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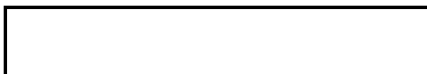


Research Study

Chinese-Indian Relations: 1972-1975

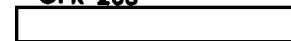
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
OFFICE OF POLITICAL RESEARCH

September 1975

CHINESE-INDIAN RELATIONS: 1972-1975

The study and its conclusions rest on an extensive body of data, which is available in a detailed annex. This annex will be provided to interested persons on request to the author, [redacted]

[redacted] also welcomes comments on the study.

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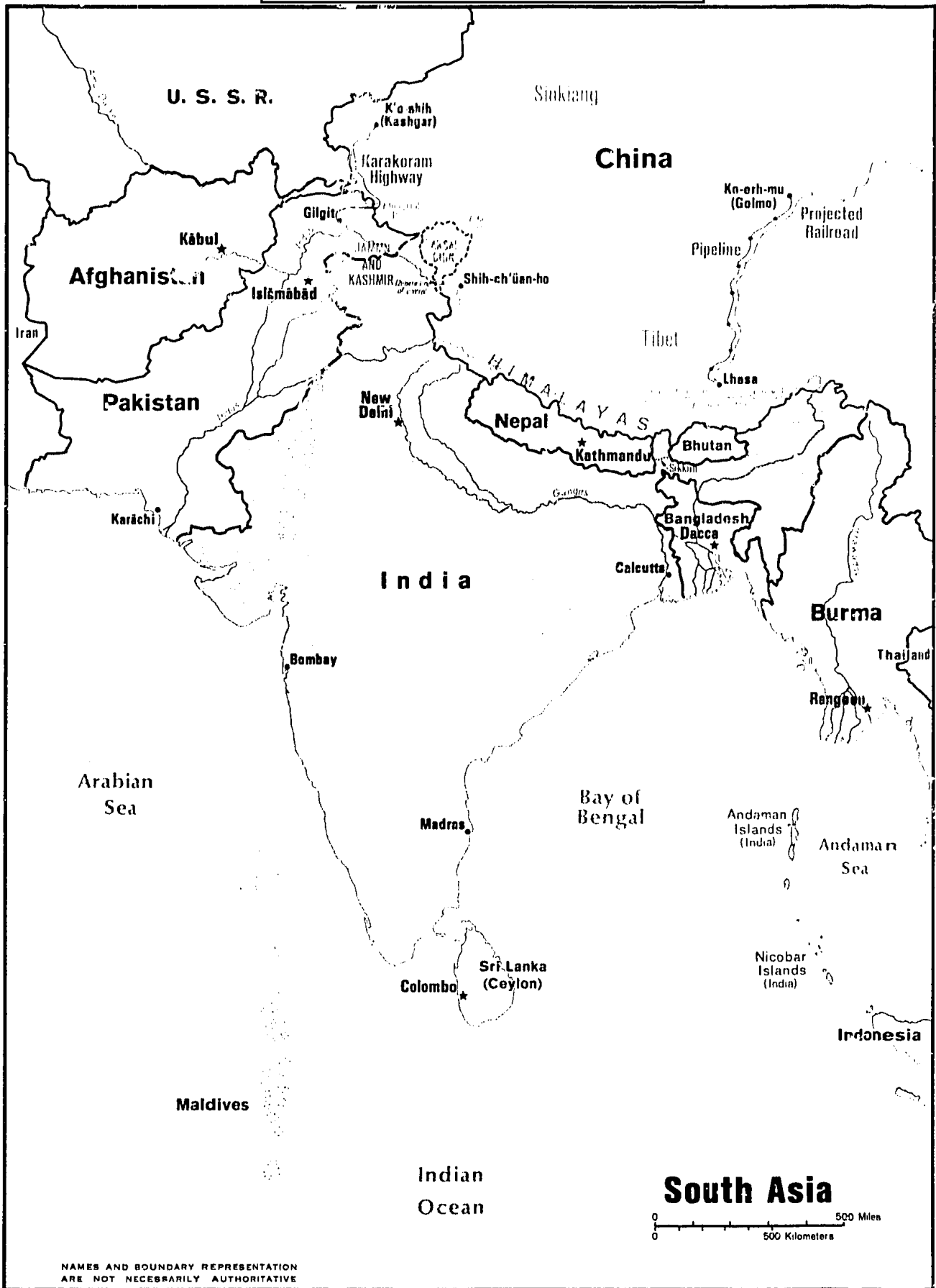
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NAMES AND BOUNDARY REPRESENTATION ARE NOT NECESSARILY AUTHORITATIVE

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PRINCIPAL JUDGMENTS

In Peking's strategic view, South Asia and the adjacent Indian Ocean comprise an area in which Soviet political and military penetration might significantly endanger China's national security interests. The Chinese in recent years have tried to impede this penetration, mainly by seeking a detente with New Delhi, but India, China's chief political champion in the 1950s, is now a major opponent and the incumbent Prime Minister is unwilling to change that position. Peking's ability to influence events in the area depends primarily on the state of its relations with New Delhi, and, as those relations have deteriorated, so has Peking's influence.

Peking's decline in influence has taken place in stages ever since New Delhi's genuine goodwill was converted to fear and hostility by the Chinese attack on Indian forces in 1962. Subsequent Chinese support of Pakistan against India has further alienated India. The USSR has been able to exploit India's hostility to Peking (as well as to Pakistan), and the Chinese are now playing a weak hand in an area where India is the paramount power.

The Chinese apparently have misjudged the strength of aversion to China in Mrs. Gandhi's thinking. Their high-profile and almost pathetic initiatives designed to court her goodwill in early 1975 were rebuffed. The rebuff seems to have been the result of Mrs. Gandhi's calculations that:

- New Delhi's security interests are well served by China's number one enemy, the Soviet Union—while the Chinese have nothing much to offer India.
- She cannot afford to annoy the USSR, India's main source of military aid and political support in international affairs.
- If the Chinese really desire detente, they will begin by returning the Aksai Chin area of India's northwest which they occupied in the 1950s.

