

# **India and the South Asian Strategic Triangle**

**Ashok Kapur**



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Ashok Kapur

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# India and the South Asian Strategic Triangle

This book traces the triangular strategic relationship of India, Pakistan and China over the second half of the twentieth century, and shows how two enmities – Sino-Indian and Indo-Pakistani – and one friendship – Sino-Pakistani – defined the distribution of power and the patterns of relationships in a major centre of gravity of international conflict and international change. The three powers are tied to each other and their actions reflect their view of strategic and cultural problems and geo-politics in a volatile area.

The book considers internal debates within the three countries; zones of conflict, including northeast and northwest south Asia, the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean; and the impact of developments in nuclear weapons and missile technology. It examines the destructive consequences of China's harsh methods in Tibet, of China's encouragement of military rather than democratic regimes in Pakistan, and of China's delay in dealing with the border disputes with India. Ashok Kapur shows how the Nehru-Zhou rhetoric about "peaceful co-existence" affected the relationship, and how the dynamics of the relationship have changed significantly in recent years as a range of new factors – including India's increasing closeness to the United States – have moved the relationship into a new phase.

**Ashok Kapur** is Distinguished Professor Emeritus in Political Science, University of Waterloo, Canada. He is author of several major works including *India – From Regional to World Power* (also published by Routledge), and is co-author of *Government & Politics in South Asia*, 6th edition.

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# Preface and acknowledgements

Foreign policy is widely recognized by practitioners as an interaction between forces within a country and outside its borders. The historical evolution of India–China–Pakistan relationships shows that their destinies are tied together by a pattern of conflict that affects each country's territorial security, and its diplomatic and political identity and international position. The pattern indicates that strategic and cultural conflict is inevitable between China and India and India and Pakistan but a future war is not inevitable despite the past history of wars. However, unwinding the intractable history of conflicts is a laborious process which shows that it is easier to hate and to fight than to organize peaceful ties.

This book appears at a time of uncertainty in the development of international diplomatic and strategic thought and policy. 2010 is the year of the tiger but who is the tiger or are several in play? One view, a popular one, by Martin Jacques 'When China rules the world' (2009) sees China's remarkable economic performance, military might, Han unity and political determination, along with America's economic weakness and the disunity of the Western world a sign of China's ascendancy and Western decline. A different view, Victor Louis's 'The coming decline of the Chinese empire' (1979) points to the coercive pattern of empire building and demographic engineering that negatively affects its governance capacity and internal legitimacy. Louis, widely seen as a KGB operative, was criticized for his provocative approach but the rioting in Tibet and Xinjiang in 2008–9 gives validity to his view. My book takes the position that America still possesses a strong military and economic infrastructure; it possesses significant soft power for example in the vitality of its educational system, and even though it has a capacity for self-deception in its international endeavours it also has a capacity to correct itself through reasoned public debate. China's ascendancy is not permanent because it lacks the qualities of pluralism, democracy and internal legitimacy, and Beijing is facing a succession issue by 2012. Its experiment with inner party democracy has stalled and it lacks an institutionalized self-corrective mechanism. Yet it must deal with forces within China and outside its borders, especially among its immediate geographical neighbours.

That is, the year of the tiger is not necessarily the year of the Chinese tiger. Realistically it may be described as an era of several caged or inhibited tigers. The interaction between China and India is a story of two tigers in diplomatic and military affairs although India is often compared to a laborious elephant or a noisy duck; however, both systems have advantages and disadvantages. China possesses more hard power and less legitimacy as a world citizen and as a government in relation to its people; India has less hard power compared to China but more soft power as a result of its pluralistic model and status quo and reformist international orientation. China relies on patriotic education to mobilize its nationalism; Indian nationalism on the other hand has stronger roots because it is grounded in a quest for discussion and consent among India and its foreign constituents. As long as Indian practitioners are able to maintain their leverage with hostile neighbours and difficult allies, and are able to maintain a capacity to escalate and negotiate, the asymmetries in the distribution of economic and military power measured statistically are less important than the political skill required to form leverage and manoeuvrability in regional and international politics.

