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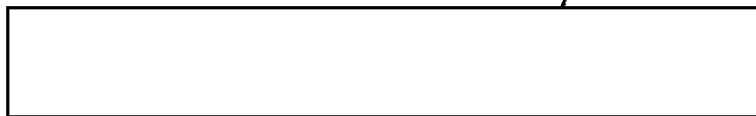
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

7 May 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

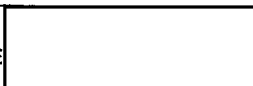
SUBJECT: Likely Developments in the
Sino-Indian Border Dispute

Attached is the memorandum on the Sino-Indian border dispute requested by the White House. This memorandum has been prepared with the assistance and concurrence of representatives of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research and, we are informed, has been reviewed by Mr. Hilsman in draft. The memorandum has also been reviewed by a DIA representative.



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SHERMAN KENT
Assistant Director
National Estimates

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Likely Developments in the Sino-Indian Border Dispute

SUMMARY

Since there are important limitations on the will and ability of both India and Communist China to pursue their border dispute, the odds are strongly against a major military escalation. Nevertheless, the extent to which both sides have committed their prestige makes small-scale clashes likely, and the political and psychological stakes involved may progressively increase, making it harder for either side to back down.

If the dispute worsens, India will probably seek additional military equipment from both the USSR and the West, looking also to the latter for help in keeping Pakistan off its back and for additional economic aid. Intensification of the border dispute will

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pose a particular dilemma for the USSR, which must balance the risks of further splitting the Bloc against the dangers of alienating India. However, it will also pose problems for the US, which cannot give major military aid to India without risking adverse reactions from Pakistan and possibly other allies. India's troubles with Communist China are unlikely to improve the chances of a Kashmir settlement.

MEMORANDUM

1. The current flare-up in the Sino-Indian dispute was touched off by recent Indian forward movements into the disputed border area of Ladakh. Indian troops reportedly have already occupied one outpost and have orders to take a larger one several miles beyond. Peiping has protested the Indian moves strongly, demanding immediate withdrawal and stating that it will forcefully defend the positions it now holds. Nehru has announced in Parliament that India must continue to protect its interests in the Himalayan border area, preparing for the contingency of war with China.

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THE INDIAN POSITION

2. Preservation of Indian territorial and political interests in the Himalayan area has long been a fundamental aspect of Nehru's policy. Originally, he pinned his hopes on amicable relations with Peiping under the "Panch Shila" ("Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence") umbrella. However, since 1954 there have been continued Chinese incursions into Indian-claimed territory. In 1959 Peiping brutally suppressed the Tibetan revolt and thereafter increased its efforts to extend its influence in the border states of Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal. India's belief in 1960 that there was a tacit understanding to maintain the status quo was shattered by further Chinese encroachments in 1961. All these events convinced Nehru and most informed Indians that their interests cannot be protected without a demonstrated willingness to use force in their defense.

3. India probably does not really expect to make good its claims to all the territory in Ladakh which it asserts it inherited from the British. The Aksai Chin plateau area in eastern Ladakh is much more useful and accessible to China than to India, and Peiping as long ago as 1957 completed a road across it connecting Tibet and Sinkiang. What the Indians are interested in

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is establishing a posture of military strength and a pattern of occupation which will enable them to prevent further Chinese expansion and leave them in a favorable negotiating position for a settlement of a wide range of border questions. To this end, they are trying to push back Chinese incursions which they feel tend to expand the limits of the disputed area.

4. Nevertheless, the border question is a deadly serious one in India today. New Delhi is convinced that failure to maintain actively Indian claims to any of the disputed areas would endanger the country's security by calling into question the validity of the entire border inherited from the British. Public opinion is aroused. Nehru's prestige has been committed, and a long-term military buildup for defense of the border is underway. From the Indian viewpoint, the present is an unusually favorable time to assert its interests: Communist China is undergoing severe internal difficulties; Chinese-Soviet relations are strained; and the USSR has refused to support Peiping in the border quarrel and has proved willing to provide New Delhi with military equipment. In addition, New Delhi probably believes that the West can be counted upon to approve Indian actions, and if it becomes necessary, to provide direct support.