While desiring detente, the Chinese are trapped by Mao's insistence that any government hopeful of improving relations with China must be the first to send its ambassador. Mrs. Gandhi almost certainly will not accept this demeaning demand, and the Chinese almost certainly will not withdraw their demand while Mao lives. Thus neither the Indians nor the Chinese will make the key symbolic gesture necessary to show that a slight improvement in relations has occurred. The stalemate probably will continue for the near future.

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The Sino-Indian border dispute is a part of the larger clash of interests along the Himalayas, where each side fears an extension of the influence of its adversary:

- Following China's attack on Indian forces in 1962, its more recent efforts to improve its strategic position in Tibet by building a pipeline, resurfacing of a major road, and conducting surveys for a prospective railroad apparently have added to New Delhi's concern about a threat from the north.
- New Delhi, for its part, has increased Peking's concern about ultimate Indian intentions by its explosion of a nuclear device and annexation of Sikkim.

In the Himalayas, Indian-Chinese rivalry is likely to center on Nepal in the near future. The Chinese undoubtedly will sustain their political and economic support of Kathmandu, unwilling to regard Indian policy toward Nepal as permanently benign. The Indians, however, do not seem to be motivated by any desire to move militarily against Nepal.

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This restraint should hold unless and until that mountain kingdom is about to be dominated by China.

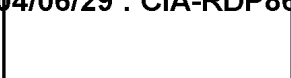
Peking is unlikely in the near future to take direct military action to aid any South Asian nation, including Pakistan, against an Indian attack. The Chinese probably will continue to operate on the principle, as they operated during India's clashes with Pakistan and its annexation of Sikkim, to avoid direct military engagements in situations where Chinese national security interests are not directly involved.

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Mrs. Gandhi's recent imposition of a harsh authoritarian regime has created no new opportunities for the Chinese. Although they initially were delighted by her self-incriminating action, which "proved" that Peking had been right to publicly criticize her, they now are confronted with the problem of trying to determine the long-range implications of her new political position. The behavior of the Chinese suggests that:

- They probably will keep their support of anti-government insurgents (mainly Nagas) at a low level of intensity.
- And they are unlikely to support her major political opponents materially.

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- They probably will not give up entirely on Mrs. Gandhi and may *hope* that, having suppressed her opponents, she will desire a limited improvement of Sino-Indian relations. Such a hope would be fueled by any dispute which might arise with Moscow over Soviet military and economic aid to India.
 - They probably will keep the Sino-Indian border quiet, in the hope that India will eventually accept the status quo as permanent.

The Chinese probably have mixed feelings about a possible breakup of India. On the one hand, the Chinese might welcome the balkanization of a major unfriendly power on its southern border. On the other hand, the disintegration of India as a single political state probably would afford the Soviets an opportunity to negotiate with one or more of the weaker, fragmented states and, conceivably, to attain base rights. On balance, the Chinese probably hope that India will remain united—with a government more responsive to Chinese overtures and less wedded to alliance with the USSR, regardless of whether the regime is to be more or less authoritarian, rightist or leftist.

For the near future, the Chinese strategy probably will be centered on the following:

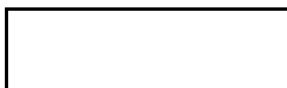
- Sustaining good relations with Nepal and Sri Lanka, while exploiting, as much as possible, their fear of domination by India.
- Sustaining efforts to reduce tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan (as an indirect way of combating the increase of Soviet influence in the former).
- Sustaining a working relationship with Pakistan, but avoiding a closer relationship. The Islamabad tie has liabilities as well as benefits for Peking. However, the Chinese probably would react quickly with assurances of increased support if Islamabad were to respond to Moscow's suggestions that Pakistan accept Soviet military equipment.

Thus Chinese strategy will be centered on impeding the spread of Soviet influence in South Asia. Peking almost certainly will continue to encourage, privately, any sign of increased US interest in South Asia and the Indian Ocean area. Quiet support for the US decision to lift the arms embargo in Pakistan and to expand the base at Diego Garcia almost certainly will be sustained.

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Peking's policy will rest on a *hope* that some turn of events in Indian domestic politics or a downturn of Indian-Soviet relations will open the way to Indian-Chinese detente. But the Chinese hand will remain weak, and, no matter how well Peking plays it, will probably be a losing one.

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DISCUSSION

I. SETTING

The importance of South Asia to China is great, if only because the area contains the only large, populous, non-Communist states directly bordering on the People's Republic. Adding to this importance is South Asia's location next door to Tibet, a province in which most of the population is non-Chinese and where there was an anti-Chinese rebellion in 1958-60. Although Indian Prime Minister Nehru in 1954 renounced the special consular rights in Tibet which his government had inherited from the British, the Chinese have remained suspicious about Indian intentions there.

Chinese attitudes toward developments in South Asia have passed through several stages since the Communist triumph in 1949.

From 1949 to 1953 Sino-Indian relations were generally cordial, although periodically spoiled by Peking's actions in Tibet. Nehru's renunciation of Indian privileges in Tibet, apparently resolved this issue, however, and 1954 proved to be a banner year for Sino-Indian cordiality. In June Premier Chou En-lai visited New Delhi and reaffirmed China's acceptance of the "Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence"—one of Nehru's favorite international themes. Later in 1954 Nehru visited Peking. By the time of the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung in April 1955, China's post-Korean war policy of peaceful co-existence was in full swing and good Sino-Indian relations were in full bloom.

This period of goodwill, however, was destined for an early decline. Events in Tibet, and Nehru's increasing interest in improving Indian relations with the USSR, laid the ground-work for the deterioration. Despite Chou En-lai's repeated assurances to Nehru that China would respect the autonomy of Tibet and the position of the Dalai Lama, Peking was tightening its grip on the province. Tribal revolts against Chinese rule sprang up, culminating in the uprising of 1959, which the Chinese harshly repressed. India's grant of asylum to the fleeing Dalai Lama added to the worsening atmosphere of Sino-Indian relations.

