

Current Anglo-American Interpretation of the Sino-Indian War: Scholarship or Propaganda?

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According to the current Anglo-American view of the 1962 Sino-Indian war, Indian aggressiveness caused the conflict. This interpretation emerged in the late sixties-early seventies and has since then acquired, in western circles, the status of conventional wisdom. The growth of the interpretation was paralleled by the growth of warm relations between the People's Republic of China and the western world.

Any student of the subject of international relations, especially one concerned with the scientific status of social science analyses, cannot but wonder whether the new interpretation emerged in adjustment to the new warm diplomatic relations or whether it was a reaction to, more respectably, some new body of historical evidence. It is this dual question which the present paper addresses.

In addressing the question, the following procedure is observed: first are sketched the principal features of the interpretation indicting India for the 1962 war. To facilitate understanding, the older Anglo-American interpretations of the war, supportive of India, are also recapitulated. Next, the object is to show that the indictment of India does indeed dominate the pages of current western analyses. Consequently, a content analysis of Anglo-American writings between 1960 and 1980 is carried out showing the displacement of earlier interpretations and emergence into prominence of a new one. Following this description of the interpretations and their temporal distribution, the central question of the paper is taken up: whether the rationale for the emergence of the view indicting India is empirical or environmental.

Interpretations of the Sino-Indian War

In Anglo-American writings published between 1960 and 1980, principally three interpretations of the war are found. Following

the terminology of Dial,¹ they may be named thus:

- (a) The "Encirclement" interpretation
- (b) The "Historicist" interpretation
- (c) The "Revolutionary" interpretation

Before the content of these categories is elucidated, it may be pointed out that writers are not aware of belonging to any of the three categories. The categorisation is that of the observer, not the writer concerned. The categories have been developed separately by the present writer by the isolation of some of the common and basic assumptions present in the multitude of arguments advanced to explain the Sino-Indian war. Such a procedure is necessary to facilitate discussion and comparison of any set of ideas in a manageable and intelligible manner.

To turn now to the interpretations of the war, the "Historicist" and "Revolutionary" interpretations both ascribe the 1962 war to aggressive behaviour on the part of China. The first interpretation maintains that such behaviour arose from Chinese historical tradition and the second that it is communism that made China aggressive. The "Encirclement" interpretation, on the other hand, takes the reverse position: it holds that the war resulted from Indian aggressiveness.

The "Encirclement" Interpretation

This interpretation may equally be named as the "Maxwell" interpretation, since it is most extensively elaborated by Neville Maxwell, the author of *India's China War*. But it is also held by several other analysts, such as Camilleri, Gittings, Horowitz, Stahnke, Topping, Yahuda and others.² Indeed, were it not shared by a large community of Anglo-American scholars, it would not merit scrutiny here. This paper is considered with the "conventional wisdom" or the "received knowledge" i.e. the views shared widely by the Anglo-American scholarly community, not the unique perceptions of a particular individual.

In its most global expression the "Encirclement" interpretation holds that China is a defensive power. If it is ever involved in military actions against foreign powers, it is because those foreign powers have been aggressive and provocative. The term "Encirclement" is derived, as may already be apparent, from the idiom of Marxist-Leninist polemics against the western world. Communist

states, in an earlier era, were wont to accuse the western capitalist states of attempting to destroy communist regimes by encircling them with offensive military forces. This "encirclement", it is alleged, necessitated defensive security measures on the part of communist states.

