
The 1962 Sino-Indian War and Its Enduring Impact on Indian Federalism: With Reference to A Frontier State

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ABSTRACT: The study aims to comprehend and analyse the effects of the 1962 conflict on Indian federalism with reference to the Indian frontier state of Arunachal Pradesh. The entire NEFA (North East Frontier Agency), now known as Arunachal Pradesh, was occasionally claimed by China, causing the conflict to spread to parts of Northeast India. After the 1962 war, there was a noticeable change in government strategy as the Central Government became aware of the State's geostrategic importance. Although the McMahon Line conflict was dormant, it became more heated in the late 1950s with the escape of the Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama, into India. Analysis of the Centre's development from a minimal to a maximal level of governance in the area becomes crucial post-1962. Beyond infrastructure and social development, the Sino-Indian War of 1962 had repercussions, notably the nationalisation of the frontier region.

KEYWORDS: Federalism, Arunachal Pradesh, Centre, India, China

I. INTRODUCTION

The requirement to accommodate socio-cultural variety within a single political entity has always been a key motivator for the tendency toward federal forms of governance. Determining how and to what extent ethnolinguistic variance should be recognised and given a place in the political and administrative framework is thus something that the federal democracy of India may be considered as a continuing experiment to explore (Mukarji & Arora, 1992). The Indian Federation had its beginnings under British colonial rule and it was witnessed under the Acts of 1909, 1919, and 1935 (Sarkaria Commission, 1987). Federalism was seen by those who drafted the Indian Constitution as being important at the time for several reasons, prominent among them the size and sociocultural diversity of the country. In addition to ensuring the country's administration, they also thought that the federal system would strike a balance between regional autonomy and national unity. Austin is therefore precise when he asserts that the members of the Constituent Assembly refused to accept any theory or dogma on federalism. They believed that India had unique problems from those that other historical federations had experienced (Austin, 1972).

India adopted a Federal Parliamentary Democracy, and its constitution establishes two tiers of government, a federal and state level, with several checks and balances to encourage cooperation and efficient national governance. The political system was consequently intended to be robust, energetic, stable, and adaptive. In this way, the Indian Constitution satisfies the ideal standards for centralisation and decentralisation (Gehlot, 1999). As a result, Indian Federalism is correctly described as a quasi-federal system. The political organisations of India are a combination of the federal and unitary systems.

The state of Arunachal Pradesh is located in the north-eastern region of India. Interstate borders are shared by Assam to the state's south and Nagaland to the southwest. The state shares international boundaries with Bhutan to the west, Myanmar (Burma) to the east, and China to the north and east. Historically, to appease the tribes and protect the borders of his kingdom, the Ahom king offered them specific lands or gateways leading to the hills. These concessions were frequently made to provide the hill people with things that were not cultivated or available in the hills (Bose, 1997). A system of Posa was developed as a result of the Ahoms' policy of keeping the tribesmen living on the frontier in high spirits (Chakravarty, 2014). The frontier tribal groups operated autonomously as little republics inside their own individual areas during the Ahom era and the early years of the British government. Additionally, as was said above, most of the tribes were governed by their indigenous self-governing bodies, which are still in place in all the tribal villages of the state.

For a variety of reasons, the British Raj chose against using a direct military extension or a difficult method to govern the hilly area. Economic prospects in the form of different natural and forestry resources, including lumber, rubber, ivory, coal, and petroleum, as well as tea, were discovered by the British (Bose, 1997). The defence of the British Empire in the northeast boundary regions was one of the contradictory reasons why the British entered this frontier, so the policy's initial political objective was to use the tribes on the eastern periphery as a buffer between the recently acquired lands and the Kingdom of

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Burma. The British employed coercion as well as persuasive techniques to subdue the frontier tribes. Following Independence, or at least for the first few years in NEFA, the Independent Government of India followed the same strategy. Their limited authority in the region was largely based on their strategy of isolation policy, which aimed to keep the hill region away from an inflow of political ideas from the outside and prevent them from experiencing a national awakening (Bhattacharjee, 1994). As a result, the lands were kept beyond the purview of the standard laws of the British Empire and were managed in a special way by regulations, occasionally implementing processes.