Conflicting territorial claims in the Himalayas between China and India were transformed from a back-burner issue into military hostilities; this transfor-

mation put an end to Nehru's hopeful policy of good relations with China. Nehru's disillusion with the leadership in Peking was complete and bitter. In later years his daughter was to allege to an Indian journalist that China's "treachery" was responsible for her father's death.

Increased hostility in Sino-Indian relations coincided with the deepening of China's hostility to the USSR, and these developments soon became intertwined. As the USSR replaced the US as Peking's main enemy, China's policy in South Asia became increasingly oriented toward combating the spread of Soviet influence. China's victory over India, however, guaranteed that Peking would be forced to deal with events in South Asia at a great initial disadvantage. Peking's evolution into the major ally of Pakistan—India's traditional enemy—while useful to Peking, could not repair the damage done by making an enemy of the largest, most powerful state on the subcontinent.

New Delhi sought support against China from outside South Asia, first from both superpowers, but in later years increasingly from the USSR. In August 1971, India gave more formal shape to its special relationship with the USSR by concluding a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Moscow. In later years Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was to explain this development by remarking that if the Chinese perceived India to be in the lap of the USSR, the Chinese should remember that it was they who had put India there.

The conclusion of the Indian-Soviet treaty, however, did not lead the Chinese to abandon all hope of early improvement in relations with India. In point of fact, Peking and New Delhi began talks looking to the restoration of ambassadorial relations in mid-to-late August 1971, after the conclusion of the Indian-Soviet treaty.* The serious deterioration of Indian-Pakistani relations was perceived by the Chinese as

*Sino-Indian relations have remained at charge d'affaires level since 1962. Their restoration to the ambassadorial level has considerable symbolic importance as a public manifestation of Sino-Indian detente. The level of interest on either side in an exchange of ambassadors serves as a rough index of the desire to seek detente at any particular moment.

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opening the way to a major influx of Soviet military aid to India—a development Peking was determined to slow down. Peking may also have hoped that the prospect of better relations might induce the Indians to exercise restraint in their dealings with Pakistan. For its part, New Delhi hoped that improved Sino-Indian relations might reduce the likelihood of Chinese intervention in case of an Indian-Pakistani war over East Pakistan.

This is not to say that the Chinese accepted the Indo-Soviet Treaty with equanimity. They viewed it as essentially a politico-military agreement aimed at China fully as much as at Pakistan—to reinsure against eventual Chinese military intervention in behalf of Pakistan.

Any chance for quick improvement in Sino-Indian relations was lost in the Indian-Pakistani war of December 1971. India's invasion of East Pakistan occasioned the harshest Chinese public criticism of India in nearly two years. Reaching into recent history for comparison, the Chinese press accused India of seeking to create a Manchukuo-like puppet state in East Pakistan. But caustic verbal attacks on India and the USSR and the provision of political support, particularly in the UN, marked the limit of China's aid for Pakistan in December 1971.

In fact, the Chinese did much less for Pakistan in 1971 than they had done during the Indian-Pakistani war of 1965. This time the Chinese avoided diversionary actions on the Indian-Chinese border. In contrast to 1965, they kept their border patrolling down, avoided moving bombers into Tibet, and made only pro forma protests of alleged Indian violations well after the event. In this way, the Chinese reduced any Indian concern about Chinese intervention—concern which, the Chinese reasoned, might induce New Delhi to allow the Soviets an enlarged role in South Asia.

Pakistan's defeat and dismemberment by India left Peking in an even weaker position in South Asia than it held prior to December 1971. India had emerged from the war the predominant power in South Asia. This setback to China's policy, however, did not basically alter the decision reached in 1970 to seek improvement in relations with India. The path to effective political influence in South Asia lay through New Delhi, not Islamabad. But China's weak hand in the area did not bode well for an easy improvement. Aside from a settlement of the border issue—an unlikely possibility—Peking had little to offer to any Indian government and to an Indira Gandhi emotionally hostile to China and in the full-flush of self-confidence brought by victory.

II. CHINA'S POST-WAR TACTICS 25X1 25X1

After Pakistan's defeat by India, Peking's first priority in South Asia was to bolster Pakistan's weak negotiating position and to recoup what it could from the setback to Chinese interests. In doing so Peking evolved a cluster of tactics designed to aid Pakistan—still its major ally in the region—without closing the door on eventually improving relations with India. Implicit in the whole Chinese effort was Peking's concern with what it saw as continued Soviet efforts to build a loose cordon sanitaire around China.

the Chinese made clear that they intended to maintain their support for Pakistan in roughly the same proportions and on the same level as previously. Chinese support would continue to include diplomatic and limited economic and military aid, but not an all-out commitment to defend Pakistan militarily, nor markedly to upgrade Pakistan's military capabilities. In part this carefully calculated support sprung from Peking's inability to supply the military equipment and economic aid necessary to make Pakistan a match for India. A further reason, however, was a desire to avoid further embroiling Chinese-Indian relations by sharply increasing China's commitment to Pakistan. After helping to replace equipment lost in the 1971 war, Peking limited itself to supplying relatively moderate amounts of the same type of equipment it

supplied previously—ammunition, artillery, naval patrol craft, and medium tanks. Nothing in the post-1971 aid package could drastically alter the military balance in South Asia.

The Chinese also agreed to Pakistan's request for additional aid in building the Karakorum highway between Sinkiang and Pakistani Kashmir. By 1975, about 30,000 Chinese engineering troops were pushing the highway south toward the Indus River. The military usefulness of the highway is limited, however, by problems of terrain and climate. From China's point of view, its value may be that it allows continuation of a Chinese presence in a sensitive, although remote, area.

