Memorandum of Three Conversations Between Director Zhang Wenji and the Indian Ambassador Regarding Sino-Indian Border Issues and the Two Countries’ Relations

Date: July 17, 1961

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Description:
Three conversations between Zhang Wenji, director of the Foreign Ministry’s Asian Affairs Department Number One, and Indian ambassador Parthasarathy. Addressed are the future of Sino-Indian relations, Sino-Indian border issues, and India’s focus on such issues as Bhutan, Sikkim and Pakistan.

Memorandum of Three Conversations Between Director Zhang Wenji and the Indian Ambassador[1]
-- Regarding Sino-Indian Border Issues and the Two Countries’ Relations --
On 16 July 1961, Premier Zhou and Vice-Premier Chen Yi received Indian Foreign Secretary R.K. Nehru in Shanghai. At the close of the conversation, Premier Zhou suggested that talks be continued by Zhang Wenji, director of the Foreign Ministry’s Asian Affairs Department Number One, and Indian ambassador Parthasarathy. In accordance with this suggestion, the two
sides successively conducted three conversations. The key points of the conversations (two in Shanghai on 17 July, one in Beijing on 19 July) are as follows:

In the 17 July conversations, the Indian ambassador continued to probe into the issues of Bhutan, Sikkim and Pakistan. [He] said India has the right to represent Bhutan and Sikkim in handling foreign affairs, and [asked] about China’s attitude toward this. [He] asked what China meant by saying it respected India having “proper relations” with Bhutan and Sikkim. Did China respect India’s treaties with Bhutan and Sikkim, and did it recognize India’s right to represent Bhutan and Sikkim in foreign diplomacy? [He] asked whether the Chinese side would agree to talk if Bhutan entrusted India with discussing Sino-Bhutanese border issues. [He] said India is very sensitive about the Kashmir issue, [and] you are discussing border issues with a country that has no right to negotiate; it is impossible not to consider this hostile. From a legal standpoint, two countries cannot discuss the territory of a third country. Director Zhang said, Yesterday R.K. Nehru raised the question of Bhutan and Sikkim under the subject of border issues. With regard to borders, there are no problems between China and Sikkim. Except for a small area south of the McMahon Line, there is not much disagreement on the Sino-Bhutanese border, either. I will state again that [China] does not cross the McMahon Line - the problem is in fact nonexistent. The Ambassador raised the [subject] of India’s right to represent Bhutan and Sikkim in diplomatic negotiations; this goes beyond the scope of border issues. We say that we respect India’s relations with Bhutan and Sikkim. This is a general expression, [one] that is common in international affairs. We do not wish to damage China’s relations with Bhutan or Sikkim, nor do we wish to damage China’s relations with India. He personally did not quite understand why India wanted to treat Sikkim as a protectorate; this kind of practice is rare in Asian and African countries.
The two countries have not, in meetings between officials, discussed Sino-
Bhutanese or Sino-Sikkimese border issues, because at the time the two
countries’ premiers were only authorized to discuss Sino-Indian border
issues, and India does not that believe Bhutan or Sikkim are a part of India.
The two sides’ main consideration should be Sino-Indian border issues. Now
India tends to sideline Sino-Indian border issues and instead focus
discussions on such issues as Bhutan, Sikkim and Pakistan; this will not
reduce [our] differences of opinion – rather, it will expand them. This does
nothing to help resolve the issues.
The Ambassador said it would be difficult for both sides to reach an actual
consensus on Sino-Indian border issues. His personal view was: Is it
possible to seek a solution starting with ascertaining those points that
require further clarification? Director Zhang said, Based on the practical
experience of Sino-Burmese and Sino-Nepalese discussions and
negotiations, when two sides disagree on the facts, there are generally two
methods for resolving the differences: (1) Each presents a factual basis and
objectively compares them, looking to see whose information is relatively
more logical, and finally parceling the [land] out to [the country] whose
[version] is more beneficial to the two countries’ friendship; (2) [If] the two
sides’ views differ greatly and it is impossible to bring them into line, each
can keep to its own position and consider, from a political standpoint, what
kind of resolution would be more beneficial. The Ambassador said, Perhaps
[we] can consider using the second method, with each side keeping its own
views; depending on the facts of the situation, we will make some
compromises and resolve the issues. But the difficulty lies in swaying
popular opinion. He could not think of a way to overcome this political
obstacle other than making a big gesture, expressing sincerity. But he made
clear that this was just a personal idea of his. As to the first method – that
is, the two sides reexamining the historical facts and practical situation – the
Ambassador said, This is a very good method, but [I] don’t know how much chance it has of succeeding. He felt that the two sides, in [their] official meetings, had only voiced their most extreme positions.

During the 19 July conversation, Director Zhang said, Premier Zhou mentioned that following reports by officials on both sides, the Chinese side thought of three possible methods which we deemed unsuitable or impossible to adopt; R.K. Nehru mentioned that there might be a kind of fourth option – which is, both sides agreed to reconsider [the issues]. He asked whether the Ambassador could expound on this. The Ambassador said, the Foreign Secretary did not receive [new] directives or suggestions [for this visit]. The original idea was just to make use of the opportunity to exchange views on current Sino-Indian relations. When the Chinese side mentioned the three possible methods, the Foreign Secretary said there might be a kind of fourth method. [The Ambassador] thought that at the time, the Foreign Secretary didn’t have any specific ideas, but was pointing out that the methods were not limited to three, that there might still be others, [and] we can think it over. This was just an exchange of views; [he] was not putting forward any suggestions on the Indian government’s behalf.