In the context of the Sino-Indian war, the "Encirclement" interpretation has "broad" and "narrow" variants. The "broad" variant speaks of an offensive threat from not only India but the Soviet Union and United States. The "narrow" version points to only the allegedly offensive nature of the actions taken by India. The following observation of Pringsheim is typical of the "broad" version:

The developments at this juncture should not be evaluated merely in terms of the Sino-Indian direct confrontation. The presence of US military personnel in Thailand and Laos, the promise of the delivery of Soviet MIG-21 fighter planes to India, the Soviet Union's lukewarm attitude towards China's border claims. . . expect (ation) of an invasion attempt by Chiang Kai-Shek's forces (created) a strong Chinese desire to tidy up her borders. . .³

The narrow variant of the interpretation argues that far from being the initiator of conflict, China was merely responding to a recalcitrant adversary, India. This variant depicts China's actions as responses to India's military moves in the disputed areas; as well, it holds that Beijing's hand was forced by India's adamant refusal to search for a negotiated settlement. India, it is argued, employed force recklessly. Yahuda remarks that "the Sino-Indian border clashes of October-November 1962 may be seen to have been inevitable once the Indian side began to implement its 'forward policy' in the border areas. . ."⁴ In contrast, Camilleri observes, that China took "extreme care in the use of military force."⁵

The "Encirclement" interpretation thus attributes the war either to Indian aggressiveness *per se* or to a combination of Indian, Soviet and American designs operating through New Delhi. In the hands of Maxwell, the chief proponent of the "Encirclement" interpretation, exposition of the interpretation also acquires an ironical and moralistic tone targetted against Indian diplomacy.

The "Historicist" Interpretation

Proponents of the "Historicist" interpretation accept without question the aggressor role of China. The theme emphasised in the interpretation is that of Chinese tradition. It is alleged that the 1962 war and the tensions preceding it had their source in the aggressive and aggrandising behaviour that is characteristically rooted in China's history. Rowland thus points out the role of history:

The events . . . (Tibetan affair, Sino-Indian war) are entirely consistent with China's historical approach to its borderlands—an approach which combined an obsession with the security of the Middle Kingdom, an urge for territorial aggrandisement.⁶

North takes the same view:

Like nationalist leaders before him, Mao Tse-tung has long made it clear that China does not intend to relinquish its right to any area over which the old order established suzerainty—no matter how brief the tenure or how tenuous the claim.⁷

A sub-theme within the "Historicist" interpretation considers China's post-1840 historical experience as being of greater importance than ancient or mediaeval Chinese history in the explanation of contemporary China's actions. In this interpretation, the diagnosis is not one of a China ever expansionist; rather, it is held that the European-imposed humiliations of the 19th century have bred in China an excessive concern for power and prestige, which considerations engender an implacable quest for the restoration of a powerful "Middle Kingdom." Victorious military action would restore China's claimed boundaries as well as underscore its claims to being a great power. North and Levi thus argue that China, in its conflict with India, is attempting to restore the *status quo ante*, i.e. the situation which existed prior to contact with the West, when the Manchu Empire attained the zenith of its expansion.⁸

The "Revolutionary" Interpretation

In 1949, China proclaimed itself a communist republic, and since then some writers have found reason to believe that Chinese behaviour, be it internal or external, results from the nature of communism. It is held that any communist state is propelled by innate, ideological expansionist drives and that the Sino-Indian

war of 1962 was the expression of these drives. As Rowland observes:

Peking pursues a belligerent policy (i.e. towards India) because in the words of its leaders, "there is no historical precedent for peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism—the old government never topples unless it is pushed." China seeks to foment and lead the revolution in the Afro-Asian world.⁹

Still another perspective within the "Revolutionary" school considers the event of 1962 not as an ideological communist expansionist drive, nor as an intended assault on capitalism, but rather as an attempt either to capture the leadership of the communist world from the Soviet Union by a display of ideological orthodoxy or to restore its purity by bringing back Moscow from its supposedly unholy flirtation with India.¹⁰

A feature of the two China-as-aggressor interpretations, the "Historicist" and the "Revolutionary", is that they are not proposed as mutually exclusive but as complementary. "Han imperialism" is believed to reinforce the "revolutionary zeal of communism."¹¹

Change in Interpretations

Of these three interpretations, currently it is the "Encirclement" interpretation which constitutes the "conventional wisdom" of post-1970 western analyses. The situation is easily demonstrated. In order to determine the relative strengths of different interpretations, the present writer carried out a quantitative content analysis of fifty-five Anglo-American writings published between 1960 and 1980.¹² The object of the analysis was not only to determine the recent strength of the "Encirclement" interpretation, but also to see whether the emergence of this interpretation is a later phenomenon or whether it was always part of the received view of scholars. The findings of the content analysis are startling.