The establishment of the Scheduled Districts through the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874 can be linked to the beginning of the state's administrative growth, while the Inner Line Regulation (The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation) was issued in the preceding year of 1873 (Pandey, 2012). In 1941, the British Indian Government authorised the expansion of the Political Officer's jurisdiction area over the Sadiya Frontier Tract up to the Mc Mohan Line in the Siang Valley. The Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation of 1945 is one of the important events in administrative history, notably the state's administration of justice (Luthra, 2017).

The slow and incremental expansion of the NEFA's administrative structure was taken seriously, especially after the 1962 Indo-Sino War. The Chinese invasion served as a wake-up call for the Indian government in terms of administering this frontier state, and it compelled the central government to reconsider its strategy. The state's swift development through a range of laws and other measures is indicative of the influence of China's aggression. It is especially significant that people in the state were becoming more politically and culturally aware of nationalism.

The North-East Frontier Agency (Administration) Regulation of 1965 marked a substantial advancement in the management of the frontier agency following the Indo-Sino war. The 1965 Regulation reconstituted the five Frontier Divisions into five Districts. The management of NEFA was moved from the Ministry of External Affairs to the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India in August 1965, as suggested by the Daying Ering Committee, during the same year. The Panchayat Raj, which came about as a result of the Daying Ering Committee Report of 1964, which suggested a new administration and political beginning for the frontier agency, to lay out a process for establishing a representative government of the people (Luthra).

II. AFTERMATH OF THE WAR ON THE FRONTIER STATE OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

In the Sino-Indian relationship, Arunachal should be viewed not only in the context of the boundary dispute but also in the context of the Centre-State relation. The way Arunachal Pradesh interacts with the rest of India, especially the Indian Central Government, has an impact on Sino-Indian ties as well as Beijing's interactions with Tibet. If the relationship between the Centre and the State in India is just and equitable, maintaining a just and necessary balance between local aspirations for peaceful and sustainable development and national security considerations, then China and Tibet can look to India and Arunachal as role models to follow. It is in this way that Arunachal will best fulfil its role as India's first line of defence (Jacob, 2015).

After the brief euphoria of 'Hindi-Chini bhai bhai' in the early 1950s, reality set in. In 1956, the Indian and Chinese approaches to the boundary started to diverge, and by the end of 1959, they were almost incompatible. India's security worries were exacerbated by the rebellion in Tibet, the Dalai Lama's flight, and China's military buildup close to the McMahon Line. The failure of the Zhou-Nehru negotiations in April 1960 in New Delhi signalled the end of a negotiated settlement, and the possibility of creating a unifying policy vanished. After the Summit's failure, Nehru's plan to move the issue from a political to a legal level was unsuccessful. His later course of action, which was made public in India's so-called "forward strategy" in Ladakh, was founded on the steadfast conviction that, while it would result in sporadic border disputes, it would not result in war (Mehra, 2007).

A. Infrastructural Development

Any nation must invest in its infrastructure if it wants to prosper. Infrastructure, particularly at the country's borders, is essential for ensuring defence security. Following 1962, Arunachal Pradesh's strategic importance started to be highlighted in India's external defence strategy. The Indian government has taken several noteworthy measures that reveal a growing understanding of the significance of the region, including border population censuses, the establishment of border posts, routine army deployment at strategic locations, bilateral talks, and the implementation of various schemes.

After 1962, the military significance of Arunachal Pradesh and its geostrategic importance became relevant to the Centre, because the Ministry of Defence and other Central Government ministries were concerned about giving the Chinese more advantages in the event of another attack, as physical infrastructure development in Arunachal was initially purposefully delayed for several decades. Infrastructure improvement is now clearly seen, especially being made in response to China's own military modernisation and significant infrastructure improvement in Tibet (Garver, 2001).

