Decision Making Essay, Research Paper

Decision Making

More than thirty years have passed since the dramatic cling of arm in the remote Himalayan region of the Sino-Indian border. This Time gap seems to be appropriate for a correct reexamination of the conflict. The account of India’s attempt to find balance with China, ever since the Kongska Pass incident in 1959 until the attack of 1962, is not merely a fact sheet that we can brows and toss away. In stead we have to link each idea to the event and causes that might have played a role in the conflict.

Ever since 1959 the border problem between Asia’s biggest two nation states has been picking up speed at a threatening speed. The year 1962 was the unfortunate year for India, which knocked out any possibility of understanding between China and India. Of course, such an act of terror could have not started without some kind of the reason, whatever it may be. The chronological order of

pre-crisis decisions taken India’s authorities are that the latter helped Nehru convey his thought and policies to the outside world in a forceful and organized manner (Brecher, 1959). But as Rajani Palme Dutt said in his book “The problem of India,” foreign policy was exercised “more behind the scenes than in meetings of the committee.” Both Menon and Nehru acted to the desire of Nehru. It was often when the Foreign secretary would take to Pant drafts of diplomatic correspondence and get the reaction which was usually at Nehru’s request (Hoffmann, 1990).

Foreign policy makers Nehru, Menon and Pant shared a common worldview which clearly showed their psychological predisposition, drawn from the sources of their personality, idiosyncrasy, ideology, tradition, culture and history. As we shall see further down, in the mainstream of common ideas and beliefs, they indeed had some differences. But all these men used the “attitudinal prism” (Hoffmann, 1990), the lens through which they filtered and structured the information thus perceiving the world. One set of Indian beliefs referred to the role India should play world. This role was supposed to reflect the fact that India was a considerably new nation-state.

India also had to preserve her independence of action. It didn’t simply fight for independence simply to become a camp follower of any of the Cold War

Power blocs. The restrictions and limitations that such a position implies would be against India’s national interest. And it was exactly this nonalignment policy of Nehru between the two sides of the Cold War, which was the projection of Indian nationalism into world affairs (Maxwell, 1970). Nehru also expressed the idea that India was an Asian power that should not be overlooked at. He demonstrated that “in regard to any major problem of a country or a group of countries of Asia, India has to be considered” (Gopal, 1980).

During the 1950’s and 1960’s Nehru and his advisors realized that India was playing a far more than neutral role in the Cold War politics. She was a very important player on the world stage, where questions of war and peace were decided. He recognized that in s bipolar world, in which relations between the superpowers were based mainly on “balance-of-power calculations” (Hoffmann, 1990), a nuclear holocaust, for example, had become highly likely. He sought that India should stay out of the superpowers’ way in the nuclear arms race and at the same time work to the reduction of superpower confrontation by “fostering communication, engaging in constructive diplomacy and public judging each action of the United States and the former Soviet Union on its merits” (Brecher, 1959). Nehru strongly believed that this trend will only act to the good of India, for it was “economic development that was the countries primary goal” (Hoffmann, 1990). So the act of nonalignment was an act of peace and not hostility. A nonalignment trend will also allow India to receive development aid from “as many countries as could be persuaded to contribute” (Hoffmann, 1990). India’s prime minister was well aware that at the present state the country could not spent considerable amount of resources for a large defense establishment. An India aligned with no Cold War Power bloc would help avoid alienating nations like former Soviet Union and China, which were of great importance to India’s security. Nehru himself realized that a hostile frontier with China, for example, would mean an expenditure of all Indian resources just to defend it (Gopal, 1980).

Another standard belief that Nehru and the rest of his associates developed in India’s foreign policy affairs was the so called image making (Hoffmann, 1990). Nehru developed the complex “images” of nations, governments, international trends and situations. Of course, as later will be shown, they were subject to change, but not that easily. So in the way of image making, Nehru had made it a fundamental view of Indian foreign policy to treat former Soviet Union and China as separate powers, passing two different sets of problems. According to Nehru, relations could be kept constructive and could be improved once the U.S. overcame their suspicion of nonalignment. Another reason for the obstruction of Indo-American relations was the U.S. policy toward arming Pakistan military, thereby threatening India military.