Among twenty-one British writers studied for the period between 1960 and 1980, all writers from about 1970 onwards subscribe to the "Encirclement" interpretation; in the previous decade there were none. In the post-1970 period, fully 88 per cent of all interpretive statements are of the "Encirclement" type. In the previous decade a mere three per cent of the statements were of this type.

The other interpretations have their period of strength in the last decade. The "Historicist" interpretation is found to dominate writings then.

The pattern of analysis found in American writings is close to identical. Of the twenty-four authors scrutinised for the 1960-80 period, six are found to be proponents of the "Encirclement" interpretation. These are all from the 1970s and onward period. In this period, there is no proponent of the "Historicist" and "Revolutionary" interpretations. The advocates of these latter interpretations are found only in the 1960s decade. Eleven writers do uphold the "Historicist" interpretation and three the "Revolutionary" one; but ten of the "Historicists" belong to the sixties decade and so do the three "Revolutionary" proponents. In consequence, the 1970 and onward period becomes predominantly of an "Encirclement" character.

A significant question is this: when precisely does the "Encirclement" interpretation come to dominate writings? In the British sources studied, the interpretation first receives references in excess of the "Historicist" interpretation in material dated 1970. For the same year, we find two authors upholding the "Encirclement" interpretation and none the "Historicist". Tentatively speaking—tentatively because of the small size of our sample for the year—it appears that the date of change was around 1970. The date of change found in American writers is around 1971-72. At this time, the change is somewhat indeterminate but the interpretations become rapidly more "Encirclement"-like as the decade develops.

Comparatively speaking, therefore, British and American writers show close similarity in their pattern of switch to the "Encirclement" interpretation. In the 1960s decade, the writers mostly viewed China as the aggressor and upheld the "Historicist" interpretation; in the succeeding period, India comes to be viewed as the aggressor party and the "Encirclement" interpretation is given credence. In the two sources, changes of interpretation take place very closely, within a span of one to two years of each other.

It can be asserted with confidence then that the manner in which Anglo-American scholarship views the war has changed dramatically. While once western scholars felt that the responsibility for the war lay with China, in the present received view, Indian actions gave rise to the conflict. This is quite evidently a change in under-

standing, or, as Thomas Kuhn may say, a "scientific revolution" in the western world's "knowledge" of the war. It is a revolution that stands in need of explanation.¹³

Change Without Justification

Science is empirical. This may not be the case sometimes but this, at least, is what it always purports to be. Explanatory ideas are meant to account for experience, or, in other words, rest upon evidence. It would be useful, therefore, to first determine if the emergence of the "Encirclement" interpretation can be defended on the basis of some telling new evidence.

The "Encirclement" case is a complex one but it can be narrowed down to certain events or items of evidence concerning (a) territory; (b) diplomacy; and (c) military interactions. To take up first the evidence concerning territorial issues: here the "Encirclement" argument consists of arguing that the Sino-Indian boundary has no formal definition; that the Indian claim to Aksai Chin has no treaty basis; and that the Simla Convention governing the McMahon Line in the east was never ratified by China.¹⁴ These claims are, as we know, old. Their evidence is from the early 1960s. The claims may be perceived to be valid but they could not have become more valid from 1970 onwards than in the preceding decade. That these claims, and their underlying empirical bases, became more appealing to western scholars from 1970 onwards cannot, therefore, be understood empirically.