As China slowly made good on its military aid commitments, after 1972 the focus of Peking's program appeared to switch to supporting Pakistan's efforts to build its own defense industry. So far, however, China's pledge, given in January 1973, to provide all possible assistance to Pakistan's effort to become more self-sufficient in military production, has proven to be mainly talk.



25X1 The economic aid advanced during the Bhutto visit was even more form than substance, consisting of relief from repayment of previous loans rather than new credit. The joint communique summing up Bhutto's visit supported Pakistan, but also put China on record as favoring eventual good relations with India.

Having made the necessary gestures of support for Pakistan, the Chinese quickly pursued a second element in their strategy—playing off India's other neighbors against it. During 1972, the Chinese took advantage of state visits by high-ranking officials from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal to amplify this campaign.

25X1 The visit of Afghan Foreign Minister Shafiq to Peking in April 1972 was particularly important to Peking.

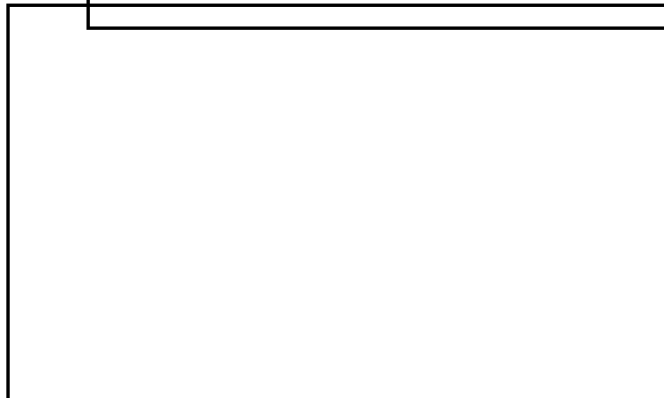
The Chinese were eager to sound out Afghan intentions concerning Kabul's nationality dispute with Pakistan. Whatever assurance Shafiq may have given the Chinese, the leadership in Peking remained uneasy over the potentially troublesome issue of Afghan-Pakistani relations. This concern proved to be well founded—the coup in Kabul in July 1973 which returned former Prime Minister Daud to power was quickly followed by heightened tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan over the status of the Pushtuns and Baluchis within Pakistan. As the Chinese feared, this turn of events led to closer Afghan relations with the USSR, already a major foreign influence in Kabul.

Peking's renewed interest in contacts with the government of Bhutan after the autumn of 1971 carried a double meaning. Not only was it meant to explore the possible benefits to China of increasing Bhutanese restlessness under Indian tutelage, but also to demonstrate, albeit in a low-key way, China's interest in preserving the status of Bhutan as a buffer between China and India. All three sides—China, India, and Bhutan—acted with restraint in dealing with the attendance of a Chinese diplomat at the coronation of the King of Bhutan in June 1974. The Chinese press briefly publicized the event and made its point by praising the new ruler for adapting the goals of sovereignty and self-reliance. The Bhutanese, in no position to alienate their Indian big brother, played their new Chinese connection very lightly. The Indians, while disgruntled at the Bhutanese invitation to the Chinese, apparently believed that their hold on the small mountain kingdom—which includes responsibility for defense—was secure enough to let the incident pass.

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A third major element in Peking's political strategy toward South Asia was the attempt to use the US to counter-balance Moscow's improved position in the area.



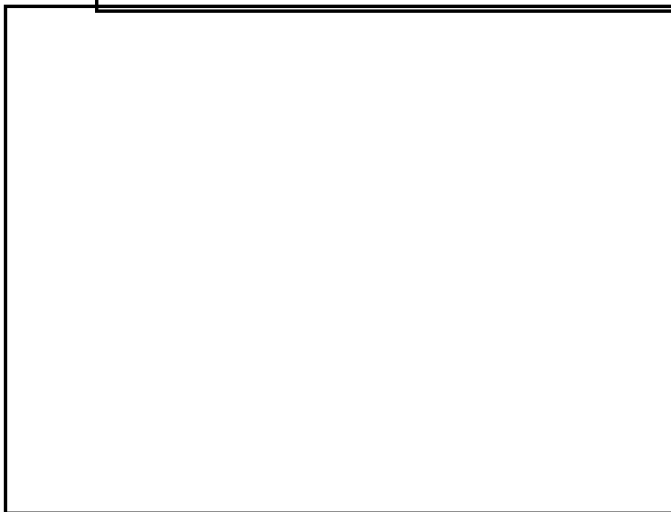
III. THE LONG ROAD TO DETENTE

Having settled on the basic elements of its postwar strategy in South Asia, China proceeded to combine them in order to achieve its immediate objective—international stability in the region. A major prerequisite for stability—and for creating an atmosphere hospitable to improvement in Sino-Indian relations—was the settlement of outstanding issues between India and Pakistan. Although Peking's ability to influence developments in South Asia was quite limited, it did what it could to change the still highly charged atmosphere there by encouraging Pakistan to hold direct talks with India to settle major differences. Given Peking's principal goal in South Asia—the limitation of Soviet influence through development of a stable regional order—it is not surprising that China welcomed the results of the Simla Conference of mid-1972 between President Bhutto and Prime Minister Gandhi. Throughout the ensuing slow process of normalization of Indian-Pakistani relations, China greeted each step with approval.

Improvement in Indian-Pakistani relations allowed Peking to make a number of small gestures of friendship toward India, such as sending a higher-ranking chargé to head the Chinese embassy. Most significantly, Peking reacted with restraint toward India's takeover of the administration in Sikkim in April 1973.

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The urgency at this time of Peking's desire further to improve relations with India probably originated in Chinese concern over what it regarded as Soviet gains in Afghanistan. The coup there which brought Daud to power in July 1973 raised the spectre of the further disintegration of Pakistan. By mid-October 1973 Chou

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En-lai was telling a visiting foreign dignitary that the USSR intended to unite the Baluchi areas of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran to form an independent state amenable to Soviet influence, which ultimately would provide the USSR with access to the Indian Ocean.