Director Zhang said, Since Premier Zhou has expressed views on the Chinese government’s behalf, before long we should be able to hear the Indian government’s views and suggestions. The Ambassador said, The first step is to take the issues out of the icebox and look for a way to break the stalemate; it is now still difficult to make further statements. He personally felt that there might be the following few methods: (1) To make some kind of gesture that would do something to change the atmosphere; (2) To restore contacts at all levels; (3) To strive for mutually satisfactory solutions on lesser issues, and not adopt rigid attitudes; (4) To stop conceiving of each other in a hostile way, in order to create a favorable atmosphere. As to a fourth possible method, he felt there was no easy answer; at the time, the
Foreign Secretary was just thinking in procedural terms – that is, how the two sides should restore contacts and reconsider [the issues]. Director Zhang asked the Ambassador whether he thought it possible to start off by supplementing and revising Premier Zhou’s proposed Six Points of Consensus. The Ambassador said that judging from the statement released by the Indian government, he felt [they] had not yet arrived at this point. [We] need to give it further thought, [and for] the two sides to reestablish trust. It was just because of this that [he] hoped they could make an effort on other issues, propose some methods and talk to each other, in order to restore relations. Director Zhang said, [We] hope that soon after the Ambassador goes back [we] can hear the Indian government’s views. The Ambassador said, [We] can have further exchanges of views.

[Detailed memorandum of conversation already sent to Chinese embassy in India]

Copied and sent to: Premier’s Office, Foreign Affairs Office (4), [National] Bureau of Surveying and Mapping, General Staff, [Bureau of] Investigation (3)
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Memorandum of Conversation (1): Director Zhang Wenji and Indian Ambassador Parthasarathy

Time: 17 July 1961, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Location: Shanghai Peace Hotel
Translator: Chen Hui
Stenographer: Li Danan

Zhang: Yesterday the Premier suggested to the Foreign Secretary that the two of us continue talks. Even though [this], as an informal, candid conversation between friends, cannot resolve issues, it too has advantages and is helpful in seeking solutions. The Ambassador has been in China for three years; [he] is conscientious about [his] work, and a person of integrity. During these three years, there have unfortunately been setbacks in the two countries’ relations; this is not [due to] personal factors. Before long the Ambassador will return to his country, and by coincidence the Foreign Secretary has come to China and the two sides have held talks. Now there are still a few days left: the Ambassador can have contact with the Foreign Ministry side, and exchange views and seek solutions. When the next ambassador comes, we hope we can also have more contact [with him]. Although things did not go as hoped during the Ambassador’s term, [he] has still made contributions toward cooperation between the two sides. Based on yesterday’s conversation, [our] initial impression is that, although there are frank and intense disagreements, there are several points on which [we] completely agree or are close to agreement, and these are:

(1) Both countries have expressed the need for friendly [relations], and from a long-term point of view, friendship between the two countries will still prevail.

(2) The situation over the last few years has been unsatisfactory, and both sides have differing views as to the cause, but both think we should adopt a positive attitude and improve relations with constructive steps, and at the
(3) In order to seek solutions and advance understanding together, the two sides both hope that each can feel and understand the other’s predicament; at the same time, each also need to put themselves in the other’s shoes and make allowances for them.

In today’s informal, friendly conversation, if the Ambassador has views he wishes to be conveyed to my countries’ leaders, [I] will be certain to report them faithfully and make [sure] that both sides have a correct understanding.

Parthasarathy: [I] welcome Director Zhang’s opening remarks. I am in almost total agreement with your assessment. The Foreign Secretary and I both consider the two sides’ free, candid talks to be the most beneficial ones. Although the disagreements have been somewhat intense, it is still better to speak what is on our minds. This is a vital matter involving the friendship of one billion people. We have a responsibility to promote the restoration of relations, [and] it is no good to not speak what is in our hearts. We have divided the issues into two aspects. One aspect is specific, predominant issues; [these] can be boiled down to border issues. Another aspect is other factors that have caused the two countries’ relations to worsen these two years. We feel that the Chinese leaders’ sentiments toward India lack understanding in some aspects. For example, on such issues as Bhutan, Sikkim, Pakistan, and criticism in the newspapers, the difference of opinions between the two sides has widened. China’s leaders gave a fairly lengthy explanation on the issue of criticism in the newspapers, making mention of their views and the reasons for criticism. What worries me are not the criticisms themselves, but whether they signify a change in [China’s] assessment of India. We two countries have different social and political systems, but [their] goal is still the same; it is only that the methods [we] use to attain that goal differ, that’s all. The reports in Chinese
newspapers cause people to feel that there have been major changes in India’s domestic and foreign policies, as if India has become reactionary, no longer progressive. This is a lack of respect for India. It is very difficult to bring the two countries’ relations back to normal.

There are major differences of opinion on border issues, and it will require some time to be able to get agreement. Until then [we] should try to keep [our] differences of opinion on other fronts from widening. [We] must be in contact more, cooperate more, eliminate misunderstandings, and create a favorable atmosphere. Yesterday’s conversation was somewhat sharp, but that’s not at all to say that [the sides] did not consider the other side. [I will] now raise two or three points:

(1) Bhutan and Sikkim issues. Premier Zhou said, The Sino-Sikkimese borders were stipulated in a treaty in 1890, it is not a problem. But the Chinese side has not recognized India’s right to represent Bhutan and Sikkim[2]