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THE CHINESE POSITION

5. The dispute with India is also of great importance to Communist China. Peiping maintains that India's claims in the Himalayan areas are based on unequal treaties forced upon a helpless China in the colonialist past. Its control of the Aksai Chin area is important to secure its position in Western Tibet. In its view withdrawal would jeopardize this objective and be damaging to its prestige.

6. The Tibetan revolt and subsequent border clashes with India severely damaged the image that Peiping has tried to create of a powerful but basically benevolent leader of Asia. To repair the damage -- without endangering its strategic interests -- Peiping demonstrated considerable cooperativeness in reaching border agreements with Burma (1960) and Nepal (1961) and continued to urge negotiations on India. In the face of India's uncompromising stance, this tactic made little progress.

7. Recent Indian moves in Ladakh have clearly stiffened Peiping's determination to defend its position. In its 30 April note to New Delhi, Peiping stated that Chinese troops had been ordered to resume border patrols in the Ladakh area (which it

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claimed had been halted two years ago) and threatened to resume patrolling along the entire frontier. On 3 May, China and Pakistan jointly announced agreement to negotiate a provisional delimitation of the frontier between Sinkiang and Pakistan, including Pakistani-occupied Kashmir -- a move which will almost certainly further embitter Sino-Indian as well as Indo-Pakistani relations.

THE MILITARY SITUATION

8. The Sino-Indian border region is difficult of access and poorly suited for large or prolonged operations. Throughout the year, but especially in the winter, the maintenance of even small outposts, many at an elevation of over 16,000 feet, is extremely difficult for both sides. Although it has longer supply lines, Communist China in general has easier ground access to the disputed area than does India. In the past few years the Chinese have also improved their capacity for shifting troops from one point to another by developing a route usable by trucks which parallels most of the border, while the approaches from the Indian side, over even rougher terrain, are for the most part still mere trails which approach the border at right angles.

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Especially in the Aksai Chin area, Indian supplies must move through a few high passes. Both sides depend heavily on pack animals for supply. The Indians have also used airdrop.

9. Major Indian troop concentrations along the border are in three widely separated areas: (a) the Ladakh region of Kashmir; (b) Sikkin; and (c) the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). India has 13 infantry brigades in Kashmir but 11 are deployed westward to defend and police the cease-fire line with Pakistan. Indian forces in Ladakh -- operating in units of company size or less -- are supplied as far as Leh via an overland route which is open most of the year, but aircraft and animals must supplement motor transport. The one understrength infantry division and several local rifle battalions located in NEFA must be supplied the same way. India's road net is much more adequate to support its reinforced brigade group in Sikkin.

10. There are about 110,000 Chinese Communist troops in Tibet, approximately double the number stationed there before the 1959 rebellion. We know their disposition only in general terms; probably about 40,000 in eastern Tibet, about 48,000 in and around Lhasa, and about 20,000 along the Nepalese border. There are also an estimated 34,000 troops in Sinkiang, most of which are

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in the northern and eastern parts of the province. The Indians estimate that there are about 2,800 in the Aksai Chin area of Ladakh, with an additional 7,000 reserves within 180 miles. There are two main access roads: Yarkand-Gartok, and Galmo-Lhasa. The latter apparently carries most of the supplies for the military units in Tibet. East-West roads within Tibet and connecting roads with Nepal are also under construction.

11. Communist China's pressing economic problems sharply limit its resupply and reinforcement capabilities in the Indian border area. Maintaining its present forces in Tibet severely taxes its logistic capabilities. It has neither the motor transport nor POL for any sizable expansion of its present effort. Lack of developed air facilities in the area and the extreme length of Chinese supply lines limit Peiping's air capability, particularly for combat operations.

PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS

12. Despite the important national interests involved and the vigor with which both China and India are now pushing their positions, there are a number of major factors which will make both sides cautious in escalating the tempo of their quarrel.