China's suspicions regarding the increasing Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean had been growing for some time. Soviet political gains in South Asia after 1970, followed by the oil crisis which accompanied the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, added to Peking's concern over the USSR's growing power in the Indian Ocean. The Arabs' use of the "oil weapon," while later endorsed by Peking, emphasized the vulnerability of Western Europe and Japan to disruption of fuel supplies from the Middle East. In addition to fear of "Soviet encirclement," the Chinese became concerned that the USSR was attempting to increase its military presence in and around the Indian Ocean in order to increase its potential to put pressure on the US, Japan, and Europe in the event of future crises.

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As Chinese propaganda criticized superpower rivalry in the Indian Ocean as a contest for hegemony, Chinese comments took on an increasingly anti-Soviet slant. In early January 1974, a Chinese Communist newspaper official in Hong Kong described US plans for the expansion of military facilities on the island of Diego Garcia as a wise move, necessary to counter the USSR.

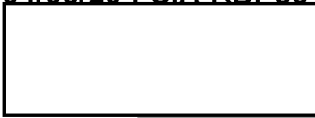


In starting a process of detente with India, however, Peking still faced the obstacle of India's retention of 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war, some of whom were wanted by the new government of Bangladesh for war crimes trials. Peking, therefore, welcomed the agreement reached on 28 August 1973 by India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh for the release of the POWs, even though the agreement did not settle the fate of the 195 POWs wanted for war crimes trials.

The POW issue also played an important role in Peking's decision not to recognize the new regime in Bangladesh. China had justified its veto of Dacca's application for membership in the UN on precisely this issue and threatened to repeat the veto until all the prisoners, including the 195 "war criminals," were returned to Pakistan.

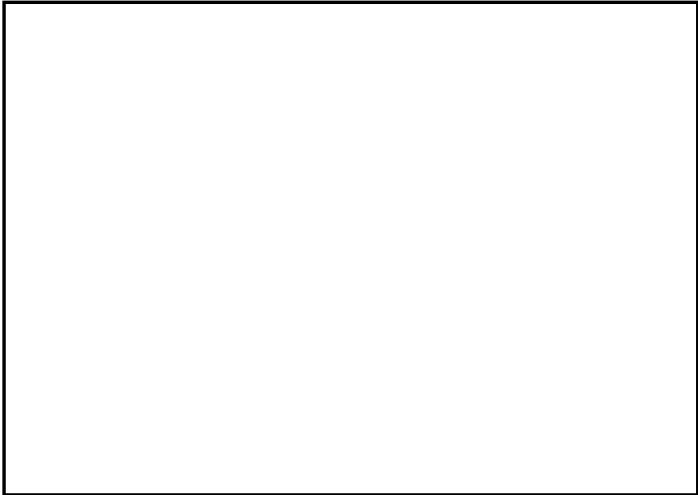
China's reluctant attitude toward Bangladesh, however, was conditioned by broader considerations

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than support for Pakistan. Peking was perturbed by the necessarily close ties of Bangladesh to India and the USSR. Moreover, the seemingly intractable economic problems facing Mujib suggested that his government might not be long-lived. Peking may have been waiting to see if he would be replaced by a government less friendly to India and the USSR. That Dacca's close relations with India and the USSR was the main obstacle hampering China's relations with Bangladesh is suggested by Peking's recognition of the government of President Khardahar Mushtaque Ahmed—reputedly less pro-Indian and less pro-Soviet—only two weeks after it was placed in power by a military coup. Recognition was not accompanied, however, by an agreement to exchange ambassadors. This continued caution may be inspired by uncertainty over the prospects of the new regime. If the Ahmed government proves to have some staying power, and more important, can loosen Dacca's ties with New Delhi and Moscow, Peking probably will establish diplomatic relations. Any future relationship between China and Bangladesh is likely to rest on mutual political interests, however, and not primarily on an economic or aid basis. China probably does not wish to become deeply involved in an aid relationship with the economic morass that is Bangladesh.



Prospects for improvement in Sino-Indian relations remained bright despite India's explosion of a nuclear device on 18 May 1974. Peking responded to an Indian suggestion made in early 1974 that Sino-Indian relations be improved by accepting a "people-to-people" visit from a pro-Chinese front organization. Included in the visiting delegation was a member of parliament who reportedly was a confidant of Prime Minister Gandhi. The Chinese gave the delegation high-level attention, including a meeting with CCP Vice Chairman Yeh Chien-ying, who attempted to determine Indian receptivity to an exchange of ambassadors.

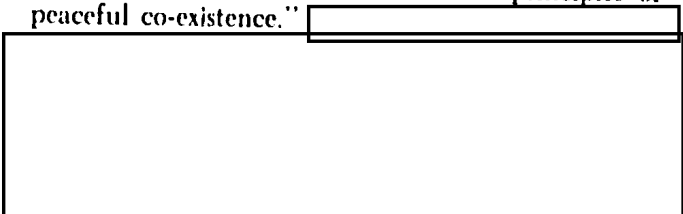
IV. THE INDIAN NUCLEAR EXPLOSION AND THE ANNEXATION OF SIKKIM

A series of events in the first half of 1974 illustrated Peking's continued desire for improved relations with India and the difficulties remaining in achieving that goal. From the Chinese point of view, Pakistan's recognition of Bangladesh in April 1974 and the agreement on the repatriation of the remaining 195 Pakistani POWs without subjecting them to war crimes trials improved the atmosphere of Sino-Indian relations and opened the way for a conciliatory gesture toward Bangladesh. In a speech welcoming Prime Minister Bhutto to Peking on 11 May, Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping announced China's readiness to develop good neighborly relations with the countries of South Asia on the basis of the "five principles of peaceful co-existence."