Zhang: I very much appreciated the way you put it; there are disagreements, but [we] must consider things as a whole. As long as we [do so] for the sake of honesty, there is nothing to fear in talks being somewhat sharp. This is much better than mutual criticisms in official letter exchanges and in public opinion. [We] must not create public tension; the governments both feel pressured, [and it] runs counter to both sides’ desire for improvement. [As for] criticism in the newspapers, India’s criticisms far outnumber [China’s]; we don’t attach much importance to it. Our newspapers have also carried some news about India that is entirely of a reporting nature, [with] almost no comment. The Ambassador said that China has changed its assessment of India and holds that India has become reactionary. Yesterday the Foreign Secretary said India’s foreign policy has not essentially changed for the past 15 years. We welcome this promise. If one is to speak of any changes in both sides’ estimation of the other, one
must first say that it is India that feels there has been a great change in China’s domestic and foreign policy. China’s national leaders have not voiced any objections whatsoever to India’s domestic and foreign policy. The Indian side says it does not know what changes there have been to Indian foreign policy. But judging from actual behavior, one cannot help but feel that there has been a change. When Sino-Indian relations were good, India held that China was interested in peace. But since last year, India’s leaders have repeatedly implied that China is keen on [having a] cold war. An Indian leader even said he did not know of any country that loved peace as much as a certain country does, nor did he know of any country that loves peace less than China does. As for China’s domestic policy, the deputy head of India’s Foreign Ministry, Mrs. Menon, once said that China is a concentration camp, a Hitler-style totalitarian regime. China’s leaders do not want to make direct criticisms of India. Yesterday, Vice-Premier Chen Yi raised the point that both sides should [try to] lessen the differences of opinion and do their best to find common points, reducing differences and preventing them from surfacing. The Ambassador says that the main focus should be on border issues; when Premier Zhou visited Delhi last year, it was in the very hopes that it would lead to a resolution of border issues. Over the past two years we have negotiated about borders with Burma and Nepal, and achieved resolution through friendly consultation. There has been development in relations with both [these] parties, as the Ambassador also knows. Parthasarathy: I still do not have a precise enough understanding of some of the issues discussed yesterday. India has a right and a responsibility to represent Bhutan and Sikkim in handling foreign affairs; what is China’s attitude toward this? Zhang: Yesterday, the Foreign Secretary raised this question under the subject of border issues. There are no problems between China and Sikkim in terms of borders. There are already stipulations [regarding them] in a late
19th-century agreement. With the exception of a small area south of the McMahon Line, there is not much disagreement on the Sino-Bhutanese border, either. I will say it again: [China] does not cross the McMahon Line - the problem is in fact nonexistent. The Ambassador raised the [subject] of India’s right to represent Bhutan and Sikkim in diplomatic negotiations; this went beyond the scope of border issues. The Foreign Secretary says India has a special relationship with Bhutan and Sikkim; [I] don’t know what this refers to.

Parthasarathy: This was stipulated on the basis of a treaty. Based on two-way treaties, Bhutan and Sikkim agreed to accept India’s guidance on foreign relations and to have India handle foreign affairs. What are the implications in China’s saying it respects “proper” Indian relations with Bhutan and Sikkim?

Zhang: This is a general expression, and it is also not limited to this issue; it is common in international affairs. I personally do not quite understand why India wants to treat Sikkim as a protectorate; this kind of practice is rare in Asian and African countries. We have no ambitions regarding the territory of any country, and we do not carry out subversive activities [against foreign regimes]. In an official letter, the Indian side made a reference to Chinese leaders in Tibet stating that Bhutan, Sikkim and Ladakh are parts of China, [and we] want to recover them. This does not merit a response. China’s leaders have never said this kind of thing. India has a general consulate and other agencies in Tibet; they can find out that there is no such talk or activities. India is just basing itself on reports from Western news agencies; it is not worth taking seriously. That we did not reply does not mean we affirming this.

Parthasarathy: We were not basing ourselves on Western reports, but on our own intelligence. It is said that you broadcast this news. We consider this to be a serious matter, [so] we brought it up with you. Now you say this didn’t
happen, but it is also possible that irresponsible people did say such things; you can also investigate. We would not criticize you based solely on Western reports. As for [your] saying, “protectorate,” this is not a very accurate term (A LOOSE TERM)[3]. This is, in fact, a historical relationship; based on the stipulations in the treaty, they ask us to offer guidance in foreign diplomacy. China’s saying that it respects a “proper” relationship has made people doubtful as to whether you respect the India-Bhutan and India-Sikkim treaties, or whether you recognize India’s right to represent Bhutan and Sikkim in foreign diplomacy.
Zhang: You say India’s criticism is based on Tibetan broadcasts, but you have never supplied specific information. Your letter was very vague, [and] you have long since made general statements that there was no such thing [happening].
Regarding [India’s] traditional relationships with Bhutan and Sikkim. India says that based on the treaty, only India has the right to handle their foreign relations. But Bhutan and Sikkim are also in communication with Tibet. For the moment [we] won’t speak of the historical relationships; in recent years, there have also been communications. For example, they have representatives stationed in Tibet. Their representatives have remained there following the India-Bhutan and India-Sikkim treaties; this is a fact. It is very clear what we mean by saying we respect India’s relations with Bhutan and Sikkim; we are very cautious, and unwilling to damage China’s relations with Bhutan or Sikkim. We also do not [want to] damage China’s relations with India. The two countries have not, in official meetings (unterm.org: “????”) discussed Sino-Bhutanese or Sino-Sikkimese border issues, because at the time the two countries’ premiers were only authorized to discuss Sino-Indian border issues; nor did India in any way believe Bhutan or Sikkim to be part of India. As regards the Indo-Bhutanese treaty, India and Bhutan’s explanations are mutually contradictory; Bhutan believes
they have the right to handle foreign affairs. In any case, we do not have any diplomatic contacts with them.

Generally speaking, the tension in [our] two countries’ relations over the past two years has concerned Sino-Indian border issues. [China] has made great efforts to alleviate [tensions] and seek ways of resolution. You say that India is doing this, too. That’s good, but now India tends to sideline Sino-Indian border issues and instead focus discussions on the issues of Bhutan, Sikkim and Pakistan, etc; this will not serve to narrow [our] differences of opinion – rather, it will broaden [our] differences of opinion. This does nothing to help resolve the issues. Our chief consideration should be Sino-Indian border issues; there is definite danger with this aspect, and none at all with the other issues. Yesterday the Foreign Secretary said that the borders ought to be considered as a whole, starting with Kashmir and ending with Burma. Here one should not overlook the fact that there also exist third-party nations, such as Nepal. We respect India’s relations with Bhutan and Sikkim and have done nothing to damage [them]. We recognize the Sino-Sikkimese border and do not see any necessity for further mention of this issue. If [India] has ulterior motives [in raising this issue], then at the very least they lack understanding. We cannot confuse primary [issues] with secondary ones.

