

SYNOPSIS

REMEMBERING 1962 WAR: TRUST DEFICIT AND WAR MEMORY IN SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS

The deepening trust deficit in bilateral ties, entrenched by the 1962 war, remains one of the foremost challenges in Sino-Indian relations. Mutual suspicion and lack of strategic and political confidence not only inhibit the prospect of robust Sino-Indian engagement but also provoke conflicts that threaten to upend the stability of bilateral ties. The process of normalisation initiated in 1976 was marked by a number of reverses, yet regular high-level official visits, government personnel exchanges, cultural exchanges, signing of confidence-building measures, and agreements relating to border, defence, and trade were continued to boost 'mutual trust and understanding'. However, all such well-meaning gestures and actions amounted to a formal rapprochement on the surface as distrust and perceptual bias continue to influence mutual judgement. Policy experts and scholars point towards a wide range of issues like continuing border disputes, aspirations for Asian leadership, conflicting political systems, third-party alliances and threat perception as factors permeating trust deficit in bilateral ties. Another aspect that is relatively less discussed but nonetheless widely acknowledged within the academia is the psychological cause of the trust deficit, that is, the memory of the 1962 war embedded in the Indian and Chinese national psyche, which acts as a major constraint in bridging the trust gap between the two countries. The existing literature on Sino-Indian relations does not elaborate on this aspect further or delve into questions like how India and China remember the 1962 war? how these memory narratives were shaped in the respective countries? what are the dominant narratives of remembrance and how the memory and remembrance of 1962 war permeate the trust deficit in bilateral ties.

This project aims to investigate these questions from the Indian perspective, with a particular focus on how India's policy elites' war memory shapes their distrust towards China. The cause of emphasis on India's policy elites' war memory is twofold. First, the existing scholarship on India-China ties highlights that the 1962 war memory is vivid in within the Indian policy elites' psyche, compared to a relative absence of such vivid memory in Chinese elites' psyche. There is a general lack of widespread knowledge about the war within China. Conversely, the 1962 war remains deeply embedded in the consciousness of the Indian elite. Even six decades later, the causes

and consequences of the conflict continue to be vigorously debated in New Delhi's policy circles, and it is argued that this persistent memory shapes India's security and strategic perceptions vis-à-vis China, potentially hindering efforts towards sustained cooperation between the two nations. The second reason the project delves into these questions is because mere knowledge about the presence of the 1962 war memory and its stated impact on bilateral ties does not advance in totality our understanding of the causal relation between war memory and India's distrust towards China. The psychological dimension of the trust deficit requires greater academic attention. A systematic enquiry into the psychological frames will help understand better the role of ideas and beliefs in shaping Sino-Indian relations. India's war memory narratives of betrayal and humiliation have persisted and transcended generations. Further, they have been accorded national prominence through monuments, days of commemoration or reiterations at public forums. Therefore, there exists a general assumption about their impact on constraining bilateral ties. However, there is lack of comprehensive analysis explaining the underlying dynamics that make war memory an influential variable in determining questions of trust and distrust in India. Therefore, it is imperative that questions pertaining to the source, content and relevance of war memory to India's distrust are explored in greater detail.

The project takes into consideration the national policy elites' memories of betrayal and humiliation. Since interactions and exchanges between the two countries continue to be heavily mediated by their respective state apparatuses thus, memory narratives emanating from outside the state hardly find space within the foreign policy conduct. Here, it is important to note that the national policy elites' memories are the dominant narratives in any country, forged according to the political exigencies of the state and are reflected in official and semi-official documents, public declarations, writings and speeches, or sites of commemoration like museums and memorials. Drawing from various archival sources, commemorative works, policy documents, public statements, media reports and writings, and academic works relating to the war, along with interviews of concerned policy elites, the project intends to investigate the link between war memory and India's distrust towards China.

Statement of the Problem

The project identifies the persistent and intensifying trust deficit between China and India as the primary area of concern, which needs to be addressed holistically if the two countries intend to build robust diplomatic ties. A brief account of the history of the evolution of Sino-Indian relations from 1976 normalisation till 2020 reveals that the trust-deficit between the two countries has intensified quite simultaneously with the expansion of their bi-lateral engagement than the other way round.