As the result of this momentous post independence decision of India’s authority, once again primarily Nehru and Krishna Menon, the country had accepted membership in the remains of the British Empire – the Commonwealth (Hoffmann, 1990). This important tie assured India, that despite of nonalignment it would never be completely isolated. It would be granted communication with the West and other Third World countries, members once again in the commonwealth, and as a result Indian diplomatic influence would be enhanced. It was both the importance of a continued British supply of military equipment and the possibility of trade and economic assistance that made this membership so valuable.

China, however, was the biggest element of concern. Nehru never had the element of doubt that China’s position in the communist world will constitute a problem to India (Gopal, 1980). His largeness of mind led him to the hope that the tradition of nearly two thousand years of peace could continue in an era of Indian and Chinese national reassertion. He was determined to prevent the former Soviet Union and China from combining powers against India. But he also knew that the Chinese as well as the Russians were acting on the strength of their own national foreign policy interests and imperatives.

In the 1950’s Nehru realized, as he carried out in a letter to a member of the Chinese authority, that India very well understood the problems China was facing after the prolong suffer and struggle against Japan. He also understood that the successful communist revolution in China added new feeling to the political palette of China. Thus he perceived it as a “mixture of bitterness, elation and vaunting confidence to which the traditional xenophobia and present day isolation from outside contacts have added suspicion of the motives of other powers” (Brecher, 1959). For two years he elaborated on these points, when describing China as on object of study by India’s Intelligence Bureau. In a briefing he told IB officers that during centuries Indian and Chinese cultures had contested for supremacy in Central Asia and Tibet, as well as in Burma and other places in Southeast Asia. Thus, conflict between India and China had never been direct, but there had been intense indirect competition, which was continuing (Hoffmann, 1990). Furthermore, China had shown the tendency to be “aggressive” (Maxwell, 1970).

On the coarse of logic, it was expected that once China had achieved a certain political and economic stability, it would seek some form of supremacy, and influence or even supremacy in Asia. And what lay in the path of the realization of this idea was India. Nehru was afraid that to achieve their ends, the Chinese might attempt to prove their superiority over India in the sphere of political and economic might or even occupy some Southeast Asian countries. A tool that the Chinese might have used, according to Nehru, was the strong lobby of the Communist party which could stand up and support the Chinese cause in any dispute with India’s government (Maxwell, 1970).

From Nehru’s standpoint, China’s emergence from the bonds of Western imperialism could release negative political and character traits. India would have to be alert, especially on the northern frontier. In 1952 China had no immediate intention to recognize the India-Tibet border formally. He expected China to extend its influence over frontier territory once the Chinese position in Tibet had been consolidated. And as a contra action of that he developed India’s frontier administration (Maxwell, 1970).

Throughout most of the 1950’s, however, other beliefs received more emphasis both ion the public and the private spheres. Nehru along with Menon and other high officials that a friendly relationship between China and India could be established, if Tibet was removed as an irritant and China was brought out of isolation into a world of emerging or reemerging nation (Hoffmann, 1990). Nehru knew that the outcome of such a relationship will bring much to do peace in Asia and that is the reason he considered it to outweigh his concerns about Tibet. The founding belief of Nehru was that Tibet was a part of China, “although it should be allowed as much autonomy as possible” (Hoffmann, 1990). India had formally recognized China’s right on Tibet and after 1954 was bound to do so with a the Sino-Indian trade agreement.

After Nehru returned from a visit to China in 1954 he spoke of the great Chinese achievements in both the economic and social spheres. But even before that trip Nehru has sought to follow the Chinese steps of progress; that is, “India should regard China as a standard of comparison not as open rival” (Hoffmann, 1990). India would follow its own unique strategy of economic development. That particular strategy called for “government-directed economic planning, a government-controlled public sector of utilities and industries, and a cooperative but independent private sector” (Hoffmann, 1990).