Parthasarathy: I am personally surprised that the issue is getting bigger. It was our hope that the issue could be limited to the scope of Sino-Indian border issues. But the difficulty lies with your use of this term “proper relations”. During Sino-Indian official meetings, you also refused to discuss the Sino-Bhutanese and Sino-Sikkimese borders. We should first discuss issues of substance. [We] would like to ask whether the Chinese side would agree to talk if Bhutan entrusted India with discussing Sino-Bhutanese border issues. This is the crux of the issue. As for the Kashmir issue, India is very sensitive about it. You are discussing border issues with a country that
has no right to negotiate; it is impossible not to consider this hostile. Yesterday Premier Zhou raised some practical issues, but from a legal standpoint, two countries cannot discuss the territory of a third country; [they] ought to be mindful of popular opinion.

Zhang: India believes China has a hidden agenda concerning Bhutan and Sikkim and is expanding the issue; this idea is strange and hard to understand. China has done nothing in this aspect over the past two or three years. Our relations with Bhutan and Sikkim have not increased - they have decreased. The main disagreement over the Sino-Bhutanese border map is [the area] south of the McMahon Line. Currently the two sides are at an impasse on the McMahon Line. India’s submission of a letter demanding discussion of the Sino-Bhutanese border, and also touching on the McMahon Line, only expanded the quarrel – [it was for this reason] we did not reply. As for the Kashmir issue, Premier Zhou has repeatedly discussed, in clear-cut terms, our position and predicament. There is nothing to add. The Ambassador recognizes that China can, when necessary, be in temporary contact with the local authorities. This is also a recognition that there are practical problems that must be handled. But this idea of the Ambassador’s still cannot resolve the practical difficulties. We could not wait until after bloodshed occurs to talk; this would create new tensions and be detrimental to our relations with neighboring countries. This will only cause the imperialist elements intent on destroying China’s relations with neighboring countries to clap their hands for joy.

As regards the Sino-Indian border issue, the Foreign Secretary spoke well; after the Sino-Indian officials’ reports were released, none of the three possible methods could be used, [so] we should consider a kind of fourth option – which is, both sides reconsider [the issues]. We set great store by this important statement [when it] made by an official so sincere as the Foreign Secretary. We welcome this suggestion, and agree that we should
consider issues on this foundation. [We] should talk about facts that should be ascertained – which ones [we] can accept, and which we could consider. I am very interested in how the Indian government views this. If it is believed that the facts supplied by the Indian side are all unassailable, and the facts supplied by the Chinese side are all incorrect and worthless, not only could I personally not agree, any fair-minded person would not agree. The concluding section of India’s report even said the Chinese side’s information can prove that India’s traditional line is correct. This statement not only disregards the facts, it is also an insult to me personally. I have held in the proper respect, and maintained personal friendship with, Indian representatives such as Mehta and Gopal; I know this is not an issue between individuals, but guided by Indian government policy. This statement from the Indian side does not hold water at all. Of course it is difficult for the two sides to have total consensus on the facts, but this is no barrier to seeking resolution on practical problems provided it does not harm the interests of either side. Both sides [can] yield to and forgive the other – this is also the normal way [of doing things]. Officials’ reports from both sides deserve regard, but one cannot get tangled up in the details. The relationship between our two countries is too important; we should view it from a greater distance, from an elevated height, considering the big picture, and seek resolution. The two sides will not necessarily agree on specific views, but should understand the overall spirit.

Parthasarathy: This is a difficult problem. For the two sides to have consensus on the facts is difficult. In truth, what the officials presented was not one report, it was two reports. The officials were assigned to examine and double-check the [written] information, determining the points [we] agree on and those we do not, but the result was completely divergent viewpoints. How are the two countries’ premiers to consider [the issues] with two piles of completely opposing facts? [My] personal view is, might it
be possible to seek a solution starting with ascertaining those points that require further clarification?

Zhang: After India issued the officials’ report, Premier Nehru flatly stated that there could be no discussion unless India’s requirements were accepted. Under these circumstances, China prefers not to state its stance for the time being, unless we are prepared to squabble. Regarding the officials’ reports, I believe that besides the differing points, there are certain portions on which [we] agree or are relatively close. Our side once suggested writing this, but the Indian side refused. As for China’s border negotiations with Burma and Nepal, there is some experience that can serve as a reference. Ordinarily speaking, when there is disagreement on the facts, there are two possible methods of resolution: (1) If the two sides both have definite grounds [for their stance], following an earnest, objective comparison, [they] can determine which side has somewhat greater grounds, and consider from a political standpoint which [country] finally getting the [land] would do more for peace and the two countries’ relationship. (2) If the two sides’ views differ greatly and it is impossible to bring them into line, each can keep to its own position and consider, from a political standpoint, what kind of resolution would be more beneficial. Of course, the differences of opinion between China and India are somewhat greater, but the importance of Sino-Indian friendship is also far greater; both can continue to think about whether there is anything else to consider. The two sides should meet halfway - it is possible to resolve the issues. China and India cannot stay locked in long-term mutual confrontation; there must eventually be peace and friendship. As long as both sides have the desire, the question of method is an easy one to resolve. [I] won’t speak of the past; yesterday’s talks prove that we are willing to resolve the issues.
Memorandum of Conversation (2): Director Zhang Wenji and Indian Ambassador Parthasarathy

Time: 17 July 1961, 4 – 7 p.m.
Location: Shanghai Peace Hotel

Parthasarathy: This morning we spoke about, when the two sides have sharp differences of opinion, one method is to place the reports to one side and ignore them, both sides proceeding from a political angle to reconsider [the issues]. Another method is one that the Foreign Secretary mentioned yesterday, that is, both sides determine which points [we] do and don’t agree on, as well as which ones require clarification, [then] look at how we might lessen our differences of opinion. My impression is that it would be relatively difficult to lessen our differences of opinion using the officials’ reports as a foundation. But seeing as both sides are basically willing [to talk], then what should we do in terms of procedure? Yesterday the Foreign Secretary mentioned both sides reconsidering [the issues].