It is with regards to diplomacy that the proponents of the "Encirclement" interpretation highlight some new items of evidence which, the proponents believe, decide the issue in favour of their explanation. Here the approach consists of establishing Indian *mala fides* by citing evidence that suggests Indian dishonesty, truculence, manoeuvrings and deception. Maxwell points out that in his correspondence with Chou-en-Lai, Nehru had been claiming that the boundaries claimed by India had "always been the historical frontiers of India."¹⁵ In Maxwell's view, this was dishonesty because the Indian side was itself aware of the weakness in India's claims. Thus, as early as 1952, G.S. Bajpai, earlier the most senior official in the Ministry of External Affairs, had described the McMahon Line as a "scar left by Britain in her aggression against China" and thus questioned its legitimacy.¹⁶ And Nehru had

admitted in Parliament that the "actual boundary of Ladakh with Tibet was not very carefully defined." For Nehru to assert, therefore, despite this awareness that India's claimed boundaries had "always been the historical frontiers of India" was rank dishonesty.¹⁷

There was also truculence and intransigence because the "scar left by Britain" and the "not very carefully defined" frontier was being claimed by Nehru in his secret directives to his officials as a frontier which was "firm and definite. . . not open to discussion with anybody."¹⁸ The Indian side also attempted to cover up its intransigence by, so it is claimed, engaging in verbal gimmicks. India had no interest in negotiations, but did not wish to betray this attitude to the world community. So it invited Chou-En-Lai to New Delhi for "talks," not "negotiations." Nehru thus explained the distinction:

There is a difference between negotiations and talks, there is a world of difference. . . Talking must always be encouraged wherever possible. Negotiation is a very formal thing.¹⁹

Maxwell, an exponent of the "Encirclement" view, dismisses this distinction as "a staple device of Indian foreign policy," "casuistry" and a "smokescreen" behind which the Indian side concealed from the international community its refusal to resolve the dispute reasonably when Premier Chou visited New Delhi in April 1960.²⁰

Some of these items of evidence are of significance. In themselves they can justify a switch to the "Encirclement" interpretation. Nehru's secret directive to officials and Bajpai's remark were not known till Maxwell brought them to light in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Taken on their own, the items of evidence do support the charge of intransigence and dishonesty; and, therefore, the possible claim that the switch is empirical, not sociological.

But it would be poor methodology indeed to build an interpretation just on the above items of evidence. It is a well known principle in science that a new interpretation should not merely account for some new items of evidence previously unknown; it should also explain those sets of facts which constitute the basis of a rival interpretation. In other words, the entire body of relevant evidence has to be weighed and on this basis the new

interpretation developed.²¹

When this methodological canon is remembered, it becomes clear that the new items of evidence do not provide an empirical justification of switching to the "Encirclement" interpretation. The empirical material which constitutes the basis of the rival "Historicist" interpretation, and shows Chinese deception and dishonesty, must also be explained and not quietly ignored.

A vital part of "Historicist" evidence, which the proponents of the new interpretation must also explain, is as follows.²² In 1954, Prime Minister Nehru visited Beijing and raised the boundary question with his host. He pointed out that Chinese maps showed Indian territory within China. Premier Chou assured Nehru that China had no boundary dispute with India and that the offending maps were old, pre-liberation maps "taken from the Nationalist government which the new government had not yet had time to revise." In saying that there was "no dispute," it could not be that Premier Chou was unaware of the conflict between India's claims and Chinese maps because India's claims had been repeatedly described in Parliament, the press, and official correspondence. Further, Nehru and the Indian Foreign Office had officially expressed to China their disagreement with the line shown on Chinese maps. In 1960, the Indian side asked its Chinese counterpart why China had not earlier aired its view that the frontier was a "dispute (d)" matter; why, it was asked, did China now (i.e. 1959-60) suddenly believe that the boundaries were a matter of "dispute." Several opportunities to express disagreement had occurred in the early fifties; yet, despite Indian inquiries, the Chinese side had disavowed the existence of any dispute. Premier Chou replied that China had not raised the issue because "conditions were not ripe" for raising it.

The history just sketched occupies a central position in the characterisation by "Historicists" of China as the party that practised deception and committed aggression. When its position was militarily weak in Tibet, it feigned "no dispute;" the moment the position had been strengthened, the existence of a "dispute" became China's fundamental stance.