It has taken me a long time to prepare a book that is historically accurate, that provides innovative academic insights for the practitioners and is forward looking. The three countries examined do not make an easy study because they have not opened their diplomatic archives for independent scholarly assessments and hence I have had to rely on the open literature and confidential interviews. The backing of Canada's Social and Humanities Research Council in the course of my academic career enabled me to travel to New Delhi, Beijing, Shanghai, Islamabad and Karachi in addition to Western capitals and to discuss pertinent issues for this book. Often the most informative discussions involved government practitioners who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Several key individuals made the completion and publication of this work possible. Peter Sowden, Editor in Asian Studies, Routledge, supported the project. He gave me the freedom to express my views while insisting on high scholarly standards. I thank also the anonymous reviewer who offered critical comments and useful suggestions. Mrs Madhuri Sondhi and her late husband Professor M. L. Sondhi introduced me to a senior official in the Tibetan government in exile in New Delhi and I am grateful for the conversations and the materials provided by him. Shivani Singh provided research assistance. I thank Heidi Cormode for her careful copy editing, and Emma Hart for her admirable care and oversight in the book's production.

I dedicate this book to my wife, Deepika, who has believed in my work and has encouraged me over the years to write and inform but also to be humble about success and hungry for more knowledge, always.

Ashok Kapur  
Waterloo, Ontario  
January 2010

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# 1 Introduction

This book examines the strategic approaches and the character of relationships among three major players in the Himalayan-South Asian region since 1947/49. I argue that a strategic triangle exists among the three. It emerged in the early 1960s and it was the culmination of two bilateral conflicts, Indo-Pakistani and Sino-Indian that involved diplomatic rivalry, conflicting worldviews, and war. The relations among the three have evolved – from diplomatic rivalry to war, and later from war to strategic discourse, but the three have been tied together. The evolution reveals two trends – from diplomatic rivalry to the formation of triangularity that was inspired by the policies of China and Pakistan. India has been a latecomer as a participant in triangular strategic politics but once it joined the game the three players have found it difficult to disengage themselves from it. Hence this triangular pattern of alignments and interactions has developed an institutional and a robust character in a geo-politically sensitive part of world politics. The first trend led to the formation of a tight strategic triangle in the early 1960s that was similar to the period of tight and tense bipolarity between the super-powers during the Cold War. The second trend has evolved since the late 1980s; it represents the current pattern of relationships among the three, and here the three members of the triangle have taken steps, by way of reciprocal action, to tone down the conflictual relationships, to build strategic dialogues and to find common economic and political ground even though the military competition has continued among them. I call the second trend a period of loose triangularity.

The formation of the strategic triangle was based on different historical, diplomatic, and leadership imperatives for each country. For China the history of rivalry between imperial (Manchu) China, British India, Russia and Tibet gave its southern policy a geo-political focus that was core to the actions of the Chinese communists vis-à-vis the Tibetans and the Indians after 1949. The pre-1949 experiences were cast in triangular terms, for example, in the interactions between Manchu China, Tibet and British India, and at times between China, Tibet and Russia. Beijing's leaders also understood the importance of strategic triangles from their internal civil war that brought them to power. They dealt with the US–Kuomintang–communist triangle

## 2 Introduction

during the civil war in the 1940s and the KMT–Japan–Chinese communist triangle in the 1930s. Communist China's ideology and diplomacy recognizes that it cannot pursue its interests unaided. Mao argued, 'China's strength alone will not be sufficient, and we shall also have to rely on the support of international forces or otherwise we shall not be able to win; this adds to China's tasks in international propaganda and diplomacy'.<sup>1</sup>

Zhou Enlai pointed out the character of China's diplomacy. He made three points. 1. 'Does diplomacy refer to relations between countries or between peoples? Should we approach states or people? We must unite with the people of all countries not only fraternal countries but also former colonial and semi-colonial countries and capitalist countries. But the function of diplomacy is to deal with relations between states'. 2. There are two kinds of friendly countries: those that will be friendly more or less constantly and those that are friendly just for the time being. Even these last differ from each other. Some are our friends for a short time, while others remain so for a relatively long period. 3. 'We should be flexible in our diplomatic work, relying on the progressives, uniting with the middle-of-the-road forces and splitting the die-hards. In this way we will open up new prospects for diplomatic work. It is wrong to think that the world is simply divided into two conflicting camps and that there is nothing we can do to improve it'.<sup>2</sup>

For Chinese practitioners participation in diplomatic and military triangles is a way to build its fronts, to create leverage for its power, and to exploit contradictions in the enemy camp for China's advantage. Communist Chinese diplomacy continues to be involved in triangles. In 1972 the Shanghai communiqué represented the formation of the US–PRC–USSR triangle. Currently, there is a US–Japan–China triangle in play in the Far East. Contemporary studies on China's foreign affairs note the importance of triangular diplomacy.<sup>3</sup>