Zhang: What we talked about this morning was just the proposal, [drawn] from the practical experience of China’s border negotiations with Burma and Nepal, that there are two possible methods for solving differences of opinion. These are both meant to address specific problems. For example, both sides present a factual basis regarding a certain [land] area; under these circumstances, they can objectively compare them, looking to see whose information is relatively more logical and more beneficial to the two countries’ friendship. Speaking in terms of the Sino-Indian border, in the east, the region between the traditional Sino-Indian line and the McMahon Line has always been a part of China’s Tibet. But the jurisdiction situation is not exactly the same throughout the area. In the area to the south, due to incursions by British forces, [British] influence also came in, and it was only after this that [the area’s] relations with India grew closer. The area to the
north, on the other hand, has always maintained relations with Tibet. There are differences between the eastern and western parts, too: in Tibet, for example in the Monyul region, control is more established; in certain other areas it may not be so well-established. It was only in the end that India completely occupied [the area] south of the McMahon line; those are the facts.

Parthasarathy: When you say the southern area is close with India, are you referring to administrative jurisdiction or the cultural relationship? I think you must be referring to administrative jurisdiction.

Zhang: Generally speaking, a few years ago there wasn’t a modern political administration at all. Of course what we are concerned with today is not cultural or racial relationships, it is administration and politics. We have persistently advocated considering historical background and the practical situation in seeking ways to solve the problem; with respect to the western area, it goes without saying [that] is under Chinese jurisdiction. Historically, only a few British people have been there - in the capacity of tourists, businessmen, officials, and explorers. Of course one cannot say that China’s jurisdiction [over the area] is completely modern administration; hardly anybody resides in this place. On this issue, India has a different view, and made mention of some situations. But it is very clear that other than a small number of Westerners and hired Indians who have occasionally gone there, especially in the last several decades, this region has been under China’s considerably effective control. The Ambassador, of course, will not agree on this point; that being the case, we can do a comparison to see whose [version] makes more sense based on the historical background and actual situation. If both sides take the approach of friendly problem-solving, dealing objectively with the facts, the issues can be resolved. For example, the Pianma region on the Sino-Burmese border has been under British-Burmese control for 50 long years; Britain used armed force to occupy this
spot. But prior to those 50 years, this spot was always China’s. The Chinese side says it belongs to China, the Burmese side says it belongs to Burma. Of course, this place has already been under British-Burmese control for 50 years; the Burmese side also has some grounds [for its position]. But we must thank the Burmese side, because Burma says this was occupied by Britain, and for fairness’ sake it is willing to return it to China. The secondary issue is just how large Pianma is; in this we can adopt an objective approach and have friendly consultations, [each] forgiving and yielding to the other.

Parthasarathy: There is a problem of compatibility on this issue. It’s not that I’m belittling the significance of that affair, it’s that the disagreements over the Sino-Indian border are much greater. Of course, there are some aspects [of that affair] we can take for reference. Like with Tamaden – if we discover that it’s located south of the line, we’ll pull out of our own accord.

Zhang: There’s no question of compatibility with the Pianma issue; the compatibility is in other areas. I don’t want to discuss details. It’s true that the Sino-Indian border issue touches on problems much larger than Pianma, but Pianma is not only a point like Tamaden, it’s a region. The way we handle issues is the same - a Chinese proverb says, “Small as the sparrow is, it has a complete set of vital organs” [i.e., it’s a tiny version containing everything needed for any size version]. Large problems carry more difficulties; this makes it even more necessary for the leaders and parties concerned to handle [issues] with foresight and courage. After all, this is not a temporary question but a long-term one, touching on both sides’ interests and destiny for many, many years [to come]; both sides hope to solve the matter once and for all. The aforementioned is one type [of problem resolution], with both sides disagreeing on the details and finally reaching a consensus. Another type is that both sides stick to their own views: not giving an inch, unable to come together, because it touches [on each one’s] sense of dignity. Given the impossibility of reaching a consensus on the
facts, in these circumstances, as a last resort one might consider seeking resolution in view of the political and practical [circumstances]. Of course, it is better to use the first method. The second method is a last resort. There may also be other methods besides these. Just requiring that one side admit fault, forcing one’s own will on the other, would never work. It doesn’t work with small countries, much less large ones. Yet another method is to leave off resolution for the time being, both sides ensuring that there is peace along the border and that no clashes occur. Both sides express a steadfast willingness to be friendly, and to take each other’s opinions into consideration to seek peaceful methods of resolution. Even if the border issues aren’t actually resolved, both sides can still interact in a peaceful and friendly way. Many countries across the world have borders that are not yet fixed, but [they] are still able to interact harmoniously, both sides waiting to talk again when the opportunity and conditions are ripe. This is my personal opinion, and has not been authorized in any way.

Parthasarathy: Our view is that your control of Ladakh is a very recent thing. It only just happened in 1955 and ‘59; thus Indian newspapers say it was recently invaded. Perhaps [we] can consider using the second method, with each side keeping its own views, and resolving issues by facing realities and making compromises. But the difficulty lies in swaying popular opinion. I hear that it also took quite a long time for you and Burma to resolve border issues, and that [resolution] involved the method of retreat, [which] created a good atmosphere. Here are the facts; we have to consider them. I cannot think of another way to overcome this political obstacle other than making a big gesture, expressing sincerity. This is a method I once thought of, and I’m not prepared to report it to the government. As to the first method – that is, the two sides reexamining the historical facts and practical situation – while it a very good method, I don’t know what you think of this method’s likelihood of success, having participated in the official meetings. I am
certainly not saying this to criticize things past, but mainly with an eye to the future; I feel that in the official meetings, both sides only voiced their most extreme positions.

Zhang: I very much appreciate the Ambassador’s last remark.