The episode just cited cannot be accommodated into the "Encirclement" interpretation. Any new interpretation of the Sino-Indian war which predicates Chinese *bona fides* and which

purports to be empirical must take account of the "pre-liberation maps" episode. In as much as the "Encirclement" interpretation maintains its plausibility only by ignoring the episode and selectively citing supportive evidence, it appears that the reasons for the espousal of the new interpretation are non-empirical. Of course, the evidence highlighted by proponents of the "Encirclement" interpretation is relevant and insightful; but this evidence must be weighed against the evidence of the previous interpretation. The new interpretation does not meet this vital requirement.

In general usage, the characterisation "aggressor" depends on the manner in which a state employs violence in its relations with other states. Proponents of the "Encirclement" interpretation claim to have evidence from India's employment of violence which, it is held, shows India to have been the aggressor. One evidence of this, it is maintained by Camilleri, Topping and Yahuda, is India's "forward policy."²³ Under the policy, Nehru directed his soldiers thus:

(In) Ladakh. . . we are to patrol as far forward as possible from our present positions toward the international border. This will be done with a view to establishing our posts which should prevent the Chinese from advancing any further and also dominating from any posts which they may have already established in our territory.²⁴

This, especially the goal of "dominating" Chinese posts, was clearly, it is claimed, an expression of aggressive Indian intentions.²⁵ The Galwan river incident of July 1962 gave concrete expression to India's aggressive intentions. In territory held by the Chinese, an Indian platoon consisting of Gurkhas "cut off a Chinese outpost that had been established further down-stream" and, going further, held up a Chinese supply party. Violence could have erupted anytime but Chinese forbearance and peaceability saved the day.²⁶

But India pushed on aggressively, so it is argued by proponents of the "Encirclement" interpretation.²⁷ In October 1962, the Indian Army established posts north of the McMahon Line i.e. north of even India's own claimed boundary. When the Chinese justifiably proceeded to besiege this post, a massive war-hysteria was whipped up in India and Nehru publicly declared

that he had instructed his soldiers to clear the Chinese.²⁸

Stahnke, a proponent of "Encirclement", observes that at this stage, faced with mounting, publicly declared Indian military preparations, "China had no real alternative other than the use of force."²⁹ China's military action of October 1962 was, thus, only an act of defence.

Again, we have some empirical material which lends plausibility to the arguments of the "Encirclement" proponents. But once the evidence is examined in depth and compared with the evidence supportive of the older interpretation, the plausibility dims and one is again left with the suspicion of political influences upon western scholarship.

The "forward policy," and the incident flowing from it, that of Galwan, were both known way back in the 1960s. Fisher, Huttenback and Rose refer specifically to the policy in their study published in 1963. To these authors, the policy did not seem at all militaristic. Indeed, to them it was a belated move on the part of India to defend its territory.³⁰ The same policy now seems, to "Encirclement" proponents, an aggressive act—this cannot be because the proponents have fallen upon some evidence previously unknown. Nehru's secret directive cited by Maxwell was, of course, unknown, but the general policy was not a secret. There is then no telling "new" evidence which justifies switching to the "Encirclement" interpretation. What has happened probably is that India's territorial position in Aksai Chin is now viewed differently. To the "Historicists," India's legal position in Aksai Chin was solid; hence, its military moves in the area were assessed as inherently defensive. To the votaries of the new interpretation, China's position is legally stronger; hence, India's "forward policy" was an act of offence. But, as we remarked earlier, there is no new evidence concerning territorial claims which justifies recasting the old interpretations. It follows, therefore, that there is no adequate reason to recast the "Historicist" interpretation of Indian "forward policy" either.

The allegation that the Dhola post was north of the McMahon Line is tendentious. The McMahon Line does not exist on the ground, but only on maps. It stands to reason that the transposition of the line from the map to the ground should give expression to the intentions of the cartographers rather than to

their unintended errors. It is well known that the framers of the Simla Convention intended to create a crestline boundary. The Dhola post may have lain north of the *map-marked* McMahon Line but it was south of the *intended* McMahon Line. The Indian effort to consolidate the position in Dhola, therefore, hardly qualifies as aggression.