Pakistan too has been an enthusiastic seeker of international solutions and triangularity in its fight with India. Indian Muslims who spearheaded the Pakistan movement were keenly aware of their minority position and were aware of the need to secure Western aid to protect their interests and to develop an independent status. Before 1947 Pakistan-oriented Muslims in India sought and formed a triangular relationship between British India government which supported Muslim fears and aspirations vis-à-vis the 'Hindu-dominated' Congress national party. This was the view of the Pakistani Muslims and the British government even though India's independence leaders projected themselves as a nationalist and a secular organization and movement. From the early 1950s Pakistan's government sought Western diplomatic and military ties initially with the UK and then with the US, to protect its identity and its territoriality, and to widen its diplomatic and military influence in the Subcontinent and in world politics especially in Middle Eastern affairs. The UK/US–Pakistan vis-à-vis India triangularity had an ideological and a strategic basis because Pakistan was judged to be a part of the inner circle of Western defence against Soviet expansionism during the

Cold War, and Indian nonalignment made it an unreliable element in Cold War politics. US military and diplomatic aid to Pakistan commenced in 1954, it affected the Indo-Pakistani military balance and it polarized the political relations between India and Pakistan and India and the US.

The US–Pakistan relationship soured when the UK and US provided military and diplomatic aid to India following the war with China in 1962. Pakistan accepted Beijing's overture to form a common front against India because both shared a common enmity. This aspect of Pakistan's link with China is stressed in my book because it has developed deep roots and staying power based on geographical contiguity, common strategic purpose to check India's growing regional and international presence and unresolved territorial issues. This triangularity pertains to core sovereignty and international status issues which did not inform the US–Pakistan–India triangularity of the 1950s. US policy was driven by a concern with communist expansionism into Third World regions. The US did not have a territorial dispute with India, it questioned Nehru's nonaligned policy and links with communist countries, it, of course, sought to settle the Kashmir dispute to the satisfaction of Pakistan and the US, but when international circumstances changed and the 1962 war happened the US government shifted its policy gears in India's favour. By doing so it indicated a desire to check China's expansionism and to preserve India's territorial integrity. Pakistan and China had no such commitments.

Pakistan's shift to an embrace of China as its international partner from the early 1960s showed its estimate of China as a reliable friend and the US as an unreliable one. Both however, showed the importance of Pakistani leaders' desire to form triangular relationships to check India's influence in the region and in the world, and to borrow external power to manage the Indians and to facilitate the presence of the external forces in the strategic game of the Subcontinent. Note that Pakistan is the weakest military power compared to China and India but it has been the most consistent practitioner among the three (or four and five if America and Russia are included) of triangular strategy as a way to advance its diplomatic and military interests since its independence in 1947.

Philosophically, Nehru's India was the least inclined to join a geo-politically driven strategic triangle. Several reasons explain why India was the slowest compared to Pakistan, China, and the US to adapt its diplomacy and military strategy to the requirements of triangularity until after the 1962 war with China forced a reconsideration of the basic tenets of Nehru's worldview and Indian diplomacy and military strategy. Nehru was the prime Indian decision maker in foreign and military affairs during the 1950s. He had a pronounced attachment to the theory of Indian nonalignment and a policy of peace rather than India's involvement in foreign alliances or in the use of force to settle diplomatic issues or world problems. He insisted that India's approach was guided by assessment of issues on their merits while balance of power politics and Cold War politics were deemed to be dangerous to world peace. He emphasized the importance of building bilateral relations with

neighbours as well as the major powers in the world. In his speeches he viewed the world system as a constellation of four powers – America, Russia, China and India. The global view over-rode consideration of regional triangularity with Pakistan and China. Second, Nehru had emerged as a major leader in the anti-colonial struggle against Britain. His political ideology and life experiences relied on political action based on high ideals rather than through war or diplomatic negotiations and compromises. Nehru and Gandhi had pushed the exit of Britain from India in 1947 but the framework of the negotiation was based on British and Indian liberal political values, and the participants on both sides were British leaders and Indian leaders who were mentored by British ideas and ideals. India's political leaders lacked experience with successful negotiations with Pakistani Muslims before 1947; their failure to accommodate and compromise with them was partly responsible for the growth of the Pakistan movement and the theory that Indians would not accommodate themselves to interests of Indian Muslims. Nehru had an internationalist outlook based on his study of fascism in Europe but he did not possess practical experience of war or negotiation. He also took great interest in China's fight against Japan and Western imperialism but he lacked an insider's view of the aims and methods of Chinese communists. His assessment of the rise of the USSR and the Bolsheviks was couched in terms of the worldwide struggle against imperialism and colonialism and the need for internal social and economic reform and global reform against balance of power and Cold War politics and alliances. His agenda was to build bridges – East-West, and North-South, to make the world safe against the danger of war and nuclear weapons, and to promote the causes of Russia and China in world affairs. Preventing the rise of regional triangularity and managing its destructive consequences for India was not a major part of Nehru's world-view. Even as Nehru took a negative view of the US–Pakistan alliance it was seen as an introduction of the Cold War into the Subcontinent (because it would incline Moscow to react against Washington's move into its southern belly) and a challenge to Indo-Pakistani stability (because it would promote the militarization of Pakistan's internal politics and its foreign affairs).