If India's demonstration of an embryonic nuclear capability did not affect China's short-term nuclear superiority, nor deter the search for detente with India, it did raise short-term complications and long-term problems for the leadership in Peking. In the short run, the Chinese were presented with the problem of appearing to support Pakistan while avoiding making any major defense commitment to Islamabad. Peking adopted a policy of minimal public reaction while privately seeking to calm Pakistani nerves. In August 1974 a Chinese official bluntly stated that China was against nuclear blackmail, but would not act as the guarantor of the security of any state against a nuclear threat.

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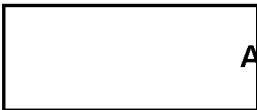
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Possession of a nuclear capability may, in the long run, however, make India harder for Peking to deal with in any effort to achieve a detente or border settlement. The Chinese saw India's nuclear achievement as a manifestation of a claim to pre-eminence in South Asia—a claim China is loath to accept. What disquieted the Chinese was, in the words of Foreign

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Minister Chiao Kuan-hua, "... not the fact, but the policy of expansionism behind it..."

In contrast to its low key reaction to the Indian nuclear explosion, China's reaction to the series of Indian moves inaugurated in June 1974 which culminated in the complete annexation of the Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim in April 1975 was sharply critical. The annexation of Sikkim raised Chinese suspicions about Indian intentions in Nepal and Bhutan, two countries which China hoped would remain as buffers along the troublesome Sino-Indian border. The announcement in New Delhi of the transformation of Sikkim into an associate state within India prompted China to announce officially that it did not recognize the annexation. Peking officially pledged its support to the "Sikkimese people's struggle for national independence." The Chinese backed up this verbal show of displeasure with limited but unmistakable military gestures. Peking also moved to strengthen its strategic position in Tibet by stepping up programs for highway improvement and the construction of a pipeline, and eventually a railroad, into the area.



By December 1974, China had put into operation a plan to use its good offices to ameliorate Afghan-Pakistani relations and to pursue detente with India. Acting on a suggestion made to the Pakistanis in August 1974, the Chinese moved to improve their own relations with Afghanistan and in December 1974 extended to the Daud regime a new \$55 million loan.

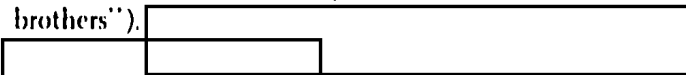
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By the end of January 1975 Peking was clearly signaling its desire for improved relations with India. The anti-Indian campaign in the Chinese press tapered off and China gave extensive favorable publicity to the visit of a Chinese table tennis team to India for an international tournament. Chinese propagandists resurrected the long unused slogan of "Hindi-Chini bhai bhai" ("Indians and Chinese are brothers").

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The Chinese also publicized their continued interest in the independence of Nepal. In February 1975, Peking augmented its propaganda and political support for the royal government there by extending a \$80-90 million loan for a large road building project. It will be the largest single foreign aid project in the country and probably will make China at least temporarily Nepal's biggest aid donor. Nevertheless, Peking was unwilling to extend any kind of defense commitment to Nepal.



In late February and early March 1975 China capped its campaign for detente with stopovers in Calcutta by a Politburo member and Deputy Premier, General Chen Hsi-lien. Chen, the highest-ranking Chinese official to visit India for over a decade, announced that China was ready for talks, if India wanted them, for the normalization of relations. Peking's eagerness for detente was evident in Chen's public statement that India's close relations with Moscow did "not necessarily" stand in the way of improved Sino-Indian relations. New Delhi, however, failed to respond. Prime Minister Gandhi appeared reluctant to jeopardize India's beneficial relationship with the USSR by pursuing detente with China. For example, in a newspaper interview on 6 February 1975, Mrs. Gandhi lauded Moscow's support for India by stating: "Haven't they (the USSR) stood by us whenever we have needed any help? When we wanted to first industrialize, they were the first people to help us with heavy industry. Whenever there was any war we have not asked for their military help, but they have stood by us."

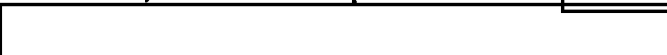
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V. THE RENEWED DRIVE FOR SINO-INDIAN DETENTE

India's moves in Sikkim, however, did not alter China's interest in improved relations with India as a device for eventually undermining New Delhi's uncomfortably close relationship with the USSR.

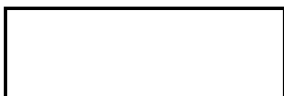
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Moreover, Mrs. Gandhi in the first half of 1975 faced mounting opposition at home. Detente with China which produced no more than a symbolic exchange of ambassadors but which failed to include progress on

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basic issues, such as the Sino-Indian border quarrel, would give her opposition more ammunition in their campaign to bring her down. Mrs. Gandhi publicly made clear her position that China must do more than send friendly signals if Sino-Indian detente was to occur. Remarks by Indian officials in Hong Kong also suggested that India wanted substantive issues sorted out before an exchange of ambassadors between New Delhi and Peking. This attitude was contrary to that of the Chinese, who wanted to start the process of detente by the reestablishment of ambassadorial relations, and only then to discuss outstanding issues, such as the Indian-Chinese border. Peking almost certainly realized that it could not offer a border settlement which Mrs. Gandhi could accept. Discussion of the border problem first would probably stop detente and the ambassadorial exchange in their tracks.

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the Pakistanis to continue to seek normalization of relations with India, Li Hsien-nien expounded the view that inherent contradictions in Indian-Soviet relations were becoming more apparent and that India would inevitably follow the example of Egypt in reversing its orientation toward the USSR. Presumably the political crisis which erupted in June in India has shaken this optimistic analysis.

India's recent plunge into authoritarian rule raises disturbing questions for Peking about the future of Sino-Indian relations. Peking's main concern in South Asia has been the increase in Soviet influence in the area. This concern obviously lay behind the remarks of a Chinese diplomat, made in late June 1975, that Mrs. Gandhi's move would greatly increase Soviet influence in India. The Chinese also were apprehensive that Mrs. Gandhi might attempt to divert attention away from her authoritarian rule by creating an incident in Nepal.