It is vital to talk about the Chinese side's infrastructure development while talking about the aftermath of the 1962 conflict. China is building infrastructure along the Sino-Indian border quickly as part of its development plans for Tibet and to get ready for any defensive or offensive operations. China has constructed roadways to and along the disputed territory, as well as extra airbases, landing strips, and supply sites, to make military deployments and operations easier. It is constructing additional roads, rail, and other ground transportation facilities in Xinjiang and Tibet, in addition to the aviation infrastructure. According to official

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projections, Tibet's transportation infrastructure increased faster than any other province, region, or municipality between 2015 and 2020, from 7,840 km to 11,820 km. In 2021, China completed the construction of a new road and tunnel system linking Medog County, a rural area immediately on the China-India border, to Nyingchi, in eastern Tibet. The purpose of the 14th Five-Year Plan, China's national economic blueprint for 2021–2025, is to accelerate the construction of strategic backbone corridors connecting Xinjiang and Tibet. The first high-speed rail line in Tibet opened in 2021 and runs between Nyingchi and the regional capital Lhasa. The new road will make it possible for people to move about Tibet's eastern region without difficulty, as well as for PLA (People's Liberation Army) personnel and equipment. China's border with India's Arunachal Pradesh is only 15 kilometres from the Nyingchi Mainling Airport (Pao, 2021).

According to an article in Arunachal Times daily, China has also started building new civilian settlements near the borders in keeping with the recently announced plan to construct 628 first and second-line moderately affluent villages along China's border with India, Bhutan, and Nepal (Pao). Robert Barnett's inquiry revealed that parts of Beyul, a village on Bhutan's western borders, have also been occupied by China. China has warned Bhutan since 1990 that if it gave up the Beyul, it would forfeit its claim to the region because it desired small pockets of territory on Bhutan's western frontiers that would give it a military advantage over India (Ghildiyal, 2021).

On the eastern side of the Indian border, efforts are being undertaken to counter the Chinese. India was compelled by the 1962 conflict to see the northeast as a vital boundary in terms of its national security. After the conflict, India pushed for the construction of a basic network of roads and military outposts close to key locations. India's top national security policy-making body, the Cabinet Committee on Security, gave its approval in 2006 for the construction of 73 essential roads along the LAC. The concept sought to provide facilities and economic opportunities for communities living in remote border locales while military considerations played a role in the decision to improve border infrastructure (Ramachandran, 2016).

India is encouraging the building of border infrastructure to counteract these changes. Strategically significant roads, trains, and bridges have been completed, including those at Bogibeel, Sadiya, Bomjir, and Sissirri. Six ALGs were commissioned, and they are located in Pasighat, Ziro, Aalo, Mechukha, Tuting, and Walong. There are two projected railway routes, Missamari-Tenga Valley-Tawang and Murkongselek-Pasighat-Tezu-Namsai. Along with the Trans-Arunachal Highway, new roads were supposed to be constructed close to the border. Other important routes, including Tezu-Hayuliang-Walong, Yingkiong-Tutting, Likabali-Aalo-Mechukha/Manigong and Daporijo-Limeking-Taksing, are in disrepair. North of the Brahmaputra, hardened shelters and ammunition stockpiles are all in short supply. Residents are migrating to areas further inland because border settlements lack infrastructure (Pao).

B. Socio-economic initiatives and Nationalisation of the Frontier State

Along with the infrastructure, efforts of the Central Government can also be seen in the form of socio-economic programmes in the State. Arunachal Pradesh is one of the state governments that have been carrying out the Border Area Development Programme (BADP) as part of a comprehensive border management strategy. The BADP's goals are to provide for the specific developmental needs and welfare of those residing in isolated areas close to international borders, to saturate border areas with all necessary infrastructure through the fusion of BADP and local programmes, and to encourage a sense of security and well-being among the border population. The Central Government's approval of the Vibrant Villages Program (VVP) in five Himalayan border states, including Arunachal Pradesh, is another step in this direction. The programme plans to encompass border settlements along the northern border that have a low population, poor connection, and underdeveloped infrastructure and are frequently excluded from the benefits of development.