Within a decade of restoration of diplomatic contacts, the deep animosity between the two countries was demonstrated in the Sumdorong Chu crisis of 1986, which lasted till 1987, and although Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit helped ease the tense atmosphere, political and economic relations hardly registered remarkable improvement. In the 1990s, instances of growing institutional links between the militaries and the strategic communities of both countries and the signing of 1993 and 1996 land border agreements had renewed hopes for a Sino-Indian rapprochement, but the latent distrust between the two countries was revealed when barely a month after PLA chief of staff, General Fu Quanyou's visit to New Delhi in April 1998, the Indian defense minister George Fernandes publicly identified China as India's primary threat and post-Pokhran nuclear tests Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in a secret letter to US President Clinton cited Chinese threat and the persisting atmosphere of distrust between India and China as the primary causes of India's nuclear tests. China, in response, cancelled a scheduled Joint Working Group meeting for border negotiations, which did not resume until 2001. Comments by Brijesh Mishra, India's Principal Secretary and Indian President R.K. Narayanan that India did not view China as a threat, failed to assuage Chinese misgivings and in 1999 Beijing tested one of its Dongfeng missiles that were capable of reaching every corner of India. Since neither country was keen to extend the political stalemate over the Pokhran tests, high-level reciprocal exchanges were resumed, and government officials from both countries publicly assured that neither country viewed each other as threat. However, the 2000-2001 Indian defense annual report underscored Chinese incursions at the LAC and Chinese nuclear missiles placed in Tibet as major threats to Indian territorial integrity. Surprisingly, the same year, Zhu Bangzao, then China's foreign ministry spokesperson declared that Beijing was paying close attention to the development and placement of India's medium-range Agni missiles. Moreover, even as the relationship

appeared to gain momentum with high-level visits in 2003, 2005, 2006, and 2008, the signing of confidence-building measures and burgeoning trade; bi-lateral ties remained fraught. Both India and China moved rapidly to upgrade their border infrastructure and military capabilities along the disputed border on the sidelines of the Special Representative Talks and Joint Working Group meetings and resorted to diplomatic retaliation whereby China invited Kashmiri separatist leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq to Beijing at the same time when Dalai Lama was visiting Arunachal Pradesh. Also, Indian hysteria over reports of the Chinese decision to build dams over the Yarlung Tsang Po River, New Delhi's moves to restrict Chinese investments over concerns of security and espionage and India and China's mutual criticism of the other's diplomatic and strategic endeavours as containment strategies demonstrated the deep-seated distrust that had persisted and deepened over years. By 2010 when India and China were celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties, the two countries apart from holding economic and security dialogues, defense, cultural and political exchanges, had also expanded their co-operation in groupings like BRICS, G-20, BASIC, and SCO and considering the change of leadership in China and India in 2012 and 2014 respectively, the 89 billion dollar trade and sixteen bi-lateral meetings between Xi-Jinping and Narendra Modi, caused optimism regarding a new phase of developmental partnership between China and India.

Nevertheless, these positive developments described only one side of the coin, as simultaneous events indicated that years of diplomatic exchanges, confidence building measures, economic and strategic links had amounted to a thin reconciliation as suspicion and distrust remained predominant in bilateral ties. For instance, amidst celebrating the Year of India-China Friendship and Co-operation in 2012, New Delhi also commemorated the 50th anniversary of 1962 war where distrust and threat perception of Chinese intentions emerged as the dominant sentiment. This sentiment was matched by Chinese state media's Global Times' opinion pieces, which blamed India for the 1962 war and warned against misadventures in the future. Similarly, when China declared the initiation of the OBOR project in 2013, many within the Indian strategic community responded with cynicism, dubbing the project as a Chinese attempt to subvert Indian territorial integrity and create a Sino-centric world order, and India has since, then boycotted OBOR meetings. In 2014, reports of PLA's incursion during Xi Jinping's visit again flared the policy elites' suspicion of Chinese intent,

leading Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to rhetorically warn that a little toothache could paralyse the entire body. Bi-lateral relations were indeed paralysed during 2017 Doklam crisis when intense distrust brought the two countries to the brink of war. Although efforts of recovery were made through informal summits between the two leaders in 2018 and 2019, China's criticism of India's abrogation of article 370, New Delhi's criticism of China's handling of the Covid pandemic, and the Galwan Valley crisis, which led to death of Indian and Chinese soldiers, again brought to fore the problem of trust-deficit as a prominent factor in Sino-Indian ties.

Research Questions

As mentioned earlier, this research analyses the trust deficit from India's perspective and will explore how Indian policy elites' war memory impact their distrust towards China. The project identifies the following three core questions:

How the memory narratives of the 1962 war were constructed and disseminated in the public arena? Memories of betrayal and humiliation were not created in vacuum but were shaped by political intervention and socio-political circumstances in both domestic and international arena. This question will explore the foundational basis of the war memories of betrayal and humiliation by delving into the formative years of the India-China bilateral ties.

The second question *asks how the remembrance of the war has evolved in the six decades since the conflict and what is the dominant war memory discourse.* One of the primary reasons memory narratives are not analysed is because of their fluid character. Memory narratives can be subjected to continuous transformations, which often makes it difficult to test assumptions based on a mnemonic framework of analysis. However, mapping evolution of memory narratives and the dominant memory discourse is not only important to understand what the policy elites intend to remember but also more importantly, what they choose to forget. Most of the times state elites choose to remember of a self-glorifying and other-vilifying narrative, which casts the self in a positive image but fails to acknowledge the cognitive biases and errors in one's own decision making. Such one-sided approach impedes trust building process. This question will explore the whitewashed and sanitised narratives of the war that were generated in the post-conflict period through selective recalling.