Four points are relevant in consideration of India's role in the China–Pakistan–India triangle. First, India was the slowest of the three members to publicly accept the inevitability of its involvement in the triangle as a basis of its regional foreign policy, and more significantly, accept that geo-politics is a stronger basis of foreign affairs rather than the politics of peace and nuclear disarmament. Over time the emphasis on bilateralism and peace or 'friendly relations with all' (not the best possible relations with friends and foes) as guiding principles of Indian foreign affairs has been relaxed in favour of attention to international and regional developments that form the context of Indian foreign affairs. Second, once the consciousness emerged in the Indian strategic and political mind about the effect of regional developments on Indian interests, the basis of triangularity incrementally gained ground in Indian thinking and policy planning; but it was a slow, retarded and not

a rational development in the 1950s and the 1960s as one would expect of a professionally run government. For instance, China's forceful takeover of Tibet in 1950 and the use of force against the Tibetans threw up the reality of triangularity between Chinese, Tibetan and Indian actions. Another instance, once the US–Pakistan military alignment was formed in the early 1950s the reality of a US–Pakistan–India diplomatic and military triangle set in. India countered this development by securing an alignment with Moscow, first with Stalin and later with Khrushchev which gave India support on the Kashmir issue and became a source of economic and military aid as well. Here India was participating in the development of these triangles but one looks in vain in Nehru's speeches or his writings or in Indian official communiqués for an acknowledgement that peace diplomacy or bilateral friendships was not a realistic basis to construct Indian foreign and military affairs. Third, triangularity became pronounced and public in war and crisis situations in regional confrontations – 1962 war with China, and 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan. Fourth and finally, Indian diplomacy now uses both bilateralism and triangularities in the pursuit of its interests. It appears that bilateralism is preferred when India has a military and a diplomatic edge over the other side, as in relations with Pakistan, but strategic triangularity is preferred when the other side has an edge, or when uncertainties exist in a crisis situation, and in these circumstances external diplomatic and military aid is sought along with alignment(s). One can see the growth of triangularities in Indian foreign affairs since the late 1990s. The India–Israel defence and diplomatic links are tied to the rise of Islamist politics in the Middle Eastern–South Asian region. The US–India civil nuclear energy agreement was tied to concerns about Chinese and Pakistani nuclear weapons proliferation and the formation of US–India–China links was motivated by uncertainty about China's 'peaceful rise'. The trend towards formation of such triangularities – for instance, between India, Turkey and Israel, is likely to persist when much of the world is in transition. My conclusion is that India was the slowest of the three to join the triangular game in reaction to the policies of her neighbours, and in opposition to the diplomatic ideology of Nehru and his fellow travellers, but now its membership of the regional triangularity has developed a sticky character and it is no longer up to China and Pakistan to induce Indian disengagement without a negotiated settlement of pending issues. My concluding chapter addresses this theme.

### **This triangle has peculiar characteristics**

The special characteristics of this triangle include the following:

- Its three members are geographical neighbours but two of the three have not acted as good neighbours; their diplomatic relations are based on two major diplomatic and military rivalries – between India and Pakistan, and India and China. The rivalries are based on conflicting territorial claims,

conflicting worldviews and diplomatic ambitions, conflicting regional ambitions, and asymmetrical distribution of economic and military power among the three.