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The Indians are not confident that they have the resources to cope with Chinese military power if any significant escalation takes place. The Chinese are aware that the dispute has earned them widespread criticism within the Bloc, and they probably are reluctant to intensify the conflict, particularly in Ladakh where they already occupy the contested territory. Furthermore, the nature of the terrain involved in the dispute means that the support of even relatively small military operations would involve a considerable burden on economies already under heavy strain. In addition, intensification of the border dispute could limit the ability of both Peiping and New Delhi to deal with other problems of more immediate importance.

13. Nevertheless, further clashes are likely, particularly in the Aksai Chin area. Both sides have already committed their prestige, and India has ordered 1,800 additional troops into the Ladakh area; Peiping will probably feel compelled to reply in kind. Clashes could also occur elsewhere along the border. We believe that patrol actions and relatively small-scale encounters -- possibly accompanied by occasional minor air clashes -- are more likely than pitched battles above, say, the company level. Nevertheless, as increasing numbers of troops come into contact

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the chances of miscalculation or overzealous action by local commanders will grow. Although the odds are strongly against major escalation of the military conflict, the political and psychological stakes involved in even relatively small-scale actions may progressively increase, making it harder for either side to back down.

14. In the political field, both India and Communist China are likely to step up their efforts to expand their influence in the Himalayan border states. Since Indian dominance is already established in Sikkim, there is probably little that Peiping can do there. India's position in Bhutan is less well established, but China will have to move cautiously lest its efforts cause Bhutan to increase its reliance on India as it did after Peiping's suppression of the Tibetan revolt. Although India also retains an important influence in Nepal, its unwillingness to suppress the activities of Nepali opposition leaders in India has caused King Mahendra to welcome closer relations with Peiping. As long as his problems with India remain unresolved, he will remain susceptible to a wide range of Chinese overtures.

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15. While both New Delhi and Peiping feel compelled to make a show of strength, both would prefer to achieve their aims without large-scale resort to force. In time, the emphasis in the dispute may shift to negotiations, particularly if a period of quiet on the border allows Indian public opinion to cool off. Peiping has already indicated that it would abandon its claims to NEFA in return for Indian recognition of Chinese claims in Ladakh -- a compromise which Nehru has spurned to date. Nehru, in turn, at one time suggested that India might be willing to allow Communist China continued use of the road it had built across the Aksai Chin plateau if residual Indian sovereignty there were recognized. While he later withdrew this suggestion, he almost certainly remains aware that Peiping, barring a complete domestic collapse, will not agree to abandon its position in Ladakh. However, it is unlikely that any real settlement would come out of such negotiations -- at least for the next several years.

BROADER IMPLICATIONS

16. As long as Communist Chinese military pressures on the frontier continues, India will seek military items on a

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selective basis from both East and West, seeking to maintain its nonaligned position. On the long held Indian theory that the USSR is in a better position to restrain Peiping than is the West, India initially at least may tend to look for support more to Moscow than to Washington, looking to the latter rather for help in keeping Pakistan off its back and for increased economic support to make up for local resources diverted to military purposes.

Implications for the USSR

17. The Sino-Indian border clashes pose a particular dilemma for the Soviet Union. If it goes too far in supporting India, it will seriously exacerbate the Sino-Soviet dispute, possibly to the point of an open split; if it refuses India's requests for aid (e.g., MIG-21's and other military equipment) it risks turning the leading neutralist power against it, destroying the influence it has spent hundreds of millions of aid dollars to establish, and weakening its influence in the entire Afro-Asian "neutralist" world. The Indians, by publicizing their current efforts to get military equipment from the USSR, have spotlighted Moscow's embarrassing situation. In the past Moscow has privately pressured Peiping to come to

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an amicable settlement of the border issue, while furnishing aid to India, including military equipment which has been used by the border forces. It has refused to take sides publicly in the Sino-Indian dispute, and it will make every effort to maintain this position.

Implications for the US

18. Continuation or intensification of the Sino-Indian border dispute would probably pose less of a problem for the US than for the USSR but would still involve some potential difficulties. The Indian defense budget has already been increased from \$561,000,000 to \$730,000,000 since development of the dispute in 1959 and further increases are likely. Such diversions of Indian resources to defense purposes will tend to inhibit progress in the development of the Indian economy and might lead to pressing Indian requests for compensating US economic support. With respect to military aid, the US cannot allow the USSR to assume the principal burden of helping India without giving the Soviets important advantages; on the other hand, the US cannot provide major assistance to India without risking strong protests from Pakistan and perhaps other allies.

