the entire combat turned out to be one-sided. The Indian side was utterly routed, it fell apart just like “flower falling into water” [落花流水 luò huā liú shuǐ: to get totally clobbered]*. The PLA beat the hell out of the Indian Army.

Nehru’s “Beautiful” Illusion

Practically speaking, life is a process. The Sino-Indian border conflict did not erupt overnight, it is a problem left over by history.

As long back as in 1914, the British imperialists delineated the Sino-Indian boundary without any authority given to them – the so-called McMahon Line. In fact, all successive Chinese governments have since not recognised such boundary demarcation.

After the People’s Republic of China was established in 1949, though Beijing and New Delhi publicly supported the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, in private there were differences on the border issue. These differences were reflected in the respective maps of the two countries.

Owing to their ongoing differences, India ceaselessly persisted with armed provocations against China on the border. In particular in 1959, following China’s successful victory over counterinsurgency in Tibet, and Dalai

Lama having fled to India, a series of exchange of fire incidents later, India began to enter China's southern Tibet region and went on to establish its military stronghold.

At the same time, the Indian government openly started demanding that China assign to India 90,000 square kilometres land in the eastern sector and 32,000 square kilometres area in the western sector, respectively. After its unreasonable demand was rejected by the Chinese government, India started implementing its "Forward Policy" and continued encroachment of the Chinese territory. In the months of August and October in 1959, the Indian Army caused Longju and Kongka La incidents in eastern and western sectors, killing and wounding several officers and soldiers of the Chinese border guards.

In the period between August 6 and September 14, the Indian Prime Minister Nehru made ten speeches on the relationship between China and India in the Indian parliament. In his speeches, Nehru insisted that McMahon Line was the Sino-Indian border and called the Indian Army's provocatively crossing the border as "incidents of Chinese aggression/invasion/encroachment." [In Chinese-English dictionary, the term 侵略 Qīnlüè is translated as aggression; invasion; and encroachment – *Translator*].

On September 7, Nehru proposed a *White Paper* on the Sino-Indian relations in the

parliament. Next day, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai wrote a letter replying to questions Nehru raised in the *White Paper* in the Indian parliament the previous day. Zhou Enlai pointed out India's continuous violation of China's territory since Nehru wrote to Zhou earlier in March.

In this letter (written on September 8, 1959), Zhou Enlai once again clearly stated the position of the Chinese government on the Sino-Indian border issue. Zhou explained, the Chinese government cannot recognise the situation arising out of the past British invasion against the local Tibetan government and use this as a solution to the Sino-Indian border issue. Zhou suggested the Indian side immediately take measures to withdraw the Indian army and the Indian administrative personnel who crossed the border and restore the longstanding state of the border between the two countries.

On September 11, Zhou Enlai submitted a "Report on the Sino-Indian Boundary Issue" at the expanded sixth session of the Standing Committee of the National Peoples' Congress. In addition to the historical background and the current situation of the Sino-Indian border issue, the report also emphasised on clarifying the stand, the approach and the policy of the Chinese government on the Sino-Indian border issue and sought the Standing Committee's approval.

The report said: “Recent tensions between China and India are the result of the ulterior motives of certain people with vested interests in India. These people have used some disputes on the border to set off afresh anti-China agitation; they have slandered China for ‘aggression’ against India; and they used the Tibetan rebellion to destroy Sino-Indian friendship. The Indian government tried to use this opportunity to exert pressure on the Chinese government to force China to accept Indian unilateral claim on the border issue between the two countries and to modify the map in accordance with India’s will.”

On September 13, the eighth expanded session of the Standing Committee of the NPC adopted the Zhou Enlai Report unanimously and totally endorsed the stand, the approach and the policy adopted by the Chinese government to deal with the Sino-Indian border issue. The Standing Committee also hoped the Indian side will quickly withdraw from the site of the invasion, will stop inciting anti-China sentiments and start friendly talks with China on peaceful settlement of the border issue.