The final question tracked here is how war memories and its remembrance impact India's policy elites' distrust towards China. This question investigates the correlation between war memory and trust deficit, essentially exploring the interplay between national perceptions of the past and state behaviour. By examining the conjunction between India's war memory and its China discourse, the research delves into how the persistence of a sanitized and simplistic narrative of the 1962 Sino-Indian War contributes to the entrenchment of a distrustful attitude towards China.

Research Methodology

The project, in general, will follow a qualitative method of research, and in accordance with the three questions listed above, the project will advance in three stages:

The project uses textual and discourse analysis to map the representation of the war in the national psyche. For the purpose of analysis, both primary and secondary sources were used. Primary sources, like official documents, policy reports, speeches, and audio-visual recordings, were used, and secondary sources like biographies, media interviews, newspaper reports, commentaries, and journal articles were used. The project also uses select case studies to analyse the shift in the remembrance of the war in the collective psyche. Finally, to analyse the impact of the collective memory on trust deficit, it uses the process tracing method. Using this method, the collective memories of the 1962 war are considered intervening factors in decision-making and their impact on Indian attitude towards China is evaluated by tracing how memory narratives were evoked in decision-making.

Primary and secondary materials have been sourced from the Nehru Memorial Library, the National Archives of India, the MP-IDSA Library, the website of the Ministry of External Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and newspaper websites. In addition, online resources available through JSTOR, journal databases of Routledge, Sage and Project Muse are also used in this work.

The study proceeds in three phases: In the first phase, the project delves into analysing the construction of memory narratives of betrayal and humiliation. This phase employs a historical approach to analyse the evolution of India's memory narratives of betrayal and humiliation with regard to the war across two distinct time periods: First, the Formative Period (1949-1958) that focuses on the initial years following the

establishment of diplomatic ties between India and China in 1949. The analysis will examine the early representations of the bilateral relationship in terms of 'Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai' where India and China were civilisational friends and partners in anti-colonial struggle.

This is followed by the second period called Escalation and Rupture (1959-1962): This period looks into the deterioration of India-China relations due to escalating tensions over the border dispute and the Tibetan issue. The project gives a brief overview of the complex situation, which developed in the late 1950s due to the evasive and ambiguous policies of both countries, and then moves to analyse how the previously dominant narratives of friendship and partnership were reinterpreted in light of these emerging conflicts. The focus will be on how the process of reinterpretation of the narratives of friendship and representation of the Chinese offensive as betrayal and humiliation excluded the complexities of the issues and errors in decision-making. Instead, we find that a simplistic, self-glorifying narrative was deliberately created that served as the template guiding India's understanding of China.

The second phase delves into the process of evolution of the memory narratives and remembrance of the war. It adopts a critical discourse analysis framework and a longitudinal research design to understand the state's intervention in shaping the remembrance of the war in its immediate aftermath, the onset of recalling of the war after Nehru's death in 1964, and finally, the dominant memory discourse that is present in the present century. The time frame of this phase extends from 1964 to 2022. Within this period, no clear distinction has been made. Instead, different timelines have been weaved together to demonstrate how the remembrance of the war has shifted from betrayal and humiliation in order to focus primarily on remembrance of the war as a national humiliation, political-military debacle caused by misplaced trust in China and lack of defence preparedness.

The third phase shifts the focus to investigating the long-term impact of the war memory on India's distrust towards China. It employs a process-tracing methodology to analyse the complex interplay between the persistence of a humiliation narrative and India's pursuit of reconciliation efforts with China since the 1962 war. To that end, this phase looks into five distinct time frames, that is, 1970-1976, 1980-1988, 1990-1998 and 2000-2013 and 2014 to 2020. These five distinct time frames represent five

different phases of reconciliation with China, where Indian policy makers engaged in different confidence-building measures including expansion of trade, establishment of institutions and multilevel dialogues to foster confidence in bilateral ties. Looking into the memory discourses in each of these phases, the study analyses how the remembrance of the war became an intervening factor in hampering the reconciliation process and entrenching a distrustful attitude towards China in India's strategic thinking.

Chapter Summary and Findings

The study proceeds in three phases. The first phase delves into exploring and analysing the construction of the 1962 war memory. The first two chapters that is, *From Brothers to Rivals: India's Memory Politics* and *India-China Border War and Narrative Building* are part of the first phase of the study. Memories represent a sanitised and selective version of history or historical events. The process by which these selective versions are formed and embedded in the national psyche is influenced by several factors like political context, interest of policy elites, distribution of power within society and deliberate acts of inclusion and exclusion of events. Similarly, India's policy elites' war memories of betrayal and humiliation too crystallised within a particular political context and were influenced by the goals and objectives of the political leadership, the power dynamics in the 1960s and selective exclusion and narrative building. The first two chapters of this thesis deals with these issues.

