

# Nehru in the Eyes of His Critics: An Appraisal

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**Abstract:** *The policies which were evolved, adopted and executed by Nehru after the independence of India were well thought and well organized policies of that time. The usefulness of those policies can be better explained in the lights of criticisms made against Nehru and his policies. In this article Policy of Non-Alignment, China and India Relations in the context of Tibet and border issue between India and China and 1962 War are assessed. There are many who still blame Nehru for several reasons at national and international levels mainly for border showoff between India and China, about the Tibet and Kashmir issues. But critics hardly give attentions to the situations Nehru and India had been conditioned. What Nehru did at that time perhaps were the best options he preferred out of many choices of being aligned with power block instead of remaining non aligned etc. What he did surely it was not a temporary treatment of the problems rather he gave the idea of coexistence and the 'truth' might be difficult to be perused but it cannot be defeated at any cost. His efforts to defuse the towering conflicts around the world can be seen as the model for a world suffering from new challenges and conflicts. Though Nehru is not around us but his model for peace can still be a beacon to guide the misled world of today. His efforts to defuse the towering conflicts around the world can be seen as the model for a world suffering from new challenges and conflicts. This article reviews different sources to find out the issues raised against Nehru's approach towards China, the policy of nonalignment and principles of Panchsheel and tries to explain Nehru's standpoint against those criticism.*

**Keywords:** Nehru, Policy of Non-Alignment, China, India, Tibet, Mac Mohan Line, 1962 War

## Nehru- Non-Alignment- China and 1962 War

There is a big list of criticism leveled against visionary like Nehru. For the purpose of this study and in this article his Policy of Non-Alignment, China and India Relations in the context of Tibet and border issue between India and China and 1962 War are assessed.

### 1. Criticism

Nehru was criticized in India as well as outside for his weak policy towards China. Critics of Nehru argue that he made a big mistake in his policy on Tibet by accepting China's suzerainty over the region in 1949, otherwise Tibet might have been politically and strategically beneficial to India and which may have prevented the humiliating defeat of India in 1962 at the hands of China. It was argued that India as a successor state of England could have adopted and continued the British Foreign Policy in respect of Tibet and treated her as an independent unit. But the critics of Nehru it seems conveniently have forgotten that India was not an imperialist power like Great Britain and therefore it was not possible for India to pursue an imperialist policy at its borders and anti-imperialist policy away from its borders.

The another big issue which had been raised is that non-alignment has failed us and failed itself, alignment with the Western Bloc would have strengthen us in facing the Chinese danger, and therefore, India must have joined the West for the security reasons. But the other side of the coin indicates that Chinese hostility against India had not proved the unsoundness of the policy of non-alignment. If India had been aligned with the West, Chinese aggression might have escalated and would have changed in a world war. If there were a war between aligned India and communist China, Russia would not have been just a neutral bystander. The dangerous implications of Russian and American involvement in any area of dispute is not a difficult thing to understand.

## The Nehru's Stand point

The major achievement of non-alignment was the neutralization of Russia in the Sino-Indian dispute. It was for the first time in the history of world affairs that Russia had not sided with its communist ally against another non-committed country in an open manner. Not only this, China attacked and criticized Russia for supporting India (Bhambhari, 1987). Due to India's non-aligned posture, the communist camp reacted differently in the crisis and China stood isolated even from its communist friends.

Thus the isolation of China, the localization of the war, neutralization of Russia and the active support of the western bloc are some of the great achievements of non-alignment. To say that India would not have been attacked, had it been aligned, is to over-simplify a complex situation. If there is a vital clash of interests between two countries, no military pact can prevent a war. A military pact is no guarantee that the other country will not attack it.

Jawaharlal Nehru followed policy of non-alignment because of many vital reasons. Many important values were involved in it. For him, joining a power bloc means surrender of one's freedom of action, thought and expression. Alignment means a country may be called upon to fight a war because some members of the bloc are involved in war. This means that the decision to fight a war or make peace does not remain the exclusive decision of the nation concerned. This situation may lead to a grave consequence. A country may be involved in a war when security and peace may be its greatest requirement. Nehru was compelled to fight a war against China to defend India's freedom and national integrity.