Nehru's statement to journalists that he had instructed the Indian Army to clear Dhola of Chinese troops was, of course, gratuitous and unfortunate. Taken in itself it may even count as a provocation. But it is scarcely fair to focus just on the statement and neglect the series of events that preceded it. Furthermore, the statement hardly constitutes a "new" piece of evidence. It was a public statement made to journalists. If it justified the "Encirclement" interpretation, it did so equally in the early 1960s as in the 1970s. But the fact that it was made use of only later, suggests that it was not so much the statement as some outside factor which yielded the new interpretation of the war.

Overall, it is apparent, therefore, that the switch to the new interpretation, that of "Encirclement," cannot be defended on empirical grounds. The interpretation is based mostly upon evidence that was well-known in the early 1960s. The fact that this evidence did not seem persuasive to western analysts of the sixties decade, but only came to acquire this quality later, indicates the presence of extra-empirical factors influencing scholarship. There is, of course, some new evidence which came to light only later and which, it is claimed, justifies the "Encirclement" interpretation. However, this evidence, when weighed against the evidence supportive of the older interpretation, is light and cannot, therefore, yield the conclusions it is meant to support.

Explaining Interpretation Change

Hitherto it has been claimed that the switch to the "Encirclement" interpretation did not seem to be based on empirical grounds. It has been further suggested that the reasons for the switch were probably environmental. It would be in order now to explore the nature of these extra-empirical factors.

The environmental factor giving rise to the "Encirclement" interpretation is political. The factor is the western world's relationship with China. The Sino-Indian war is, of course, about

both, China as well as India; but the Anglo-US relationship with India is not significant as an environmental influence upon scholarship. This is because of the two powers, China and India, China is the principal power and India the secondary one. The principal environmental factor (China) is more likely to be decisive than the secondary one (India).

To return now to the linkage between the political environment and interpretive change in the explanation of the Sino-Indian war: it was shown earlier that the revisionist "Encirclement" interpretation emerged *circa* 1970-72 and thereafter established itself. Almost around this time also took place changes in the western world's political relationship with China. During 1970, American trade and travel sanctions on China were relaxed in an unmistakable step-by-step manner. In 1971, these measures were carried further.³¹ Ping-pong diplomacy now commenced with an American table-tennis team visiting China.³² Shortly afterwards, Henry Kissinger, the then National Security Adviser, travelled secretly to Beijing to arrange a Presidential visit.³³

Similar changes took place on the British side of this relationship. In March 1971, Premier Chou En-Lai conveyed an apology to London for the burning of the British Mission in Beijing in August 1967.³⁴ In April, a British table-tennis team visited Beijing and other Chinese cities.³⁵

The changes in the Anglo-American relationship with China may be said to have climaxed with the arrival of President Nixon in Beijing in February 1972.³⁶ Following the visit, a pattern of successively growing warm relations was established between China and much of the western world.

There is, thus, a very distinct correlation between the switch to the "Encirclement" interpretation and the transition to a pattern of warm relations with China. In principle, the correlation leaves two possibilities; one is that the "Encirclement" interpretation emerged first and the foreign relations changed in response; the second is that the foreign relations changed first and the interpretation followed. The data do not clarify the issue, and, indeed, to a certain extent, cannot: this because the question of change in foreign relations depends upon which event is fixed as an indicator of change—the lifting of trade sanctions, the Kissinger visit or the Nixon-Mao Beijing Summit.