(1) Concerning the so-called Ladakh problem, this is a problem of the western section. As I understand it, Prime Minister Nehru discussed [the issue] with Premier Zhou last year in Delhi, and admitted that a number of years ago the northern part of this area was under China’s control. The most obvious fact [supporting this] is that we built a highway through this region. Prime Minister Nehru also said that China’s advances were mainly in the southern part of this region, the Kongka Pass region. As for the eastern section, we also based ourselves on the facts; there is a considerable part of the region that India has controlled somewhat longer, but there is also a part close to the McMahon Line that India only entered in the last year or two. India says the Indian side has some difficulties it has to take care of, but we also have difficulties – both sides must consider taking care of [the difficulties]; it is only in this way that problems can be easily solved.

(2) It is worth considering the question of whether the official meeting style is appropriate for carrying out future work. At the time they stipulated tasks, the premiers of both countries[4] were thinking in light of the wish to resolve the issues as quickly as possible. Both sides worked hard, but the differences of opinion are great. There is one point [we have] in common, which is that these most recent official meetings were the most tension-filled instance of work for both sides. The situation at that time, especially in the Delhi phase, was that both presented a vast amount of [written] information that the other had to comment on immediately. Both sides were mainly limited to defending their own positions. This style, in my personal opinion, is not very beneficial for resolving issues. Based on my experience participating in some of the work of the Sino-Burmese negotiations, when it
comes to checking the actual information, the key does not lie with presenting a vast amount of information, but with whether one can, to a greater degree, consider the main issue from a position of foresight and come closer together [on the facts]. After the main issue is resolved, the lesser issues are also readily resolved. With the Sino-Burmese border, it was both sides’ retreat and not a single-sided retreat that had a definite effect in terms of improving the atmosphere. This reflected the two sides’ approach of forgiving and yielding to each other, taking care of both sides and facing the facts. China agreed to withdraw from the Pannah-Panlao [tribal] area, Burma agreed to withdraw from the Pianma area. This increased mutual trust, and the friendly feelings of the people. Our side imagined something similar for India; when Sino-Indian relations were tense, we thereby suggested that both sides withdraw 20 kilometers. The Indian side has not agreed, so it has not been achievable. No matter what the considerations, now they can all be raised and explored. Anything that takes appropriate care of both sides and is based on reciprocity can be considered. Both sides must also consider how to progress yet further. One could also say that the Chinese side has comparatively lesser difficulties, but difficulties do in fact exist – difficulties are not necessarily expressed in media opinions. During the Sino-Burmese border negotiations, there were differing opinions within China, especially between Yunnan’s local border peoples and upper-class circles – the pressure was considerable. But we didn’t let it leak out; we adopted a consultation style to conduct the work of convincing [people]. It is my personal opinion that both sides should consider what specific methods there are to push things forward. We [Chinese] are currently considering this, and welcome friends, including the Ambassador himself, to do so. As long as it’s helpful in advancing Sino-Indian relations, no matter whether you do so as the Ambassador or as a friend, we welcome you to bring it up.

Parthasarathy: I would like to clarify one point. In the case of the second
method, if the facts presented by the two sides are that different, what is it that the two retain? Can [we] think of it as, no one has to abandon their position, but just make concessions in a broader political sense?

Zhang: It can be understood this way. It’s not necessary to speak of which side was wrong in the past; this is an issue of mutual concessions.

Parthasarathy: Your difficulties probably are fewer: your legislative assembly is not as heated as ours. Following along with this assumption, the Indian side could say, India has sovereignty over Aksai Chin, but agrees to China having a highway there. This is hypothetical, just a reflection of the Indian people’s ideas. But the Indian people still have one misgiving. The fifth point in Premier Zhou’s proposed Six Points of Consensus is that both sides maintain the status quo, without territorial demands as the prerequisite. Some Indians fear that if we agree to this point, it means we agree that China has sovereignty over Aksai Chin.

Zhang: Let me clarify a moment: The fifth point in Premier Zhou’s proposed Six Points of Consensus refers to both sides keeping to the actual line of control, and not making the other’s acceptance of one’s own territorial demands a prerequisite for conducting negotiations. Maintaining the status quo and the final resolution are still two different things.

Parthasarathy: I agree with this understanding, otherwise there would be no room for negotiation. But in India there is the view that what Premier Zhou meant was to resolve the issues on the basis of the status quo, because the original language also mentioned, “But individual adjustments can be made.”

Zhang: “Individual adjustments”[5] is also in regard to maintaining the status quo. [We] have to separate maintaining the status quo from the final resolution.

Also, it seems that the two countries’ other disputes can be reduced somewhat. There are some small matters that often recur in our exchanges of [diplomatic] letters. We didn’t answer some letters out of the
consideration that we shouldn’t go looking for trouble on some small matters. It’s better to have fewer letter exchanges; we can talk informally about important things, and only then present letters [to each other]. Otherwise it increases fervor on both sides, for nothing. [We] hope that both sides can have a certain understanding and make allowances on this point, otherwise the two sides will have certain jealous suspicions, thinking the other one is up to something and taking [the other’s] lack of reply as silent confirmation of this; in the future this can’t be reversed. For several years, India has adopted a practice of all letters having to be answered, and India having to be the one to draw up a conclusion. India also issued a white book many times; with so many protests by India, we could not but also raise protests and answer back on some questions. Please consider whether some practices can be changed in future. For example, in the matter of English versions of the reports from the two countries’ government officials, it was initially decided that translations would not be provided for either side’s report. Later the Indian side insisted that [China] provide an English version, and the Chinese side agreed. Due to the narrow time constraints, there were some places in the translated version that were not precise enough, and we later made some non-substantive corrections to it. Recently the India foreign ministry sent a letter saying that the translated version had different implications from the original, and India could not accept it. This surprised us, because there is no question of accepting or not accepting with the translation – both sides take the text proper as the standard. Otherwise, we too would require India to provide translations of documents, and also be pickier about them.
Memorandum of Conversation (3): Director Zhang Wenji and Indian Ambassador Parthasarathy

Time: 19 July 1961, 9 – 11 a.m.
Location: Foreign Ministry

Parthasarathy: In accordance with Premier Zhou’s directives, we conducted informal talks. This is the most effective [means of communication]. The goal is exploring how both sides can further consider [issues]. Of course, neither side can give explicit answers. All possible methods discussed boil down to the following:

1. With an objective attitude, carrying out another examination of the facts, taking the historical background and the actual administrative jurisdiction into consideration, and seeking out a certain method on a political foundation. Take the eastern section, for example: the northern part has close ties to China, and the southern part has close ties to India. [We would] approach the situation of each section objectively and seek a possible solution. You and I both think that that repeating the method used last time, that kind of hurried official meeting, is not likely to be very effective.