The first chapter, *From Brothers to Rivals: India's Memory Politics* traces the basis of the formation of the war memories of betrayal and humiliation. To that end, the chapter looks into the formative years of the bilateral ties, that is, from 1949 (establishment of diplomatic ties between India and China) to 1958 (emergence of the border dispute and tensions along the border publicly). The narratives of betrayal and humiliation project the 1962 war as a time of Indian victimisation. According to this portrayal, India was wronged by China and suffered military humiliation due to misplaced trust in the Chinese leadership and neglect of the country's defence and security needs, thinking that the Chinese would not initiate an attack. This chapter notes that this simplistic representation of the conflict as betrayal and humiliation was itself based on sanitised memory narratives of history of Sino-Indian bilateral ties, that is, '2000 years of civilisational friendship' and 'shared anti-colonial struggle'. At the time of India's independence in 1947, the international system was fractured owing to Cold War

tensions between the US and the SU. The international system was divided into two camps, that is, liberal democracies and communists, the two powers vigorously competed in different geographical spaces, especially in Asia and Africa (where newly independent countries were emerging) to carve out spheres of influence. Then Indian PM Jawaharlal Nehru saw this as inimical to India's core national priorities of maintaining foreign policy independence, achieving economic development and elevating India's position as a leading actor at the global stage. In order to achieve these policy objectives, New Delhi rejected Cold War alliance systems; Indian policy leaders like Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Rajendra Prasad, along with PM Nehru, repeatedly emphasised India's commitment to independent decision-making in domestic and foreign policy issues. Second, New Delhi strove to shape a peaceful external environment conducive to India's economic development. To this end, India attempted to geopolitically stabilise Asia and limit the spill-over of Cold War tensions by diplomatically intervening in the Indo-China and Formosa crisis. Finally, India moved to play a proactive role in international diplomacy to mitigate Cold War tensions. As Nehru was keenly aware of India's lack of military and economic capabilities, two important prerequisites to command a major power role, he emphasised India's civilisational heritage, anti-colonial credentials and non-violent independence movement to project moral superiority as the basis of India's demand for leadership position.

Owing to China's geographical proximity to India, size and potential to play a crucial role in international politics, Nehru perceived China to be an important player vis-à-vis India's strategic interests. First, China's foreign policy position with regard to Cold War politics was thought would impact India's external strategic environment. Second, China was seen as a stabilising factor in the Asian security environment and finally, friendly diplomatic ties with China were expected to enable India to play a greater role at the international level as a bridge between communist and liberal democratic camps. Therefore, maintaining cordial diplomatic ties with China became a cornerstone of India's foreign policy.

In this regard, New Delhi, besides, extending friendly gestures like early recognition of the PRC, supporting China's membership in the UN or extending diplomatic support to the Chinese leadership during the Korean crisis, also propagated memory frames of '2000 years of civilisational friendship' and 'shared anti-colonial struggle' in its

diplomatic discourse vis-à-vis China. This was done to shape India's image as a friendly country in the Chinese mind and present to the Chinese leadership a model of peaceful and friendly ties that could be replicated in the post-independence period. Indian policy elites, in their public pronouncements called for 'Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai', referring to 2000 years of peaceful ties between the two countries through cultural and economic linkages and shared colonial victimisation and anti-colonial struggle. It is noteworthy, that the advent of colonialism was alleged to be the cause of disruption of the peaceful ties.

The government also expended considerable political capital to institutionalise this narrative of the history of bilateral ties through repeated public proclamations, facilitating friendly exchanges and setting up "India-China Friendship Associations". In effect, these memory narratives were drawn from the Pan-Asian movement that promoted an idea of unity and fraternity between Asian powers against the colonial powers by virtue of historical contacts, cultural commonalities and shared cultural values. The Pan-Asian movement had glossed over dissimilarities, hierarchies and instances of violent exchanges between Asian countries to project an image of Asian brotherhood. Likewise, the narratives of civilisational friendship and shared anti-colonial struggle eluded the uneasy details of the marginal nature of economic and cultural contact between Indian and Chinese kingdoms much before the arrival of colonial powers, persecution of Buddhists in China during the Tang and Song dynasties, perception of the common Chinese of Indian opium traders and Sikh soldiers as collaborators of the British which continued even after independence and the starkly different trajectories of their independence struggles. More importantly, the exaggerated accounts of friendship and the networks to reinforce the same did not lead to any real emotional involvement in the bilateral ties. In the 1950s, notwithstanding the slogans of 'Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai' tensions between the two countries were brewing over Tibet, the border dispute and for the leadership of the third-world countries. Also, Indian leaders, including Nehru, expressed in private their apprehensions about Chinese expansionism, PLA's presence in Tibet and its implication on the un demarcated border and the possibility of conflict between the two countries. Further, Nehru himself cautioned Indian diplomats to deal with China firmly as any show of weakness would lead to exploitation by Beijing.