The legitimacy of the McMahon Line has been the subject of allegations and counterclaims between China and India, which has made state politics and economic development liable to geopolitics and military strategy. Thus, the Indian government has nationalised the border state through several strategies both before and after 1962, though more overtly in the latter.

In Arunachal Pradesh, the Community Development Programme was first implemented in 1952 with a single local initiative. The Community Extension Service Block was enlarged in 1953. There were just five such Blocks during the first Five-Year Plan era; during the third plan period, there were 41 Blocks. The McMahon Line Agreement of 1914 did not change the daily lives of those who lived in the frontier regions on either side of the Line. Bartering and matrimonial partnerships were common social and economic connections in societies and persisted unhindered even after India attained independence. The ground situation was changed by the 1962 War and the McMahon Line unexpectedly went operational. As a result of the altered circumstances, two hostile political camps, India and China, were formed, dividing families and clans. All communications were cut off, and independent economies were transformed into dependent ones using a barter system. The population remained reliant on government supplies delivered by airstrikes. Many of the transient frontier groups live apart on either side of the contentious international border now because they were split between India and China after 1962 (Bath & Babin, 2021).

The Sino-Indian War of 1962 had implications beyond infrastructure and socioeconomic growth, including the nationalisation of the frontier area. The then NEFA was made to feel emotionally and culturally integrated with the mainland. As a result, despite having a distinctive cultural and traditional significance, Arunachal Pradesh and its inhabitants are more Indianized than many of their North Eastern counterparts. Even before the 1962 war, there was a presence of nationalistic feelings; during

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and after the 1962 war, this feeling became more widespread. However, initially, there was ambiguity about nationalism among the residents of this borderland and therefore, nationalising such places became vital for the government (Sayeda, 2020).

A key step in establishing nationalist predominance in NEFA was the use of Hindi as a language of instruction. The Government of India's B.V. Kesar, Minister of Broadcasting and Information from 1952 to 1962, said Hindi would serve as the same kind of cultural link between NEFA and the rest of the country (Dawar, 2001). Although the Assamese public opposed the policy of using Hindi as the primary language of education. Following the end of the war in 1962, the following became the situation regarding the medium of instruction: Assamese, Hindi, and English training started in Grade levels respectively (Chowdhury, 1996). The indigenous people began speaking Hindi to the Indian soldiers and BRO (Border Roads Organisation) officials who arrived in the region as a result. Hindi eventually replaced Assamese as the primary language spoken by the many tribes that inhabited the area. Given that all the tribes in the state speak a language other than English, which is the official language, Hindi is currently the preferred language for communication among the people of the State.

There were many ways the boundary was nationalised by the Centre. The state administration, which was then governed by the Government of India, ostensibly prohibited the functioning of institutions run by Christian missionaries of any religion in order to avoid meddling from the outside world. However, with the administration's active backing, Hindu missionaries, including Sarada Mission, Vivekananda Kendras, and Ramakrishna Mission, were permitted entry into the area (Bath & Babin).

III. IMPLICATIONS ON INDIAN FEDERALISM (Related to the Frontier State)

While continuing to emphasise Arunachal's military importance, the Centre is aware that, at a time when the likelihood of a major conflict between India and China is declining, Arunachal's importance in the context of a settlement of the boundary dispute lies in establishing an international case for India's retention of the region and combating perceptions of a lack of economic and infrastructure development in the region. They draw attention to the reality that India's key priorities are economic development and international support for such projects. To advance this, the Indian government has focused mainly on the state's abundant natural energy resources, notably its potential for hydroelectric power, as incentives for domestic investors and international multilateral funds. There is no question that Arunachal needs economic development and assistance in modernising its social, cultural, and political institutions in the age of globalisation, but the question is whether the Indian Government has a well-thought-out plan in place for doing so (Jacob).