VI. PROSPECTS

The rebuff to its efforts of early 1975 to begin the process of detente with India, coupled with the later plunge toward authoritarian government there, has left China at best roughly where it was in January 1972. At worst, its position in South Asia has deteriorated, if one accepts the thesis that Prime Minister Gandhi will be driven to seek closer relations with the USSR and to rely more heavily than in the past on political support from the Indian Communist Party as a result of her swing to authoritarian rule. It is the opportunity afforded the USSR to advance its influence in India that has most disturbed Peking. This is not to say that Peking ever had unrealistic expectations that it could successfully effect a deep split in Indian-Soviet relations. Nevertheless, the Chinese were hopeful of eventually undermining Moscow's influence.

That India still feels the need for a powerful ally to weigh in the balance against China is reflected in the public and private statements of Indian officials from the level of Indira Gandhi down to minor diplomats. As one Indian official has said, New Delhi cannot be expected to sacrifice its ties with Moscow for the sake of improving Sino-Indian relations any more than Peking can be expected to sacrifice its Pakistani ties for the sake of better relations with India.

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The completion by India in April 1975 of the annexation of Sikkim ended Peking's latest attempt to improve relations with India. The Chinese once again vented their outrage in harsh propaganda attacks against Indian expansionism and against Prime Minister Gandhi personally.

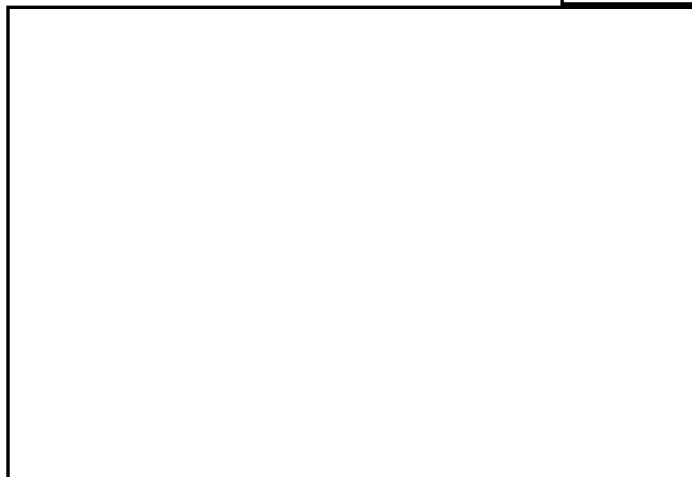
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Peking still did not close the door to eventual detente with India. Deputy Premier Li Hsien-nien in late April 1975 reiterated China's wish to develop good relations with all the countries of South Asia. In urging

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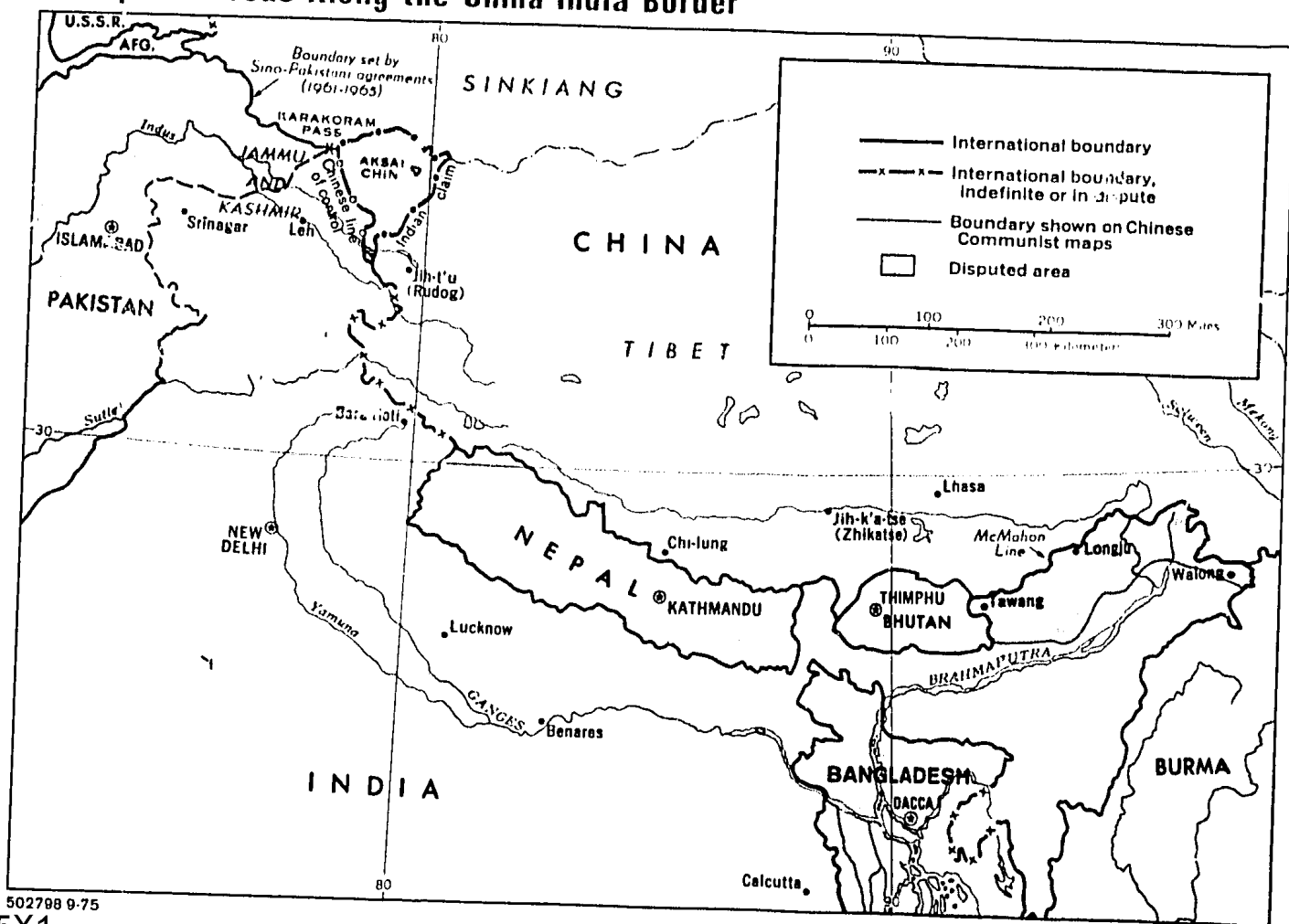
way to strengthen its weak hand in South Asia is to improve relations with India, even if this means initially accepting an uncomfortably close relationship between India and the Soviet Union. Peking appears to be relying on the hope that in the long run Indian and Soviet interests will increasingly diverge and provide an opening for Chinese diplomacy.