The key takeaways of the chapter are that India in order to advance friendly ties with China propagated a sanitised version of bi-lateral history in the form of ‘2000 years of civilisational friendship’ and ‘shared anti-colonial struggle’. However, neither the historical ties were deep, nor relations became close and friendly during the formative years. Second, trust-deficit was latent in bilateral ties since the onset of diplomatic relations. The memory narratives merely fostered a superficial sense of understanding of China (primarily in India). In effect, the lack of real understanding of China in the Indian policy elites left issues of concern like Tibet and the border dispute unattended, despite New Delhi being aware of the divergences in views.

Moving to the second chapter, *India-China Border War and Narrative Building*, the project delves deeper into the memory building process. It argues that the propaganda campaign that was launched by the Indian government in the wake of the 1962 war to shape the nations and the external audience’s understanding of the conflict and its causes, strategically placed the war as betrayal and humiliation perpetrated by China in disregard of 2000 years of civilisational friendship and shared anti-colonial struggle. In the process, New Delhi elided the complex bilateral situation that led to the war and promulgated a simplistic self-glorifying narrative.

During the early 1950s, notwithstanding the calls for ‘Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai’, the establishment of India-China Friendship Associations and exchange of friendly visits, signs of diplomatic strain appeared in bilateral ties over Tibet and the disputed border. New Delhi, although outwardly remained dismissive of any threat being posed to India due to the Chinese occupation of Tibet, did not take PLA’s military intervention lightly. In 1950, the Indian government, in a protest note to Beijing, termed the Chinese invasion of Tibet ‘deplorable’ and privately extended limited diplomatic and military assistance to the Tibetans to resist the PLA. Post-1950 occupation, Nehru also tried to leverage Indo-Tibetan trade to reduce the PLA’s presence in Tibet and continued to provide diplomatic assistance to the Dalai Lama to limit Chinese dominance. With regard to the disputed border, New Delhi remained displeased with Chinese maps’ representation of Indian territories on the Chinese side and ordered the strengthening of Indian civil and military presence along the border. Beijing, too on, its part, resented India’s sympathy for Dalai Lama and Tibetan autonomy and alleged that India’s perceptions were being influenced by foreign elements hostile to China. On the border

issue, the CCP leadership concluded that India's position on the border dispute and McMahon Line was a continuance of the British policy of expansionism.

One of the primary reasons for the tensions was that both India and China failed to timely address the complexities introduced into these issues by their colonial and imperial predecessors respectively. The two countries, despite being aware of each other's position on Tibet and the border dispute, adopted an evasive approach that increased the complexity and ambiguity. Archival records reveal that New Delhi was aware of the subsequent Chinese government's claim over Tibet and rejection of the McMahon Line. Beijing, too, had noted India's occupation of Tawang and proclamations about the McMahon Line. However, for a prolonged period, India and China avoided direct talks on the political status of Tibet and the McMahon Line until the border dispute surfaced openly. Furthermore, during the negotiation of the Panchsheel Treaty in 1955, both countries expressly instructed their respective negotiators not to discuss the border dispute or the McMahon Line.

The year 1958 marked a turning point in bilateral ties. Tensions deepened over differing interpretations of the border's location leading to perceived intrusions. Chinese concerns regarding the activities of the Dalai Lama's supporters in Kalimpong and India's objection to Chinese maps added to the friction. The unravelling of bilateral ties continued from 1959-1962. Reports of Chinese excesses in Tibet, Chinese construction of highway in Aksai Chin and border clashes inflamed public opinion in India, pressurising New Delhi to adopt a hard-line stance towards China. Similarly, criticism of CCP's policies in Tibet and calls for military action against China by a section of Indian political leaders and public intellectuals, outbreak of armed resistance in Tibet in 1959, India's granting of asylum to Dalai Lama in 1960 deeply angered Beijing. Subsequently, the sense of animosity between both countries heightened, diplomatic protest notes became sharper against each other with accusations of transgression and expansionism, talks between Zhou Enlai and Nehru and the political officers in 1960 failed owing to intense distrust between the two countries, forward patrolling by the PLA and the Indian Army caused frequent clashes.

The outbreak of conflict in October 1962 and the Indian army's military reverses resulted in severe criticism of Nehru's China policy at both the national and international level. In Parliament and the press, the government was accused of credulity and neglect of India's security needs. Serious doubts were expressed regarding the Indian Army's capability to protect India's territorial integrity and security and the government faced a no-confidence motion in 1963. Suggestions were also floated about constituting a separate wartime leadership as then government led by Nehru was perceived as incapable of conducting wartime operations. International observers held the conflict as vindication of the West's fear against communism and described Nehru's non-alignment approach as impractical and dangerous.