On September 26, Zhou Enlai received a reply from Nehru in which the Indian Prime Minister expressed his disagreement with Zhou Enlai’s representation of the border facts. Thereafter, the Indian army provoked a second armed conflict between China and India. The Indian army invaded the Chinese territory in

the south of Kongka La Pass in the western sector.

Endure extreme conditions, endure what is unbearable; and then “sweep it off”

In the early phase of the PRC, the people of China nourished the notion of “Hindi-Cheeni Bhai Bhai,” based on the belief that China and India together advocated the Non-Aligned Movement, together advocated the anti-imperialist unity of the Third World countries. These were also words Nehru had himself stated. During the anti-Japanese war of resistance, India provided a lot of help and assistance to China. Why did the close cooperation between China and India evolve into a continuous military action on the part of India until the two countries went to war?

Speaking of Nehru, Mao once told people close to him that he spent ten days and nights trying to figure out but in vain, as to why Nehru have to fight with China?

Mao once described the Indian “Forward Policy” of nibbling Chinese territory as a “cocky” tactic. Mao summed up his India strategy in 16 Mandarin characters: 决不退让, 避免流血。武装共处, 犬牙交错 *Jué bù tuìràng, bìmiǎn liúxuè. Wǔzhuāng gòngchǔ, quǎnyájiāocuò* or “Never give in, avoid bloodshed; be fully armed and stick together like criss-cross teeth.” Only then can one win against the cannibals. We know how Mao was

very reluctant till the last moment, from going into war with India. He was very hopeful India would call it quits.

Nehru, on the other hand, was determined that border issue could no longer be shelved. He believed the people of India were in no mood to accept this. Nehru was ready to go for the military adventure. He also believed the prevailing international opinion favoured India. In fact, Nehru's assessment of the situation was not at all unrealistic. China had just fought a war against the UN forces led by the United States; China's relations with the USSR were at its lowest ebb. China was not enjoying friendly equation with either of the two superpowers. Taiwan's Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai Shek) too was relentlessly indulging in military provocations all along China's southeast coast.

Khrushchev, who was ready to leave for the United States on September 9, 1959, with the objective to appraise the US leadership of the USSR position on the Sino-Indian border conflict, did not pay heed to China's efforts to dissuade him and went on to issue the "Tass Statement" condemning China and defending India. Following his return to Moscow, Khrushchev issued yet another statement "publicly condemning the Sino-Indian conflict" and calling it "sad" and "stupid." He further admitted of feeling "regretful" and "sorrowful" over the Sino-Indian border conflict. Later, he bluntly accused China of displaying "narrow

national thinking." Khrushchev vigorously strengthened Soviet-Indian anti-China alliance, and he doubled Soviet military aid to India. Let alone the Americans, he cited thousand reasons to back up India in order to contain China.

With both the superpowers backing India, and opposed to China, Nehru was riding high in confidence. He was continuously supplied with intelligence information from the Indian agencies, the Indian embassy in Beijing and the US's CIA briefings. These intelligence inputs and briefings kept Nehru updated on China's internal chaos and weaknesses; on the acute damage to China's national economy caused by the 1958 "Great Leap Forward" movement, resulting in a three-year difficult period from 1958 to 1961. To Nehru, these problems seemed to be serious enough to prevent China's advancing adventurism abroad. Nehru became further convinced to continue his "Forward Policy" to nibble Chinese territory, expecting the Chinese to offer no resistance. Nehru wished that this would change the status quo situation at the border and cause a *fait accompli* to be imposed on China.

Even when India was advancing into Chinese territory, it kept launching armed attacks on Chinese border guards causing casualties. Moreover, the Chinese guards compromised when the Indian soldiers snatched away guns and weapons from them. At the national level,

Mao Zedong and other leaders too exercised restraint. Zhou Enlai wrote three letters, one after the other, to Nehru, hoping Nehru too will rein in his troops and will choose China-India friendship in resolving the border conflict in the spirit of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and will not resort to further attacks. However, India insisted on unilateral action, treating the Chinese government's show of restraint and tolerance as signs of weakness, and persisted with bullying China and expanding the Indian attack.