- Since the emergence of this triangle in the early 1960s it has acquired a structure and dynamics of its own because of the domestic and external compulsions of each member, and as a result of learning and re-learning by the practitioners. Between the early 1960s and the present the history of these relations indicates that neither member can opt out of the strategic game with each other. They are tied by questions of territorial conflicts, military and nuclear policies, and their international and regional status and political identity.
- Although the distribution of economic and military power is clearly asymmetrical between India and Pakistan, India does not have a winning strategy to achieve asymmetrical gain with Pakistan because Indian power is checked or balanced by China's aid to Pakistan and by US pressure on India not to push Pakistan into a diplomatic corner or at a military disadvantage. At the same time despite the asymmetry between Chinese and Indian economic and military power China too does not possess a winning strategy against India because it fears the presence of countervailing American and Russian support for India's diplomatic and military aims.
- Historical examples of strategic triangles, as discussed by the foremost student of this phenomenon Professor Martin Wight, had an end game. Either its members had a winning strategy as in the Western-Soviet fight against Germany during the Second World War, or a triangle ended with the collapse of a key member, as in the case of the US-PRC-USSR triangle that ended with the implosion of the USSR. (The characteristics of Martin Wight's triangles are discussed in a later chapter.) The Pakistan-China-India triangle does not reveal a serious discussion about an end game in the thinking of the practitioners in these countries. This book assesses two opposite possibilities. The first is that the failure of its members to formulate an end game through a winnable strategy means that the three are expected to be locked into triangular strategic relations involving continuous military and economic competition and diplomatic talks that lack the prospect of a negotiated political settlement vis-à-vis each other. The second possibility is that a member of this triangle implodes. The guesswork is that Pakistan is the most likely candidate to do so given the fast pace of the spread of Talibanization from Afghanistan to the Swat valley, to Pakistan's cultural-political-military heartland, the Punjab. China and India too have their respective internal political and economic problems and these attract serious attention by different experts. The latter changes suggest a weakening of Chinese and Indian power and capacity for internal governance but it does not imply an imminent or inevitable breakdown of the political and military structure of the two countries as do developments within Pakistan at the time of writing. Weakening of China and Indian internal power (even as the two continue their respective

military modernizations) implies a loss of state capacity and political will to formulate a winning strategy against regional rivals but it does not imply a breakdown of the state system in the two countries. The first possibility has an implication for the theory of triangles inasmuch as theory does not anticipate a long shelf life for strategic triangles. The second possibility, in this case the implosion of Pakistan and the end of its membership in the triangle would validate Wight's approach. It is premature at this point to make a call on either possibility.

- The long shelf life of this triangle is explained in part by the learning and re-learning that occurred in the leadership styles and diplomatic and military machineries of the three players. In the early 1950s, following the flush of victory of communism in China under Mao Beijing had a powerful attitude about its history, about the future of Chinese communism, about the importance of its frontier security and politics and the importance of aggressive military tactics; frontier insecurity and over-confidence in the role of its political will and military tactics were in play in China's conduct in the 1950s in its southern zone. At the same time Nehru's diplomatic policy and leadership style had different roots and experiences. He was flushed with a powerful attitude about India's civilization, its diplomatic strength and high potential as an independent country and a future as a major power along with America, Russia and China. He had no negotiating experience in the world of regional conflicts, and he had a limited interest in determining the aggressive character of China's military and geo-politically driven moves in the Himalayan region, in determining the location of India's territorial boundary in relation to China or in negotiating a settlement. He made a subtle and self-serving distinction between talking to the Chinese about the border in the mid to late 1950s but against negotiating with them because he did not recognize that a dispute existed in the 1950s since, in his view, the basis of the boundary was historically determined. Chinese and Indian leadership styles differed in their respective approaches to relations with the 'imperialists'. Beijing relied on national defence and diplomacy to check the imperialists and to deal with them from a position of strength, and to treat both America and Russia at different times as threats to Chinese interests. Nehru on the other hand sought a position for himself and India as a bridge builder with two of China's main enemies – America and Russia, and sought to gain their confidence and support for India's economic and military needs by building ties with them. The diplomatic and the military record of the 1950s shows that Indian practitioners drifted into a military conflict with China in part because of Nehru's over-confident leadership style, in part because of inter-ministerial disagreements about the actual location of the China–India boundary and the legal position during the 1950s, and because of the unwillingness of Indian practitioners to understand the value of propaganda and deception in China's statecraft.<sup>4</sup> India learned its lessons after its defeat in 1962 and internal reforms led to a process of diplomatic and

military engagement with China. By refusing to capitulate to China's victory, the refusal to accept 1962 as something more than a defeat in a single episode in battle, the engagement established a basis to escalate the controversy and to push China into a scenario to either negotiate with India on Indian terms, or to escalate by building a front against India via Pakistan. As is known, Beijing took the latter route and the game was joined. Here Indian learning and re-learning in the 1960s from its mistakes in the 1950s, and China's continued determination to check Indian ambitions were twin factors that shaped the triangle and its shelf life.

