

India, China And Tibet

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When Queen Victoria reigned in the United Kingdom the President of Bolivia, out of annoyance with the British envoy, forcibly shaved off his whiskers. Naturally this led to a major diplomatic confrontation between Britain and Bolivia and the Queen furiously told the Prime Minister that a warship be sent to Bolivia to obtain an apology. When the Prime Minister pointed out that Bolivia is land-locked an angry Queen took a pair of scissors and cut Bolivia out of the map of the world. So long as she was Queen no map published in Britain showed Bolivia as a country in existence. This was cartographic war at its best.

India is the victim of a cartographic war in which the three main actors are China, Pakistan and the United States. Maps published in the United States and following it, in most European countries, do not show the whole of Jammu & Kashmir as a part of India. Generally they show it as a disputed territory, with Pak occupied Kashmir being shown as separate from the whole State. Pakistan shows no part of Jammu & Kashmir to be a part of India. So far as China is concerned not only is Jammu & Kashmir not shown to be part of India but Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim are depicted as being part of China. The Chinese follow up this cartographic war with refusal to issue normal visas to persons belonging to or posted in Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir. The argument is that because Jammu & Kashmir is not a part of India a visa cannot be stamped on an Indian passport and Arunachal being a part of Chinese no visa is needed and at best for residents of the State an entry permit may be needed and for outsiders special visas would be issued. This is outright territorial aggression aimed at the very integrity of India. Our response has been to bleat weakly, almost like a goat staked out as bait for a tiger. This is not how independent countries which take pride in their nationality should behave.

China has already occupied thirty-eight thousand square kilometres of Indian territory in Aksai Chin. Not satisfied with that Chinese troops keep encroaching on Indian territory in Ladakh and our government always finds an excuse for them on the grounds that the border is not properly demarcated. Why do we not hear Chinese protests at Indian troops crossing this not clearly demarcated border? Are we timid, are our troops cowardly or are their officers afraid of their own shadows? Is government totally spineless? These are not questions I am asking. These questions are posed by the world and every time we prove by our inaction that the answer is in the affirmative, we lose that much of our standing before the rest of the world. One section of Chinese troops stepping across our border and going unchallenged is a far stronger diplomatic signal than any statement issued by the Foreign Office in Beijing. It is even stronger than the signal we sent out when we denied the Dalai Lama a suitable place of honour because China so demanded.

The Chinese has always held that any treaty entered into by Tibet with the British is not binding on China. According to me this alone is adequate proof that Tibet was not a vassal of China and that at the time that the British intervened in Tibet through the Younghusband expedition, the Chinese has no control over Tibet and the Tibetans acted independently of China. If the sovereign or suzerain has no presence in a territory, has no say in the established government, can neither prevent that territory from going to war or participating in a war and has no control over its foreign affairs, how can we accept that the claimant country has any right of sovereignty? This is a question which we must pose ourselves very seriously because we have, at the time when Dalai Lama fled Tibet, accepted Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. We withdrew our garrison from Gyantse, surrendered the Chumbi Valley and gave up our control over the Tibetan Postal and Telegraph system. In other words, we completely withdrew from

Tibet in what, in my opinion, was an extremely unwise diplomatic step. The Chinese have taken every advantage of this to tighten their hold over Tibet, settle Han Chinese people in Tibet in an effort to change the demographic character and have now succeeded in greater integration of Tibet into China. In all this we have been silent spectators. This has further emboldened the Chinese to claim Indian territory, to dictate terms to us on how we should treat Dalai Lama and have constantly interfered in our domestic affairs. The continuing militarisation of Tibet is a constant source of worry to India.