However, India's policy of non-alignment has been successful for India. It has not prevented it from getting military aid from the West. Even if India was aligned, the West would not have fought for India. This is the logic of the nuclear age. India would have to do its own fighting.

Further, in the conflict between India and China, it may have been China's success, if India abandoned non-alignment. China's wanted to prove her thesis about the inevitability of war, and belief that the world was divided between communists and anti-communists, and sought to discredit the concepts of non-alignment and peaceful co-existence. China wanted to prove that India's non-alignment was a smoke-screen to get the best of both worlds. China alleged that India was a tool of the western camp. China anticipated that under the impact of aggression, India would throw overboard the principle of non-alignment and immediately rush to the West for the help thus proving the Chinese thesis that the world is either communist or anti-communist. In the ideological war, abandonment of non-alignment by India would have meant the singular success of China.

Another important aim of Chinese aggression might have been the aim to win Afro-Asian leadership. Abandonment of non-alignment would have compromised India's prestige in the Afro-Asian countries, which would not have liked to sympathize with a country which had jointed the imperialist camp. China infact had been carrying on a propaganda campaign against India, ever since the Tibetan revolt in 1959, branding India as expansionist and an agent of the imperialists.

Nehru's policies i.e. Panchsheel and non alignment at the emergency period were seeming irrelevant, but Nehru stuck to the non-alignment. Addressing the AICC he said: "I cannot understand any self-respecting Indian or party being prepared to hand over the future of India to some other country in the name of protecting it. By alignment you give up a bit of your sovereignty, as decisions are taken by somebody else which you have to follow because you are aligned. I am not willing to leave the responsibility of the country in the hands of another country (Nehru, 1963).

Finally, Nehru was not unaware with its military weaknesses (Kaul, 1967), so he was unwilling to embarrass Beijing by lending any overt support to Tibet's cause at the United Nations, because, the experience of United Nations for him was bitter as he got in the case of Kashmir and because French and Portuguese colonial pockets still existed on Indian soil. He also wanted Chinese friendship by supporting her rightful place in the United Nations, even at the coast of his own membership when it was offered to him. Nehru also fought for Beijing's active participation in the negotiations at San Francisco for a peace treaty with Japan in 1950-51. Again he refused to condemn Beijing when its troops crossed the Yalu River in the course of the Korean war (Mehra, 2007).

Pandit Nehru was not much satisfied with said organization. The lack of military ability made it possible for china to attack India. At the time of independence India did not have any navy worth the name and even the rudimentary airforce which she had was of very recent origin. It was, therefore, the old Indian army on which the responsibility for the defence of the country rested. Mountain warfare was not taken seriously until the Chinese attack of 1962 and there is no evidence of any serious thinking on guerilla war to this date (Bandyopadhyaya, 1970). That above was the condition of Indian army that they never suggested any

concrete strategy to meet the rise of communist china. The Indian army officers were not much able to give any adequate advise in defense system General Kaul indicates in his book, 'The Untold Story' that on one or two occasions Nehru expressed his dissatisfaction on the inability of the army generals to suggest anything concrete about structural reorganization (Kaul, 1967).

## 2. Conclusions

After India's defeat in the Sino-Indian war of 1962, it was Nehru personally rather than the govt. of India, who was targeted for attack "for the first time in his life" wrote Kuldeep Nayar "Nehru heard his countrymen say that he had betrayed them" (Nayar, 1971). What he did surely it was not a temporary treatment of the problems rather he gave the idea of coexistence and the 'truth' might be difficult to be perused but it cannot be defeated at any cost. His efforts to defuse the towering conflicts around the world can be seen as the model for a world suffering from new challenges and conflicts.

The *Baltimore Sun* portrayed Nehru contributions precisely, when it commented, "His greatness is the greatness of a man who is neither exclusively oriental nor-occidental, politician nor ascetic, highbrow nor dire poor. Pandit Nehru is in part all these things, and he speaks as a man who has straddled two worlds, two philosophies and two standards of living. The key to Nehru's greatness as a statesman is his ability to leave past conflicts behind him as he enters new situations" (Bhambhari, 1987). Though Nehru is not around us but his model for peace can still be a beacon to guide the misled world of today. His efforts to defuse the towering conflicts around the world can be seen as the model for a world suffering from new challenges and conflicts.

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