However, it is hardly likely that the relatively inconsequential "Encirclement" interpretation caused a change in the critical realm of great power relations. It would require a lively imagination to suppose that an academic and journalistic re-interpretation of the 1962 events yielded the Sino-American and Sino-British rapprochement. Practically speaking, therefore, only one possibility remains; and this is that the new interpretation emerged in response to the new diplomacy of international relations. The "Encirclement" interpretation then is a by-product of foreign relations. Couched in scholarly idiom, the interpretation is a justification of the Anglo-American detente (and subsequently entente) with China. By claiming that China had "never really" or "never in fact" been the aggressor in the 1962 war, Anglo-American scholars appear to have assumed a public relations role whose task was creating the right intellectual climate for acceptance of the Sino-American rapprochement. At the same time, it is possible that a few proponents of the "Encirclement" interpretation produced their explanation either a little in advance of changes in Anglo-US relations with Beijing or almost in simultaneity with them. For these proponents, the guiding political environment was probably the deepening Sino-Soviet rift, especially the Ussuri river clashes of 1969. These changed the entire geopolitical context of the US-USSR-PRC triangle and made the readjustment of American-Chinese ties almost inevitable. Some scholars may have seen the writing on the wall and revised their conceptual frameworks accordingly. Or some may have felt that, given the Sino-Soviet clashes, a warm relationship with Beijing was in the West's geopolitical interests. They may have sought to promote this type of relationship by depicting China as an unaggressive and defensive power.

Whatever the manner in which political influence operated, it is clear that such influence did operate. This much is undeniable. A question of interest is whether the "Encirclement" proponents who followed the government policy (excluding here those who anticipated it) followed it under government threat and pressure and obligations of government employment, or whether they followed it voluntarily.

It would be reasonable to allow room for both possibilities. Government threat and pressures and obligations created by

employment with the government must have been responsible for bringing some Anglo-American scholars in line. It is a well known fact that in the United States scholars shuffle between, on the one hand, the State Department and the Pentagon, and on the other, the academia.³⁷ Some proponents of the new interpretation may have also espoused it voluntarily, out of an empathetic identification with the policies of their country.

Conclusions

Two conclusions follow from the above analysis, one particular and one general. The particular conclusion relates to the "Encirclement" interpretation blaming India for the war of 1962. This interpretation now dominates, with greater or lesser emphasis, the current western analyses and commentaries on the Sino-Indian war. But it is a political interpretation whose function is to justify the reorientation of western policies from a pro-India direction to a pro-China one. The earlier interpretations may have had analogous functions but they had empirical strengths and it is just here that the new interpretation is found grievously wanting. Social science, like the natural sciences, is an empirical enterprise and any political linkage is acceptable so long as the condition of empiricism—staying close to the facts—is respected. It is just this condition that the "Encirclement" interpretation violates egregiously. It selects a few isolated facts to lend itself plausibility and proceeds to build a distorted argument for Indian aggression in 1962. But the enormous body of cold evidence which underwrote the earlier interpretation of the war still stands and any honest attempt to understand the war must take it into account. The "Encirclement" interpretation notwithstanding, it is clear that the Chinese territorial case has nothing to support it. China's occupation of the Aksai Chin is a pure act of expansion that cannot be defended under any legal or moral principle of international intercourse. In the east, in the territory to the south of the McMahon Line, China's claim is sheer invention. The Chinese never ever in their long history had any presence in this area. In their diplomatic actions, Nehru and the Indian side may have erred occasionally but nothing New Delhi did equalled in scale the deception practised by Chou-En-Lai. In the area of the use of force, India's measures were light and almost para-military

in character. In contrast, the assault unleashed by Beijing in October 1962 was a full-fledged military campaign self-evidently planned and calculated long, long in advance.

The "Historicist" case of Chinese aggression is, then, as strong as ever. As diplomatic negotiations between India and China come up again, this is a point which the Indian side must bear in mind. Given the evidence, New Delhi ought to reiterate its case with vigour, without any sense of diffidence or hesitation.

There is also a general point which emerges from the analysis undertaken in these pages; and this concerns the manner in which western studies on international relations need to be received. The influence of western study materials, scholarly or journalistic, is pervasive in developing countries. Factual material is obtained from western sources and so are interpretative studies. Library holdings in research institutes are largely of western provenance. In this situation it should be surprising if some of the ideas do not filter down into the belief-structures of Third World readers and re-emerge in their own analyses of political situations. But this paper has shown how western studies may sometimes be adjusted to suit prevailing political currents and how their very empirical basis may be dubious. Possibly this is a widespread phenomenon, something more extensive than merely the writings on the Sino-Indian war. Western studies, therefore, ought to be taken with a pinch of salt. The need for caution is imperative.