### **The existence of this triangle is not self evident because Chinese and Western scholars have ignored its existence**

China's practitioners and scholars have ignored the existence and durability of this triangle for several reasons.

- The People's Republic of China has had a dismissive public attitude about India's presence in regional and in international affairs since 1947. As per John Gittings Chinese leaders thought of India as 'feeble minded bourgeoisie' that was tied to Western anti-China imperialist forces. China's leaders had a positive self-image and a negative image of India and her leaders. India was not deemed to be truly independent despite the British withdrawal from India in 1947.
- In their conversations with President Nixon and Henry Kissinger, Mao and Chen Yi openly expressed contempt for Indian philosophy, Gandhian pacifism and India's freedom struggle.<sup>5</sup>
- Communist Chinese writings on foreign affairs such as the work by Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen (1988–98) and the strategic journal of the China Institute for International Strategic Studies, an authoritative forum for Chinese strategic assessments, have examined the US–USSR–China triangle and the US–Japan–China triangle, but there is no consideration of the China–India–Pakistan triangular relationships. The focus is on bilateral ties, India is bracketed with Pakistan in Chinese political writings, and China's approach to South Asian diplomatic and military issues is cast in terms of China's international position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Beijing's approach since the early 1960s showed a positive institutional bias towards Pakistan that merited significant aid in the form of conventional armament, nuclear and missile technology transfers and diplomatic support and intervention on Pakistan's behalf in regional wars and crises vis-à-vis the US government and at the United National Security Council. The positive bias towards Pakistan and a negative one towards India reflected Beijing's assessment in the mid 1950s. As conveyed to the Pakistan government and as reported by a knowledgeable source Rushbrook Williams, Beijing saw a conflict of interest with India but not so with Pakistan and sought a Pakistan linkage



on that basis. The negative bias towards India reflected Beijing's concerns about the orientation and international relations of India. Despite Nehru's advocacy of Chinese positions with the Western powers the awareness of a Sino-Indian diplomatic competition between Nehru and Zhou Enlai in the Third World coloured Beijing's attitude. Indian concerns about Beijing's intervention in Tibet, the collapse of the Tibetan buffer and the sympathy with the Dalai Lama, cast a shadow on the bilateral relationship. For Beijing Nehru's foreign affairs had the taint of a pro-Russia tilt during the Cold War along with a pro-Western tilt, and given the history of rivalry between Stalin and Mao and the political leadership on both sides, Nehru's access to Moscow and Washington contrasted with China's international isolation and lack of full Soviet support for Chinese aims in the Korean War, in relation to the liberation of Taiwan, the Sino-Indian border dispute and the future of Indo-China. Finally, the use of India as a base of CIA covert operation in Tibet was a source of suspicion and animosity.<sup>6</sup>

The conflict of interest between China and India and the latter's refusal to accept China's pre-eminence in Asia or in the Subcontinent has shaped the pattern of strategic interactions of China, India and Pakistan in relation to each other. The aforesaid outline shows why China and India have been on a collision course and are likely to remain in this mode because the diplomatic theories of the two Asian rivals are at odds as are their self-images. Both see themselves as destined to play an important role in Asia and the world. Both see themselves with a legacy as great civilizations. Both possess significant economic and military capacities to engage each other and major members of the world community. But their approaches to international relations vary. During the Mao-Zhou era China saw itself as a revolutionary world power and the pre-eminent power; it did not recognize Japan or India as worthy of the distinction. Indian leaders saw India as one of four major powers – along with America, Russia and China. Mao and Zhou valued armed struggle and liberation theology as the basis of their international legitimacy and as a basis of China's foreign affairs. Indian leaders sought peaceful discourse and diplomacy as the way to reduce international tensions and to settle controversies through negotiations. (However, as my discussion will show Nehru did not acknowledge the existence of a border dispute with China and while he was willing to talk to China, he was not willing to negotiate a compromise of Indian border claims.) Beijing saw Indian intransigence and hegemonic ambition as the problem in South Asian international relations; India's leaders saw themselves as a benign and a non-expansionist force in the region and the world. China's leaders felt that Indian aggressiveness and expansionism was responsible for the border conflict and the war in 1962; India's leaders argued the opposite case. China adopted a clear national security stance that involved the use of military force to guard its interests in the Korean War (1950–53), in Tibet (1950–) and in the war with India (1962).