There was a time when India did create the Special Security Force (SSF), whose main job was to encourage the rebellion of the Khampa people of Western Tibet. For several years the Khampas were the only real resistance to Chinese rule. We should have built on this and made of the Khampas another Mukti Bahini which performed so successfully in Bangladesh. Unfortunately India does not have a killer instinct, at least not since the days when Chanakya guided Chandragupta Maurya against Greece and helped to make India a strong and united nation. It should be remembered that there are only two rulers in the history of India who carried India's colours beyond our borders, repulsed invaders and enlarged the frontiers of this country. The first was Chandragupta Maurya whose conquest of Gandhar is still remembered. The second was Maharaja Ranjit Singh of the Punjab, who carried the Nishan Saheb right upto the Khyber and occupied the whole of what is now the Province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan. It was Hari Singh Nalwa and Gen. Avitabile who pacified the Frontier and brought the proud Pakhtuns under Sikh control. Both Chandragupta Maurya and Ranjit Singh proved that in the ultimate analysis it is attack which really defends the country. A purely defensive strategy is doomed to failure against a determined aggressor. Today we have no Chanakya, no Chandragupta Maurya, no Ranjit Singh and, therefore, countries such as Pakistan feel encouraged to attack us at will and China to treat us with utter contempt.

There is an extreme view that India, Russia, South Korea, Vietnam and Japan, fully supported by the United States, should vapourise the major Chinese cities through nuclear attack. The argument is that this would greatly reduce global warming because the polluting Chinese industries and power plants would be wiped out, it would demilitarise China and relieve the world of a military menace and it would certainly solve the economic problems of the United States because its debt to China would be wiped out. Of course this is not a course of action which is advisable or even feasible, but it is certainly a thought to be borne in mind. Because China took the manufacturing path to development it built up an enormous manufacturing base largely by opening itself as destination for parking offshore industry hived off by the United States and other developed countries. India, on the other hand, did not open itself to exploitation of its labour by foreign companies and this has resulted in our manufacturing base being relatively small and weak. We have also not followed an aggressive policy of self-sufficiency which was Nehru's formula. This has also inhibited our industrial development. Of course in the tertiary sector, especially Information Technology, we have done well, but there is no concomitant development of hardware and this is not in our interest. These factors do inhibit our capacity to match China, especially militarily, but that does not mean we adopt a meek posture because it ill becomes us.

Even if the Chinese were not in the picture it makes eminent sense for us to develop our manufacturing base, not only because we need to compete in the world market but also because our domestic market is huge. Manufacture not only as a means of production but also an instrument for gainful employment automatically would strengthen our economy. The State of Gujarat has proved that it is possible to balance agricultural development through aggressive use of technology, expertise and extension methodology, together with well-developed water resources and manufacturing industry and thus have the primary and secondary sectors grow in tandem. Bihar has shown that investment in infrastructure together with a government committed to good administration can transform a State.

These are the models of development we must promote. Together with this we must continue to build up our armed forces in a planned manner so that our defence capabilities are demonstrably such as to deter any misadventure against us by any nation, including China.

But what about the cartographic war with which we started? Because the Chinese maps distort our borders our maps must show Tibet to be an independent country. Because the Pakistanis refuse to accept Jammu & Kashmir as Indian we must show the whole of that State as entirely Indian and include areas such as Hunza. We must show Xinjiang as disputed territory. If the United States insists on not showing the whole of Jammu & Kashmir as Indian I see no reason why we should not show Texas as a part of Mexico. Even if for the present we leave America out of the picture let us at least aggressively hit out at China in the matter of the war of maps.

We can go further. We should officially recognise Tibet as an independent country, give to Dalai Lama all the respect due to a Head of a State and to his Prime Minister that of Head of Government. Let us invite Dalai Lama as an official guest of honour at a Republic Day parade. Let us exchange ambassadors with the Tibetan Government-in-exile. Let us make it very clear to China that we do not recognise either its sovereignty or its suzerainty over Tibet. Let us put China on the defensive. We made a bloomer in dropping a Group Captain from Arunachal Pradesh from our military delegation to China. We should in fact have suspended all such visits by our defence forces and vice versa. For God's sake, dear government, grow a spine and show some courage when dealing with China. If it is a dragon we are at least an elephant, whom we should refuse to put under a shroud merely because S.Y. Qureshi so orders!!