2. Each keeps to their own position, and [we] reconsider the issues and seek a political resolution. Both sides will, in a friendly way and by forgiving and yielding to each other, resolve border issues once and for all.

3. Taking into consideration that there would be difficulties in carrying out the second method in a minimal time period, the two sides can temporarily put border issues to one side, and take steps to keep the two countries’ relations from worsening in other aspects. [We could] consider some suggestions to ease relations, like the two sides having more contacts, etc

Zhang: Premier Zhou mentioned that in regard to the officials’ reports, the Chinese side had thought of three possible methods that we think unsuitable or impossible to adopt. The Foreign Secretary mentioned that there might be
a kind of fourth option – which is, both sides agree to reconsider [the issues]. The Foreign Secretary did not have the time then to fully explain; I wonder if the Ambassador would be able to do so.
The day before yesterday I talked about some of my personal, very undeveloped ideas; I don’t know which fit with or are relatively close to the Indian side’s ideas, or which are unacceptable. China has a proverb, “Casting a brick to attract jade”[6]: the Ambassador is clear on the Indian side’s position; [we] are willing to listen to the Ambassador’s opinions on what steps to take in terms of reconsidering [the issues]. What are the Ambassador’s wise views?
Parthasarathy: The Foreign Secretary has not received directives and suggestions for this visit. The original idea was just to make use of the opportunity to exchange opinions on the current Sino-Indian relationship. When the Chinese side mentioned three methods that might be adopted and the Foreign Secretary said there might be a kind of fourth method, I think that at the time he didn’t have any specific ideas in mind at all, but was pointing out that the methods were not limited to three, that there might be others, and that [we] could first consider this and see what steps might be taken. I think that at the time, the Foreign Secretary just wanted to exchange opinions, and was not in any way presenting any suggestions on the Indian government’s behalf. We, too, are also only exchanging opinions; we haven’t been authorized to take any steps. When I summarized the main contents of the discussions just now, it was only to illustrate a train of thought. I cannot yet say anything now; I need to report to my country. I think these two days of discussion have been valuable: we cleared up the atmosphere, and both sides voiced their own views candidly. Everyone agreed that the two countries’ relations should be restored, [and we] should explore what steps to take. These are the gains of these two days. In sum, there should be further talks. We think that the several possible methods
that you and I spoke about are not mutually exclusive, but that one method may lead to another. [We] must ponder the practical likelihood further.

Zhang: I agree with the Ambassador’s statement. Outside of what Premier Zhou, on behalf of the Chinese government, has already discussed with the Foreign Secretary, the conversations between us are just free exchanges of ideas. Just now the Ambassador said that the Foreign Secretary was not at all authorized to present China with suggestions, but to understand China’s ideas through conversations with China’s leaders, and must reconsider the issues after reporting back to the Indian government. I think since Premier Zhou has already expressed views on the Chinese government’s behalf, before long we should be able to hear the Indian government’s views or suggestions. I would like to ask very candidly: Does the Ambassador personally believe that the Indian government wants to actively take any steps to resolve the issues? I am raising this question because Prime Minister Nehru once said, following the release of the official reports, that unless China accepts India’s demands, there is no possibility of talks. The Foreign Secretary also said it is necessary for the two sides to have a foundation upon which to talk. I’m not clear on how the two sides can have a foundation if they don’t talk, and the Indian side says there can be no talk without a foundation. The Indian government makes general statements that it hopes to resolve the issues, but what of specific methods?