In an attempt to manage public discourse surrounding the conflict and to cultivate a favourable perception of the government and the army, New Delhi launched a massive propaganda campaign, whereby the Chinese attack was projected as betrayal and humiliation and the Indian Army as brave soldiers defending India's territorial integrity. Immediately following China's attack in 1962, the State Information Bureau was instructed to publicise India's account and mobilise the press to align it with the government's position. Thereafter, Nehru's national speech of 22 October denouncing China for unabashed aggression against India and appreciating the Army's courage was reprinted by national dailies like the Indian Express, The Hindu, and The Times of India to disseminate the government's viewpoint. In order to further solidify this perspective in the national psyche, the narrative of betrayal and humiliation by China and the sacrifice of the Indian Army was disseminated across the country through public speeches, demonstrations, resolutions, posters, commentaries in the press and official documentaries. Official publications like 'China's Betrayal of India: Background to the Invasion' and official documentaries like *The Chinese Threat* and *United We Stand* emphasising Chinese duplicity and Indian resilience were also circulated. Indian officials and diplomats in foreign missions were asked to convey to the international audience that China had committed unprovoked aggression in return for India's constant friendship and India intended to resist it with full force.

The chapter yields two key insights regarding the construction of the war memory surrounding the 1962 war. First, the pre-existing narratives of a 2,000-year civilizational friendship and shared anti-colonial struggle formed the foundation for

portraying the Chinese offensive as a betrayal and humiliation. The narratives of civilisational friendship and shared anti-colonial struggle were given a sense of historical footing and it was opined that the Chinese, in disregard of these factors wrongfully launched military action against India, disrupting centuries of peaceful ties. Second, while constructing the narrative of unprovoked Chinese aggression and duplicity juxtaposed against Indian innocence, the state also excluded several intricate details like the lack of clear policy of the British predecessors regarding the status of Tibet and rejection of the McMahon line by both Lhasa and Beijing, India's knowledge about the Aksai Chin road since 1952, and suggestions by certain parliamentarians and army officials to initiate military action against China. Consequently, the national psyche internalised a simplistic victim-glorifying and other-vilifying narrative overlooking the spatial, temporal and perceptual complexities which led to the outbreak of the war.

The second phase of the thesis, in the form of the third chapter, *Decoding India's Memorialisation and Remembrance of 1962 War*, shifts its focus to the post-conflict period, investigating the evolution of the war's remembrance over the past six decades. This phase also analyses the dominant memory discourse surrounding the Sino-Indian War within the Indian strategic community.

It is noteworthy that the state intervened hugely to shape public remembrance of the 1962 war immediately after the cessation of hostilities in November 1962. For instance, public records and the Henderson Brooks Bhagat Report, potentially contradicting the government narrative, were classified. However, selective information contained in government pamphlets about the war was disseminated as scholarly references. Further, the policy elites, including PM Nehru, used political messaging to maintain a certain understanding of the war by reiterating narratives of betrayal and humiliation by China through public speeches, writings and other official documents. Further, literature from China, especially dealing with Tibet and the border dispute was banned. Also, the government sanctioned cultural productions for mass circulation like war films, documentaries, music and other literary works, showcasing Indian military bravery at the face of Chinese perfidy and ruthlessness.

However, parallel to the government's efforts of memorialising the war as an event of betrayal and humiliation, calls intensified within sections of the Indian strategic community to identify internal actors responsible for military reverses. A counter-discourse emerged, which, although it did not challenge the narrative of Chinese perfidy, but saw the war as a debacle caused by political and military leadership's naivete, failure to assess military threat from China and prepare India's defences accordingly.

Recalling and retrospection about the war began a few years after Nehru's death. The demise of the primary architect of India's foreign policy and the Indian Army's resuscitation in 1965 created the space for revisiting the past. Beginning from the 1967 publication of B M Kaul's (considered one of the architect's India's military response) *The Untold Story*, till the start of the 21st century, several political, military and civilian leaders who were closely associated with the war or had an insider perspective published their accounts.¹

Besides these retrospective analyses, the Sino-Indian War also remained a persistent topic of public discourse. References to the conflict were woven into public discussions, parliamentary debates, and writings on India-China relations. Notably, certain recurring themes in these retrospective works, writings and discussions were military reverses, mistakes in tactical and strategic decision-making and an accompanying sense of humiliation. Inadequate defence preparedness was seen as the cause of military reverses and related consequences and this failure was attributed by some to Indian leadership's misplaced trust in Chinese pronouncements and uncritical acceptance of Beijing's assurances. However, some analysts argued that the military and the intelligence had failed to prepare as well as strongly convey the threat from China to the political leadership. In this regard, some of these works, highlighting