Following 1962, development efforts were accelerated, and efforts were made to establish representative institutions so that the region could become more integrated into national political life. The "Nehru-Elwin Policy" was revisited, but nationalist and strategic considerations remained at the core of the Indian government's policy framework. According to Elwin, the idea of nationalising a frontier zone would, in the eyes of the critics, mean expanding the tribals' sphere of association and contact with the outside world rather than containing them within their small social group.

The Government of India established home guard units of frontier tribes called Lok Sahayak Sena in response to the Chinese incursion with the intention of instilling a sense of patriotism and capitalising on the martial tradition of the frontier tribes. The population, who were already skilled in patrolling and reconnaissance techniques, gladly accepted it and underwent regular instruction from army commanders in military discipline and firearms use (Choudhury, 1982). Additionally, it was believed that the settling of non-natives in NEFA, such as Chakmas, Hajongs, Tibetans, and ex-servicemen, would aid in the development of areas where the local population was unwilling or unable to occupy. The Administration assumed that having tracts of idle land along the border was strategically undesirable and the past emergency had emphasised this concern.

IV. CONCLUSION

With a look back at their magnificent pasts and a realisation of their enormous potential, India and China can help define the outlines of modern international relations. The demographic advantages, thriving diaspora, geostrategic locations, and models of sustained economic growth have all emerged as important factors in determining their bilateral and multilateral ties. In this scenario, India and China can set the tone thanks to their stronger soft power assets than their international competitors (Pattnaik, 2015). War is not a good alternative to settle the border conflict, as demonstrated by the experience of the 1962 War. It is true that since 1962, India has used a large portion of its limited resources to strengthen its military and it has significantly improved its military capability. But it is also crucial to keep in mind that China is currently a potent military force in the world. If India and China were to engage in another battle, many believe it would be more savage and devastating. The people of Arunachal Pradesh will be the first and worst victims of the conflict in the current situation, regardless of which nation ultimately prevails or fails. Therefore, the best course of action for India is to communicate with China in a meaningful way, using logic and reason (Srikanth, 2015).

A different economic perspective between the two neighbours can be taken, in place of the military one. For instance, with its location in the Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh and elevation of 4,070 feet above sea level, Kibithoo has the geoeconomic potential to be developed into an all-weather route to China's Tibet Autonomous Region, Sichuan, and Yunnan. It would give the Indian industry shorter, quicker access to the southwest and southeast Chinese markets. Additionally, the emergence of Kibithoo

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as an entrepot would present an opportunity for China and India to reorient their emphasis from security to trade or economic partnerships built on sustainable engagement paradigms. However, given China's adamant stance on the McMahon line, it is unclear how Arunachal Pradesh can be incorporated into the greater framework of free trade architecture to seize the prospects in the India-China sector. To be very clear, any cross-border initiative must be built on compatibilities between parties rather than on inconsistencies or hegemony to dictate the structure of any subregional or regional architecture. The unilateral Chinese position would only fuel tension between the two Asian superpowers and impede the region's progress and tranquillity (Pattnaik, 2021). The future of Asia can be shaped by India and China, two emerging global powers, via cooperation and a common vision. In order to maintain cross-border contact between China and India, proactive discussions and strategic readiness must be maintained. At this point, an Indo-Chinese discussion on border issues and strong opposition by the Indian Government to the Chinese claim on Arunachal Pradesh are needed to turn the geostrategic zone of Arunachal Pradesh into an economic zone.

The slow progress of India's border infrastructure projects is frequently attributed to bureaucratic red tape, corruption, difficult terrain, short working seasons in high-altitude locations, difficulties obtaining environmental permits and other local factors. The surveying and marking of borders, the construction of border posts, the routine deployment of the army at strategic locations, bilateral negotiations, border population censuses, and the implementation of various programmes are all noteworthy actions taken by the Indian government that show a growing understanding of the significance of the region.

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