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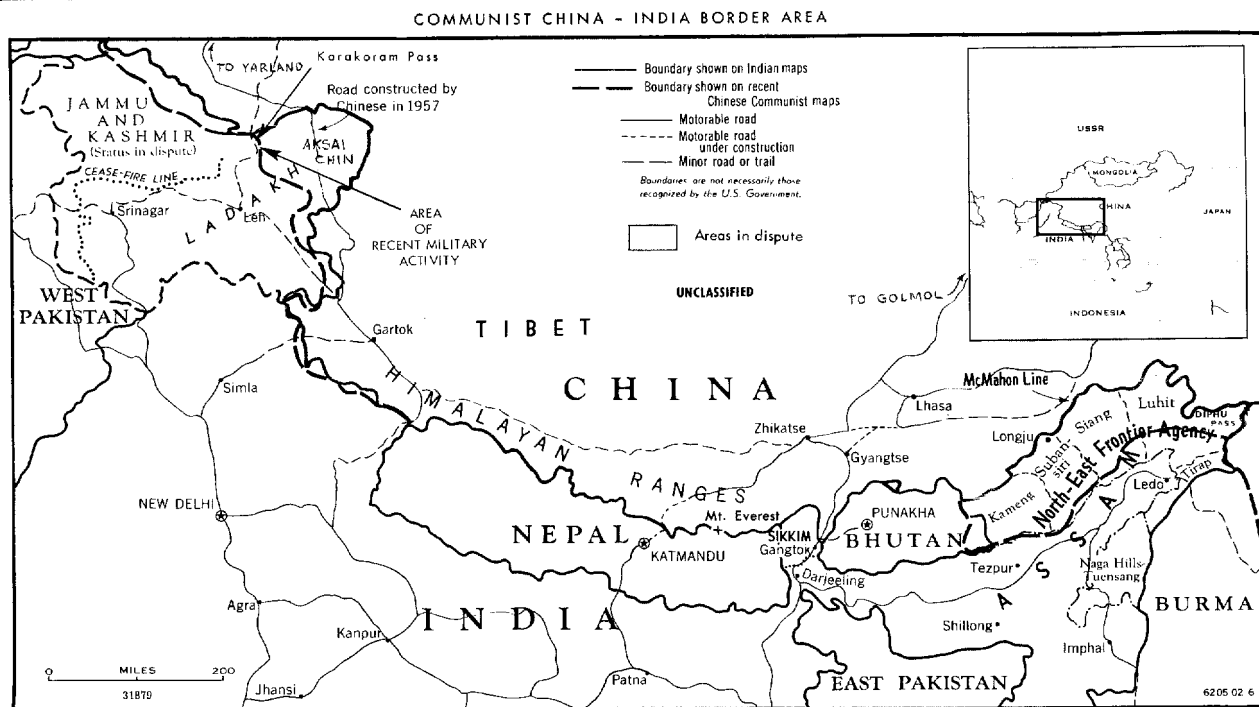
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19. Pakistan will seek to exploit India's troubles with Communist China by propaganda and diplomatic efforts and perhaps by increased subversive activities in Kashmir. It is unlikely to undertake military action. It will almost certainly resist any restraining US efforts, and will be unwilling, except on conditions unacceptable to India, to undertake military redeployments or other actions which would make it easier for India to concentrate military forces against China. India's troubles with China are unlikely to make either India or Pakistan significantly more amenable to a compromise solution of the Kashmir issue, at least for some time to come.

20. Over the longer run, heavy Chinese Communist pressures against India's borders might conceivably make India somewhat less resistant to an accommodation with Pakistan and less firmly committed to a nonaligned position, particularly if the USSR felt constrained to limit its support for India's position. In the event of major military reverses, New Delhi would almost certainly seek US military support, perhaps within a UN context. On the whole, however, we consider it unlikely that the border dispute will bring about any major shift from India's policy of nonalignment.

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additional maps attached to DCI, DDCI, CES,
and AD/NE file copies.