The climax of the conflict, as to Nehru, came in the fall of 1959 when

China’s behavior, which through his “attitudinal prism” led him to alter the previous image of China. The final and most serious border problem completed a intensifying process where Nehru adopted a new set of beliefs concerning the Chinese beliefs concerning Chinese motives for starting the border conflict. Those beliefs were firstly that China was definitely acting “arrogant” and imbued with feelings of superiority. The second belief was that China was a revolutionary and unsatisfied power which at the time was in aggressive mood. Third belief was that China was an expansionist country, which meanwhile was strong internally. Fourth came the belief that Chinas attempt to influence and pressure India was due to Communist ideology. The fifth believe was that all these previously mentioned traits have been strengthened by the recent isolation imposed on China by the West. Paranoidity and one-track mind was the sixth believe. And following from the latter believe came idea that China would, therefore, not be interested in the kind of border settlement that India could accept (Hoffmann, 1990). Thus Prime Minister Nehru pictured China as a hostile country predisposed to harm India and the strength of deep-seated emotions.

The Sino-Indian border problem seen through the “attitudinal prism” of

Defense Minister Krishna Menon was different from Nehru’s view. Even though Menon and Nehru were on the same side of the battle, they indeed shared some differences. While Nehru was following the concepts of Marxism and Leninism, Menon pursued “Laski’s neo-Marxism” of the 1930’s (Langyel, 1962). In that way he retained a basic acceptance of the Leninist theory of imperialism which according to Menon outgrew capitalism. The Defense Minister’s images of India’s neighbors were also strongly influenced by his distrust of imperialism and capitalism. The “central place of Menon’s assault of Imperialism in the 1950’s and 1960’s was prescribed to the United States, which in the eyes of Menon was the major Western power which was inclined to intervene in the affairs of the non-Western world” (Langyel, 1962). Due to that he considered not China, but Pakistan to be the main threat to India’s security. For Pakistan, after independence, ha d become tied up to the new American imperialist system through a treaty and the acceptance of military aid. As an American client Pakistan weakened the area of peace and served the instrument with which imperialism could threat India’s security.

In contrast to Nehru’s vision of China, Krishna Menon had a very positive image it. Although he rejected totalitarian methods anywhere he viewed China as a progressive, modern and socialist state. The Defense Minister also felt a kind of “spiritual kinship” with China (Langyel, 1962). And even when the India-China relations edged in 1959 Menon still regarded China as all but an enemy. In stead he argued that the boarder incidents rose from the fact that China considered that the Tibetan refugees in India might return to Tibet and start a rebellion. Other Chinese motives underlying the border problem, according to Menon, were firstly that a certain Chinese “despondency” over internal economic problems existed and secondly the youthful, aggressive passion of the Chinese revolution (Langyel, 1962). All through the pre-crisis period Krishna Menon believed that frustration caused by the international isolation imposed on communist China was the factor which aided and guided the formation of the Japanese attitudes.

Throughout the whole conflict he remained certain that China had taken India mistakenly as representing threat from the imperialist west. On the question how to deal with the Sino-Indian conflict, Menon became the leading defender of a new school of thought. To that school the territorial disagreement between China and India was genuine, and not a reflection of deeper Chinese hostility.

According to the school a political settlement with the Chinese could be reached and might also include territorial compromise (Langyel, 1962).

In the political battle between India and China a lot of hard decisions had to be made. The authority of decision-making, as we saw, lay mainly in the hands of a few people in the high levels of the Indian authority building. Their appropriate actions in the Sino-Chinese border problem were of crucial importance. Some of them were hard to be taken, others were voted secretly and even some decisions were left undecided. India s correct evaluation of its conflict with China enabled her to act accordingly and carry out its plans in such a chronological order that would be best for its national security. The importance of correct decision-making and the ability to choose right from wrong is the single most important feature each political leader should try to control to the rate of perfection.