Furthermore, Nehru even threatened to "wipe off" the Chinese army in less than a week. Mao Zedong could not take this anymore and summoned Comrade Zhang Guohua, commander of the Tibet Military Zone, who was at the time preparing to return to Tibet to take command of the battlefield.

Mao Zedong, who all his life had loved to be in tough situations, on hearing that Nehru had dared China, took Zhang Guohua into a big hall where there was a huge military map spread over a table and pointed at the Indian stronghold positions marked on the map. Mao then suddenly waved his hand in the air and said loudly: "Finish them off!"

Army Chief of Staff Luo Ruiqing, who was also present in the room, asked Zhang Guohua: "Are you sure of a win?"

Zhang Guohua replied: "I am."

"Why sure?"

Zhang Guohua replied: "Our enemy is the Indian elite forces, such as the Seventh Brigade of the Fourth Infantry, but inferior to Jiang Jieshi's main army. They (the Indian elite forces) have not fought in a long time, we have just put down the counterinsurgency in Tibet; they have no experience in high mountains, but we often live in high mountains; their training just cannot match ours."

Thus, on October 17, the Central Military Commission issued the "Combat Order to Annihilate the Invading Indian Army," and the war was officially launched.

In just over a month, Zhang Guohua led two main attacks and several sporadic battles and emerged victorious.

Fighting the enemy, including the Indian ace Brigadier Dalvi and Brigadier Singh, the Chinese forces killed and captured more than 7,000 Indian soldiers. Chinese combat troops also paid a price and lost 1,460 soldiers.

What is more important is China gained combat experience during the peace era. After the border war, several "war battle backbones" were transferred to other battalions. In 1963, on the recommendations of Mao, Zhang

Guohua recruited 12 company platoon leaders who had fought bravely, for the Central Guard Regiment.

Mao's Conclusion on the self-defence counter attack against India: "Shaking the mountain is easier, shaking PLA is not!"

The reality of war shattered Nehru's dream. The Chinese forces drove the Indian army out of the Chinese territory in a mere 30 days. In the Sino-Indian border war, besides defeating the Indian expansionist aggression militarily, the Chinese government also scored a political victory. In the battle, Mao showed a high degree of political wisdom.

History has fully proved Mao's foresight and vision. It has been fifty years since the war broke out in 1962, and the Sino-Indian border has remained largely stable. Without the decisive Chinese victory, such a stable border situation as well as such long-term peaceful border would have been impossible to achieve.

These achievements are inseparable from the heroism of the PLA soldiers. Chief of Staff, Commander Luo Ruiqing, while submitting his general report to Mao, emphasised on the driving spirit of the troops and said that the PLA troops are "Neither afraid of hardships,

nor afraid of death." To which, Mao gave a philosophical reply: "Yue Fei* had said, when civilians don't ask for a bribe and military officials are not afraid to die, the world is peaceful." "Starve to death without snatching others food, freeze to death without tearing down others homes," these lines are superficial. To which, Jin Wuzhu*** said: "Shaking the mountain is easy, but shaking the Yue family is difficult." To this, I would say: "**Shaking the mountain is easier, shaking PLA is not!**"

Notes

*From translator's pen.

** **Yue Fei** (pronounced Yweh-Fay) is one of China's most celebrated generals. Born at the end of the Northern Song Dynasty, **Yue Fei** (1103–1142 C.E.) was known not only for his military successes, but also for his high ethical standards.

***Wuzhu, also known by his sinicised name Wanyan Zongbi, or Jin Wuzhu, was a prince, military general and civil minister of the Jurchen-led Jin dynasty, which ruled northern China from 1115 to 1234. He was the fourth son of Aguda, the founder and first emperor of the Jin dynasty.

The views expressed here are those of the translator and not necessarily of the Institute of Chinese Studies

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INSTITUTE OF CHINESE STUDIES

8/17, Sri Ram Road, Civil Lines,
Delhi 110054, INDIA
T: +91 (0) 11 2393 8202
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