¹ Some of the major works were, Cabinet Secretary S.S. Khera *India's Defence Problem* (1968) and Defence Secretary P.V.R. Rao's *Defence without a Drift* (1970), veteran journalist, D R Mankekar's *The Guilty Men of 1962 War* (1968), Commander of the 7th Brigade in NEFA in 1962 and a PoW, J.P. Dalvi's *The Himalayan Blunder* (1969), Press Officer to Home Minister in 1962, Kuldip Nayar's *Between the Lines* (1969), Intelligence Bureau Director, B N Mullik's *My Years With Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal* (1970), Foreign Secretary Subimal Dutt's *With Nehru in Foreign Office*, (1977), *Division Commander in NEFA during 1962 conflict*, Maj. Gen. Niranjan Prasad's *Fall of Towang* (1981), Indian Charge de Affairs to China after the outbreak of the 1962 war, P.K. Banerjee's *My Peking Memoirs of Chinese Invasion of India* (1990), Director of Military Operations during 1962 war, D.K. Palit's *War in High Himalaya: The Indian Army in Crisis* (1991), former Prime Minister P .V. Narasimha Rao's *The Insider* (1997), personal secretary to Defence Minister in 1962, R D Pradhan's, *Debacle to Revival: Y.B. Chavan as Defence Minister, 1962-65* (1999) a close confidante of Nehru T.N. Kaul's, *A Diplomat's Diary* (2000).

instances like China's rejection of the McMahon Line after signing of the Panchsheel Treaty in 1955, gradual infrastructure building and mobilisation of troops in Tibet and the launch of a two-pronged attack in 1962, opined that Indian leaders were unable to match the clever and hard-headed approach that China took with regard to India-China relations. It is noteworthy, that while this body of literature held the government and military accountable for their actions, it did not fundamentally challenge the narratives of Chinese duplicity. Instead, it attributed the national humiliation to political naiveté, specifically a misplaced trust in China and a failure to adopt a more realistic foreign policy approach towards that nation.

In the 21st century, the Indian strategic community's recollection of the war has persistently centred around the theme of national humiliation and debacle, perceived to have been caused due to Indian political-military leadership's failure to appreciate and timely respond to the security threat posed by China. During the commemoration of the 50th and the 60th anniversary of the 1962 war in 2012 and 2022 respectively and the 2017 Doklam and the 2020 Galwan Valley crisis, when recalling the 1962 war surged surrounding these events, a large section of Indian commentators recalled India's lack of understanding of Chinese intent, Indian Army's military weakness vis-à-vis the PLA, the national humiliation suffered due to military reverses in NEFA, India's loss of prestige amongst third world countries and opportunity for New Delhi to avenge the 1962 defeat. The government, too, without explicitly referencing the humiliation, asserted that successive Indian governments had learnt lessons from the 1962 war, and a similar outcome would not be repeated. While certain observers reflected on the Chinese betrayal of Nehru's friendship, its continued tendency to do so and the Indian Army's valour despite lacking logistical support, the national elite psyche remained preoccupied with the narratives of the 1962 war as humiliation and debacle.

The chapter demonstrates that by the end of the 20th century, the memory frames of civilisational friendship and anti-colonial struggle are replaced by memory narratives of betrayal and humiliation. This transformation occurred largely due to state propaganda campaigns and the government's attempts to shape remembrance of the war. These state-sanctioned representations are entrenched in the elite psyche and have not been challenged even sixty years after the war. Second, it is also noteworthy that while memories of betrayal and humiliation co-exist, the memory of the war as an event of

debacle and national humiliation has been more dominant in the elite psyche, probably due to the power gap between the two countries. This dominant narrative of humiliation, while blames the Indian leadership for misplaced trust and faulty assessment of Chinese intentions, it also implicitly enforces that the Chinese are not trustworthy and New Delhi needs to be constantly vigilant against Beijing.

The final part of the thesis addresses the question of how memory and remembrance of the war as humiliation and debacle impacts India's distrust towards China.

The fourth chapter, *Remembering 1962: War Memory and India's Distrust towards China* notes that in order to build trust in bilateral ties in post-conflict situation the two countries have to genuinely reconcile, where there is no expectation of violence and preparation for conflict and economic relations are smooth with shared feeling of harmony in interests.