The principal Chinese concern about Indira Gandhi's drive toward personal rule is that it will work to the benefit of the USSR. The Chinese thus will continue to watch carefully for signs that may portend even closer Indian-Soviet ties, such as an acceptance by India of Moscow's scheme for an Asian Security Pact or the granting by India of naval bases to the USSR.

Given India's ambitions for South Asian leadership and fear of China, the Chinese have little to offer New Delhi. China cannot duplicate the political, economic, or military support available to India from the USSR. Nevertheless, Peking appears to realize that the only

A large measure of the antagonism between India and China stems from their conflicting border claims,

Disputed Areas Along the China-India Border



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and this issue probably will be further downplayed by the Chinese. Peking has occupied the territory it wants on the border and no doubt would be willing to accept a settlement which would leave it in possession of the western disputed areas while renouncing claim to the eastern areas it does not occupy. It is even possible that China would accept small adjustments in India's favor in those areas occupied by China. The Indians, however, would regard such a settlement as being too heavily in China's favor. It would entail a loss of territory for India that any Indian leader, including Mrs. Gandhi, would find impossible to accept.

Whereas in early 1974 Mrs. Gandhi appeared to be in favor of setting the unresolved border issue aside, by February 1975 she had apparently come to believe that increasing domestic criticism of her government and awareness of China's role as the party seeking better relations called for raising the border issue; she appeared to be linking substantive progress on the border problem to any decision to enter into talks on normalization of relations. New Delhi probably will persist in its current position that a resumption of ambassadorial relations that does not lead anywhere further will serve little purpose for either side.

The bilateral problem of the border is only part, although an important one, of the large issue of clashing Sino-Indian interests in the Himalayas. China almost certainly views India's actions in Sikkim as a move to strengthen New Delhi's position on the border of Tibet. India, however, is likely to remain extremely sensitive to any disorder in the mountain kingdoms which might be exploited by the Chinese to advance their influence south of the Himalayas. This mutual sensitivity based on security interests underlies both China's sharp reaction to the annexation of Sikkim and India's serious view of Peking's official refusal to recognize it as a legal annexation.

With Sikkim securely in India's grasp, Sino-Indian rivalry in the Himalayas is likely to center on Nepal. Peking will seek to maintain the kingdom as a neutral buffer while remaining suspicious that Mrs. Gandhi will use or provoke an incident there to divert Indian popular attention from troubles at home. As long as India remains unified, with growing military strength, however, China is unlikely to use force to pursue its interests in the Himalayas.

Political developments in India constitute another source of possible future friction between Peking and New Delhi. Peking may be forced to consider what at-

titude to take toward underground opposition groups there or regional opposition to the central government in New Delhi. Peking's attitude toward civil war in India is unclear. Chinese experience with Indian Maoist radicals has been unproductive from Peking's point of view. In the event of anti-central government insurgency in India, China is unlikely to rush in with more than moral support. More likely would be a decision to follow events closely and attempt to gauge the likelihood of success—based on organization, leadership, and proven ability in the field—of any underground or insurgent movement.

Peking's attitude toward an eventual breakup of India also is unclear. Certainly such a contingency would present Peking difficult problems and choices. On one hand, Peking might welcome the balkanization of a major, unfriendly power on its borders. On the other hand, a process of Indian political disintegration almost certainly would invite strong Soviet efforts to safeguard the USSR's political, economic, and military investments there. On balance, Peking probably hopes that India will remain unified and that the government of Indira Gandhi eventually will give way to one more willing to seek Sino-Indian detente. In Chinese eyes it would matter little if such a new regime were, for example, a radical left-wing or a military right-wing government. What would matter would be the new government's attitude toward the USSR and China.

Anti-Indian feeling among the aging Chinese leadership is probably only a minor factor in China's formulation of its policy. Certainly past Chinese approaches to New Delhi suggest that Mao and his lieutenants are able to overcome their personal antipathies in the interest of preventing a closer Indian-Soviet alignment. Of greater moment is the effect of Mrs. Gandhi's personal animus toward China and the continued widespread anti-Chinese feeling among the majority of India's governing elite. Although Mrs. Gandhi has shown flexibility at times in her attitude toward China, her personal antipathy to the leadership in Peking is deep and will probably persist.

While the special relationship with Pakistan is still useful, Peking is under no illusions about the existing balance of power of South Asia. It recognizes that India is far stronger than any of its neighbors there. It sees little chance that even improved relations with smaller states would strengthen its weak position. Thus, lacking leverage in South Asia, Peking will continue to look to the US as a counterweight to Moscow.

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Peking will remain alert to any development that might presage Indian interest in Sino-Indian detente. Certainly the prospects for such a development now appear bleak, but the situation which has developed in South Asia since December 1971 contains the same basic elements which led China to seek detente in 1971 and which led it to try again in early 1975. As long as

these elements remain—Soviet influence in South Asia and presence in the Indian Ocean, Indian fear of Pakistan and China, and New Delhi's dreams of dominating the region—China appears constrained to hope for some turn of events in India that will once again open the way to Sino-Indian detente.

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