NOTES

1. Roger Dial, *A Pedagogic Design for Chinese External Affairs and Its Implications for Future Research*, Halifax: Dalhousie University, 1973.
2. Joseph Camilleri, *Chinese Foreign Policy: The Maoist Era and Its Aftermath*, Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1980, pp. 86-87, 115.
John Gittings, *The World and China, 1922-1972*, London: Eyre Methuen, 1974, p. 216.
David Horowitz, "Asian Tragedy", *Ramparts*, vol 10, no. 9, March 1972, p. 7.
Arthur Stahnke, "The Place of International Law in Chinese Strategy and Tactics", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol 30, November 1970, *passim*.
Seymour Topping, *Journey Between Two Chinas*, London: Harper and Row, 1972, pp. 172-173.
Michael Yahuda, *China's Role in World Affairs*, New York, St. Martins

Press, 1978, pp. 87, 113, 127.

3. Klaus Pringsheim, "China, India and their Himalayan Border 1961-1963," *Asian Survey*, vol 3, October 1963, pp. 308-310. For the 1960s decade this is a rare statement of the "Encirclement" viewpoint.
4. Yahuda, n. 2, p. 113.
5. Camilleri, n. 2, p. 22.
6. John Rowland, *A History of Sino-Indian Relations: Hostile Co-Existence*, Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1967, p. 73.
7. Robert C. North, "Peking's Drive for Empire: The New Expansion", *Problems of Communism*, vol ix, January-February 1960, p. 25.
8. Ibid; Werner Levi, "Chinese-Indian Competition in Asia," *Current History*, vol 38, February 1960, pp. 67-68.
9. Rowland, n. 6, p. 186.
10. Leo E. Rose, "Conflict in the Himalayas," *Military Review*, vol XLIII, February 1963, pp. 10-11.
11. Norman D. Palmer, "Trans-Himalayan Confrontation". *Orbis*, vol 6, no. 4, 1963, p. 517.
12. The fifty-five Anglo-American writings which were content-analysed are, in chronological order, the following:

BRITISH WRITINGS

- No author, "The Challenge of Tibet", *The Round Table*, December 1958-September 1959.
- No author, "Chinese Expansion", *The Round Table*, December 1959-September 1960.
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Technology Import and Modernisation of the Chinese Air Force

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In the closing days of 1987, China had undertaken a major reshuffle of its senior military personnel following the 13th Party Congress in October. The Congress saw China's aging leader Deng Xiaoping relinquish all his posts except that of Chairman of the Party's Central Military Commission. He, no doubt, deserved this post to see the fulfilment of his desire of making China's military a modern fighting machine—a process he had initiated way back in the 1970s.

In 1975, in a speech made to high-ranking members of the People's Liberation Army shortly after being named head of the PLA's General Staff, Deng observed: "The Army has been in considerable disarray...has become bloated and is not a crack outfit that will make a good showing in combat." Though this speech cost him his position soon after, Deng returned to power two years later, resumed his position on the General Staff and subsequently became Chairman of the Military Commission of the Chinese Communist Party and began to implement reforms he had talked about in his 1975 speech. Military modernisation in Deng's formulation, aims at producing a force that is leaner, younger, better equipped and more loyal to the central leadership.¹

As a follow-up, Zhao Ziyang, First Vice Chairman of the Military Affairs Commission (MAC), has proposed the unification of the supply arrangements for the Army, Navy and Air Force to avoid wasting manpower and money. In a speech to the March 21, 1988, forum of the Central Military Committee, Zhao said that gradual improvements should be effected in military equipment, especially in the Navy and Air Force. Although it would not be suitable to further reduce the numbers of Army personnel—already reduced by one million men—Zhao called for further streamlining in academies and schools.

Modernisation of the armed forces should be regarded as the