Parthasarathy: The question is complex. The Foreign Secretary’s talks with Premier Zhou reflect [the fact that] both sides have some anxieties and misunderstandings. For example, on the issue of criticism in the newspapers, both sides felt hurt. The Indian side also had the impression that China wanted to stay locked in a stalemate. Thus the question cannot be considered one-sidedly. You mentioned general statements; Prime Minister Nehru said not long ago that the two countries of China and India cannot stay locked in long-term mutual confrontation, and that the issues
cannot always be kept in the icebox. As to the specific ways, that is quite
difficult. You spoke very rightly: It seems that neither side has raised
constructive suggestions. You [all] raised the Six Points of Consensus – we
did not accept [them], but that does not mean we are not considering
[them]. The first step is to take the issues out of the icebox and look for a
way to break the stalemate. It is now still difficult to make further
statements.
Zhang: The two governments’ positions differ greatly, but since both sides
want to resolve the issues, we must seek out points of consensus, and not
points of difference; [we] should always take active steps. The Chinese side
has already put forward the Six Points of Consensus; perhaps there are
some clauses or wording with which the Indian side feels it cannot agree.
Only if the Indian side can put forward positive opinions can we pursue
forgiveness and understanding, and the two sides get closer. Regardless of
what suspicions the Indian side has toward China - like suspecting China
doesn’t wish to resolve the issues, etc. – the suspicions can only be proven
baseless through action. We have many times expressed our willingness to
talk, and also always put forward positive suggestions. If China wanted to
stall, it would never take these kind of positive steps. The Indian side may
feel this is still not enough – then, just look at the facts. As far as our side is
concerned, [we] have always shown with statements and actions that we are
true to our position.
Parthasarathy: Our two sides can both put our ideas and train of thought out
there [for the other to see]; this is very good. I personally think that there
might be the following few methods:
(1) To make some kind of gesture that would do something to change the
atmosphere;
(2) To restore contacts at all levels;
(3) To strive for mutually satisfactory solutions on lesser issues, and not
adopt rigid attitudes;
(4) To stop imagining the other in a hostile way - for example, you [all] do not think we are conducting anti-Chinese campaigns, we do not think you are slandering us, etc – to create a favorable atmosphere. Of course, there are some problems that can’t be resolved immediately; this is a long-term issue.
In regard to some sort of fourth option, I think there is no simple answer here. The Foreign Secretary was saying, What should we do as a next step? At the time, he was just thinking in procedural terms, how the two sides should restore contacts. As to the substantive issue, you asked just now if the Indian side was willing to resolve the issues. I think our two sides should have a basic trust; both sides wish to resolve the issues, if not today, then tomorrow. There are differences of opinion between us, but both sides are sincere. We [can] restore contacts in some aspects and reconsider [the issues]. This is my idea; it is difficult to give an explicit answer, [and I] am willing to have a further exchange of opinions.
Zhang: There are difficulties, it’s true. [We] must make further considerations and exchanges of opinion, to stop the two countries’ relations from worsening. To be sure, in this period there is mutual criticism and stalling over minor issues in diplomatic relations, but as long as both sides have the will, the situation can be improved. The Ambassador has researched Chairman Mao’s writings, and is sure to know that we have consistently adhered to two principles in handling relations with others. The first is, “Do not be the first under heaven,” that is to say, do not take the first step in causing harm. The second principle is, “It is improper to take but not give,” that is to say, if others treat us unfairly, we cannot fail to give answer.[7] Likewise, if others are good to me, I will be even better to them in return. If we look back at the facts of the situation, I’m afraid one is hard put not to recognize that India’s criticisms of China were far more numerous
than our criticisms of India; it is all right to have differing opinions in this area, but it is best if the leaders of the two countries stay behind the frontlines[8]. In terms of the two countries’ diplomatic documents, India’s protests to [China] have also far outnumbered our protests to India. I also don’t wish to play the arithmetic game, and hope that after today both sides improve their practices. A certain amount of time is needed in terms of resolving border issues; for some other minor issues we can make immediate changes. I am not pointing the finger at anyone, [just] hoping that the two countries’ relations [can] be improved.

Parthasarathy: What troubles me is the hidden insinuation in Chinese newspapers’ criticisms that there have been changes in India’s basic domestic and foreign policy. It’s true that in terms of amount, Indian newspapers’ criticisms outnumber the Chinese, but most of the criticisms are limited to border issues. I want to raise a candid question: Premier Zhou presented the Six Points of Consensus; now that the two sides have held official meetings, and Indian officials have raised arguments [concerning them], will it have any effect on [the Six Points]? If you were to present them again, would the content and wording of the Six Points not be changed or revised at all from what they were – would they not have been affected at all by [those] few talks?

Zhang: I don’t know the government’s considerations, and I can’t speak on the government’s behalf. Personally, I believe that in terms of the major aspects, our position is completely correct. I must say that some of the information and conclusions presented by the Indian side were surprising and unusual, although I have respect for India’s representatives. Following the two sides’ official meetings, [if] Premier Zhou’s Six Points of Consensus are not thrown out, there is the possibility of supplementing and perfecting [them]. As to China’s view of India, [our] overall assessment is based on the approach of seeking truth from facts. We take a case as it stands, judging a
thing on its own merits. We still speak well of the good aspects, and give them our support. As for certain disagreements, it is perhaps unavoidable they will show in public opinion too, but this does not hinder us from international cooperation; for example, on the issue of Laos, the Foreign Secretary promised that India’s foreign policy had not changed in 15 years – and if it has not in fact changed, then there’s no need for worry, [since] we seek the truth from facts.

Parthasarathy: We are not worried at all, we know what to do, but hope there won’t be an increase in animosity between the two sides.

Zhang: [As] Ambassador Pan mentioned in the written conversation with the Indian Foreign Secretary, our enemies are in the east. Recently Chairman Liu also made mention, in a conversation with foreign guests, of “Not disliking to have many friends, and not disliking to have few enemies.” India is a great nation with a long history; why would we want to offend India? No matter what, one can see that disharmony between the two countries has no advantages for either side. China has a saying: “When the snipe and the clam grapple, it is the fisherman who stands to profit.” Does the Ambassador think it possible to start off by supplementing and revising Premier Zhou’s proposed Six Points of Consensus?

Parthasarathy: It is very difficult to say. [As] I just said, regarding these six points – it is the fifth point in particular that is the core of the problem - India cannot accept [them]. Frankly speaking, judging from the statement released by the Indian government, I think we have not yet arrived at this point. [We] need to give it further thought, [and for] the two sides to reestablish trust. It is just because of this that [we] hope to make some efforts on other issues, propose some methods and talk to each other, in order to restore relations. It could be said that in the past the two sides talked back and forth at, not with, each other. Although the two sides’ differences are great, I am still optimistic. Resolving issues takes some time.
Zhang: From a long-term point of view – from a historical point of view – some small difficulties are temporary phenomena. The Ambassador knows China’s approach to overcoming difficulties. When things are at their most difficult, we are still always optimistic. The difficulties between China and India are very small; this is not to make light of these difficulties, but considered in terms of the entire world, and of long-range history, the differences of opinion are not very great. We all have confidence [we can] overcome domestic and foreign difficulties. After the Ambassador returns to his country, [we] hope he will make efforts to improve the situation; we will make efforts on our side as well. We hope that soon after the Ambassador goes back [we] can hear the Indian government’s views.

Parthasarathy: [We] can have further exchanges of views.

[1] This portion is a brief synopsis of the three conversations that subsequently follow.
[2] Only this one (1) point appears in the original document.
[3] “(A LOOSE TERM)” appears in English in the original document, in parenthesis following the Chinese translation.
[6] Getting the ball rolling with a few commonplace remarks so that others may offer valuable opinions (????)
[7] The first principle is a quote from Lao Tzu, the second from Confucius.
[8] In other words, it is better if criticisms are not voiced by the leaders themselves.
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