In that context, post 1962 conflict, despite the restoration of ambassadorial level ties, India and China fell short of achieving genuine reconciliation, thus hindering the establishment of trust. For instance, the Indian policy establishment continues to harbour concern about another 1962-like or larger armed conflict with China in the long-term.² Accordingly, India's defence modernisation has been geared primarily to meet the eventuality of a Chinese attack or two-front war with Pakistan and China. New Delhi raised special divisions like SSF and Brahmastra (XVII) for mountain warfare and created SSB to conduct guerilla warfare against PLA in the event of another Chinese attack across the border. Further, India also advanced its missile defence capabilities, adding a nuclear component to it to reduce military vulnerability vis-à-vis China. With regard to smooth economic relations, while trade volume between the two countries have increased significantly to cross 130 billion, it remains a contentious political issue. Indian commentators and policy observers time and again call for import curbs or ban on Chinese goods, citing increasing trade-deficit between the countries. The government, too, is extremely wary of Chinese technology like 5G and investments in sensitive sectors like banking, IT, infrastructure building among others. Furthermore, New Delhi remains suspicious and wary of Chinese presence in India's neighbourhood and sees China's diplomatic-military support to Pakistan as aimed to counter India's rise.

² Very recently, following the Galwan Valley clashes in 2024, India's Chief of Army Staff expressed that transgressions along the border can escalate to conflict.

Despite years of efforts towards reconciliation, factors like the unresolved border dispute, geostrategic competition, threat perception and third-party ties have impeded the process and intensified distrust in the Indian elite psyche. However, an additional and often overlooked challenge has been that India's attempts at reconciliation have always been shadowed by its memory and remembrance of the war as a humiliation. Meaning, New Delhi on one hand has tried to advance bilateral ties and reconcile with China, on the other, back at home, Indian policy elites have simultaneously recalled Chinese aggression, humiliation India faced in 1962, cautioning that India should not let its guard down vis-à-vis China despite talks of cooperation. For instance, during the first phase of reconciliation from 1969-1976, a number of first-hand accounts of the 1962 war were published, which termed China as an expansionist power and recalling the humiliation, urged the government to ensure that India's security and defence is not compromised again. At the same time, the Indian political opposition, too, speculating the possibility of future conflict, urged the government to prepare for war in order to avoid 1962-like humiliation. Similarly, in the 1980s, despite the Rajiv Gandhi government intensifying the reconciliation efforts, then Foreign Minister P V Narasimha Rao rejected China's package deal, citing that the arrangement did not address Indian humiliation. Further, evoking the spectre of humiliation during the Sino-Indian border crisis in 1986, Indian policy elites urged the government to remain vigilant. In the 1990s when negotiations for Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control were ongoing, India's Ministry of Defence published the official history of the 1962 conflict, stating that the war was caused due to Chinese expansionism and assured that India was making necessary preparations to avoid another debacle in future conflict. Notably, in 1998, two years after signing of the Agreement on Confidence Building Measures in Military, the Indian policy establishment justified India's nuclear states citing the 1962 war and the prevailing atmosphere of distrust between the two countries.

Moving on to the 21st century, from 2000-2013, amidst high-level delegation exchanges, increasing bilateral trade, signing agreements on confidence building measures and border defence and celebration of the India-China Year of Friendship, a number of commemorative works by former government officials and military personnel appeared lamenting New Delhi's lack of understanding of the Chinese leadership and failure to anticipate the attack. The Indian strategic community also

commemorated the 40th and 50th anniversary of the 1962 war in 2002 and 2012, reiterating suggestions of military preparedness and vigilance against China to avoid national humiliation. Furthermore, in 2013, as India signed BDCA with China, the government also established the XVII Brahmastra Corps as a quick-reaction and counter-offensive force against China across LAC. Finally, from 2014-2020, even as the two countries held informal summits in 2018 and 2019, established hotline between military commanders, New Delhi sanctioned several projects to modernise infrastructure in the ecologically fragile border regions, citing military defeat during the 1962 war. Further, India's Foreign Ministry directed its foreign missions to carefully watch Chinese activities while improving ties and imposed multiple restrictions on Chinese business and investment in India, citing national security threats.

The phenomenon of remembering humiliation that makes China untrustworthy while trying to reconcile has normalised the culture of distrust as a pragmatic policy approach as opposed to the perceived romanticisation of the Nehru period. The Indian strategic community accepts that while complete estrangement between the two countries is not practical and both countries will have to take measures to manage differences, humiliation seems entrenched in the Indian psyche, primarily due to the cycle of remembrance that India cannot let its guard down vis-à-vis China as political military vulnerability could tempt Beijing to humiliate India again.

This thesis has looked into the trust-deficit in India-China bilateral ties from India's perspective and has attempted to analyse the role of memory and remembrance of the 1962 war in sustaining New Delhi's distrust towards China. However, it is noteworthy that the distrust is mutual. Beijing, too, remains wary of India's military modernisation, engagement with South east and East Asia and deepening of political and military ties with the US. It acknowledges the need to undertake research to explore how Chinese memories of the 1962 war affect Beijing's distrust towards Indian leadership.

(Signature of the Supervisor)

(Signature of the Candidate)