



Encirclement of India

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In early 1950, a few weeks after India decided to be the "first nation" outside the communist world to recognise Red China, a young Mumbai journalist running a magazine called Mother India prophesied the invasion of Tibet. It was several months before Mao's troops walked on the Roof of the World. He wrote: "It is quite on the cards that soon she (Tibet) will be added to Mao's territorial possessions. But the story is different with Nepal. Mao will perhaps wish to reach out through Tibet and interfere with Nepal's present status. "Nepal has good defence-resources, though an out-of-date political structure, and India will be particularly interested in the security of this neighbour of hers, since there are 16 railroads leading from the Nepalese border into our country and the Gurkha soldiers are an important part of our own Army. An extension of Mao's rule to Nepal will lay India open to easy attack by him and consequently cannot, under any circumstances, be tolerated. It will mean definitely a prelude to a war between China and India." There are several interesting features in this article, the first one being that the journalist, KD Sethna, was a disciple of the great Rishi Sri Aurobindo and that all his articles were vetted by the master who several times pointed out at the danger of Communist China reaching India's doorsteps and engulfing what Mao named the palm (Tibet) and the five fingers (NEFA, Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal and Kashmir). Another remarkable feature of Sethna's piece is that 54

years later, the situation does not appear to have improved and the threat over India remains. In the same article, Sethna stated: "What the alarmists declare is that if we did not recognise Mao he would precipitate a military clash with us." However today the position is poles apart: Nobody is alarmed either in the corridors of South Block or the media. Particularly after Mr Vajpayee's visit last year to Beijing, India is again becoming friend (if not yet brother) with China and the new Government (like its predecessor) is actively "engaging" China. Nevertheless, it remains a fact that the situation in Nepal-as it was 55 years ago-is very worrying and the ascendancy of the Maoists, whether they are supported by Beijing or not, is not a good omen for India. One can only hope that the new Foreign Secretary, who has been posted in Kathmandu and should have some knowledge of the situation, will do something to "engage" the King and his Government and encourage the creation of the conditions which will carry the populace with them and not against. In the meantime, Beijing is more and more "engaged" in Nepal. An Agency report mentioned: "Nepal's Crown Prince Paras' first visit to China resulted in the establishment of a series of aid projects for Nepal... China has agreed to provide nearly NRS 450 million (US \$6,250,000) to Nepal this fiscal year to support ongoing projects as well as to initiate new ones." Another difference from the early 1950s is that today China is a power to reckon with. Remember when Tibet was invaded in 1950 China was nothing. It was recognised only by a few "fraternal communist nations". During his stay in Moscow in 1949-1950 for several months, Mao had had to literally crawl in front of Stalin to get material support for his country. In 2004, though Red China is dead and gone, under the banner of "the peaceful rise of China", the Forth Generation's leadership has transformed the Middle Kingdom into an Eden of wild capitalism (Mao

must be turning in his mausoleum). China today is on top of the world or, to put it more correctly, on the top of Olympus. Beijing is indeed triumphant. New China was perhaps not able to get the better of the United States, but as an Indian paper puts it: "Western sports officials and journalists no longer talk of China taking over the US supremacy of world sport-unchallenged for a century-as a possibility. Rather, it is an inevitability." This has not come by wishful thinking or prayers; China has work hard and invested much for this: Its sports budget is astronomical. The PLA Daily reported that Beijing spent \$720 million a year on their Olympic sports programme alone. For 32 gold, it is good return. Furthermore, China believes that in four years time, the Middle Kingdom will find its proper place at the centre of the world. For the Chinese psyche in which "face" is so central, this is imperative. More and more analysts sense that China will take the lead in the world during the 21st century. The "peaceful rise of China" means that Beijing will do everything to keep the image of a peaceful nation till China rises to the top in 2008. Till then, it does not mean that Beijing will do nothing and merely watch the world. In recent months its foreign policy has never been so assertive, especially against an India (with its one and only silver) considered very weak. It is not only Nepal that China is keeping the pressure on India, it is in all its neighbourhood. I had written earlier about the mysterious lake in Tibet. Beijing has managed to keep the State of Himachal Pradesh on tenterhooks for several weeks, causing crores of rupees in expenses to the exchequer, just because the leadership in Beijing refused to allow an Indian team to visit the "natural" dam. Road construction to the Indian border was probably the reason for the landslides and China was obviously not keen to update Delhi about it. In Manipur, where the agitation is linked to the murder and rape of Thangjam Manorama,

a militant, by the Assam Rifles, a deeper angle has recently come to light. The Website indiareacts.com reported: "Raids on Manipur university professors and at least seven students unearthed details of telephone calls made to Hong Kong... During questioning, one of the professors broke down and confessed to visiting Hong Kong nine times in the past six months. A proposal was recovered in the raid for Chinese mediation of the Manipur issue. A further trail led to five Manipuri insurgent leaders who had regular meetings with MID agents based in Myanmar." We know about Myanmar and Beijing's support to the military junta (and its aversion to Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Laureate who, let us not forget, studied at the Institute of Advance Studies in Simla for years and is considered close to India). Beijing provides important economic assistance to Rangoon and since the coup in 1988, China has built important infrastructures (roads, bridges, power plants, harbour facilities), which in turn serve Beijing own strategic interests. Isn't this one more subtle pressure on India's borders? Another worrying incident is the rising harassment and persecution of Buddhist tribals by militants of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (IM) & (K) in remote parts of Arunachal Pradesh. The militant outfits have demanded annexation of land from the Buddhist and issued a decree for their conversion to Christianity. The villagers were given two options only- embrace Christianity or face capital punishment. The objective of the NSCN (IM) is to establish a "Greater Nagaland" based on Mao Zedong's ideology. Its manifesto is based on the principle of socialism for economic development with a religious addition "Nagaland for Christ". A powerful cocktail! We could continue the list with the supply of arms to Bangladesh; or the Beijing orchestrated saga of Dr AQ Khan in Pakistan. The rise of China, whether peaceful or not, should be of great concern to India.

