

Operational Art in the 1962 Sino-Indian War

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

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Territorial disputes have played a major role in the relationship between India and China since the formation of both nationalist governments in 1947 and 1949 respectively. The incorporation of Tibet into the People's Republic of China and unclear borderlines established by the British Empire during their colonization of India set the stage for conflict between the two countries. This conflict culminated in the Sino-Indian War of 1962. China's resulting victory provides an opportunity to study how they achieved success through the lens of operational art. This study explores the nature of Chinese objectives from policy down to the tactical level and the relationship between these objectives. It also discovers what process, if any, the Chinese used to derive complementary objectives, and finally, whether their victory was the result of this process or other circumstances. This study addresses six structured, focused questions in an attempt to establish a clear linkage between political and military objectives, and whether the People's Liberation Army of China arranged their operations in time, space, and purpose to achieve these objectives.

This study produced valuable insight into the theory of operational art and provided an opportunity for greater understanding of the art of translating strategic objectives into the arrangement of tactical actions aimed at a common purpose. In the end, Chinese military commanders successfully executed operational art, merging political and military considerations to achieve an outcome that left China in an enhanced bargaining position against India. Their selective application of military force against limited objectives destroyed the image of India as a rising Asian power and exposed many of its strategic shortcomings. Successful military action against India allotted China the political initiative throughout the short war, allowing them to conclude it at the time and in the manner of their choosing, resulting from the effective application of operational art.

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Acronyms

CMC	Central Military Commission
NEFA	North East Frontier Agency
PLA	People's Liberation Army

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Introduction

Territorial disputes have played a major role in the relationship between India and China since the formation of both nationalist governments in 1947 and 1949 respectively.¹ The two countries, both vying for superpower status, realized the benefits of an amiable relationship and sought to maintain peace through diplomacy to avoid the distraction and draining effects of conflict. However, with the incorporation of Tibet into the People's Republic of China and unclear borderlines established by the British Empire during their colonization of India, dispute over the Himalayan border ensued.² Tensions rose to a new level with the Chinese construction of a road linking the regions of Tibet and Xinjiang across the disputed area known as the Aksai Chin, which India claimed belonged to Kashmir and China to Xinjiang. In response, India instituted a "Forward Policy," stationing troops at border outposts where they claimed sovereignty.

This activity took place in the greater context of the Cold War, with United States and Soviet influence playing a role in Southeast Asia. In light of this overarching background and a desire to avoid conflict, China still decided to initiate an offensive against India in October of 1962, resulting in the Sino-Indian War. This action and China's resulting victory provide an opportunity to study the nature of their objectives from policy down to the tactical level, the relationship between these objectives, what process, if any, they used to derive complementary objectives, and finally, whether their victory was the result of this process or other circumstances.

Since the end of the Vietnam War, the US Army has invested much time and study into the efficacy and understanding of operational art. Considering the difficulty in translating

¹ Dawa Norbu, "Tibet in Sino-Indian Relations: The Centrality of Marginality," *Asian Survey* 37, no. 11 (Nov., 1997): 1078-95, accessed July 15, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2645742>, 1078.

² Keshava D. Guha, "Sino-Indian Relations: History, Problems and Prospects," *Harvard International Review* 34, no. 2 (Fall, 2012): 26-29, accessed July 15, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1470956518?accountid=28992>, 2.

strategic objectives into tactical engagements that achieve the desired outcome, the Sino-Indian War offers insight into this process. To this end, the question driving this research asks, “How did the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) understand or practice operational art in the Sino-Indian War and did they apply operational art as the US Army defines it?”

The purpose of this study is to explore the execution of operational art in the Sino-Indian War and determine how the Chinese military established a linkage between objectives that led to the arrangement of operations in time and space to achieve victory. The study shows that in 1962, the Chinese achieved their stated political objectives during the Sino-Indian War through the application of operational art. The Chinese military successfully arranged their tactical actions in time, space, and purpose to achieve their strategic objectives.

This study provides valuable insight into the theory of operational art. In an era of constant literature debating what operational art is and how to apply it, it is increasingly important for US Army officers to attain a greater understanding of the art of translating strategic objectives into the arrangement of tactical actions aimed at a common purpose. As it is an art, the theory is susceptible to constant evolution. Conducting this analysis of how the Chinese military practiced operational art in the Sino-Indian War can lead to a greater understanding of the concept itself. Furthermore, it can validate our current understanding of the theory by discerning similar ideology in the Chinese military, as well as provide key takeaways from methods divergent from doctrinal practices to improve its application in the US Army.

Given the attention by the military community on the study of operational art, different definitions and explanations of the term exist. This study focuses on the US Army doctrinal definition of operational art which is, “the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.”³ Understanding

³ Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, May 2012), 4-1.

operational art in this sense promotes an understanding of the framework this study applies to the Sino-Indian War.

With an emphasis on the need to turn tactical action into strategic success, there exists the necessity for a common understanding of purpose derived from policy. Current US Army doctrine states that operational art requires commanders to understand the strategic objectives.⁴ This understanding must transcend all levels of war and display a reciprocal effect in which each level informs the others. This understanding should lead to the arrangement of actions in time, space, and purpose, ultimately resulting in attainment of the understood strategic objectives.⁵ By analyzing the Sino-Indian War through this lens, the study examines the relationship between strategic aims, policy, and objectives at each level of war from the Chinese perspective. Once established, the study will evaluate the translation of these objectives into operations and their arrangement toward a common end.

The study addresses the following research questions in an attempt to establish a clear linkage between political and military objectives, and whether the PLA arranged the resulting operations in time and space to achieve these objectives:

1. What were China's strategic aims in relation to the Sino-Indian War?
2. What were China's political objectives?
3. What were China's military objectives?
4. What were China's operational objectives?
5. What operations did the Chinese conduct against the Indian Army?
6. How did the Chinese arrange military operations in time and space?

Answering these questions provides the insight needed to determine if the hypothesis in this study is supported or not supported. The underlying hypothesis rests on the premise that when the Chinese military commanders understood the strategic political objectives in the Sino-Indian

⁴ Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 2011), 10.

⁵ Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1-01, *Doctrine Primer* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, September 2014), 4-8.

War, it allowed them to arrange the appropriate tactical engagements to link the military objectives to the political objectives.

This study is confined to the time period between 1907 and 1962, coinciding with the origin of the border dispute, the Anglo-Russian treaty, and the Sino-India War that resulted from post-colonial friction between China and India. It focuses only on the shared border between China and India and their interactions that led to war. This provides the relevant information to conduct the study. There is brief mention of the influence the Cold War had on the relationship between China and India in terms of strategic context. Finally, this study will only evaluate Chinese decisions and actions at the strategic and operational levels with respect to the Sino-Indian War. There is no evaluation of the tactics used during the war, which other publications have assessed.

This monograph contains limitations that may affect the validity of the data collected. All research for this study is restricted to secondary unclassified sources. Additionally, the majority of this material is from western literature and as such, constitutes an interpretation of Chinese thought and intentions. Official Chinese and Indian archival records are not available for research to ensure objectivity in the evidence found and confirm a true representation of the political and military mindsets and actions taken by both actors.

This study makes a number of assumptions that provide a basis for research and interpretation of the resulting evidence. First, it assumes that China is a relevant actor in the future to ensure any research done has significance. Second, it assumes that operational art is a relevant theory and valid practice to arrange tactical actions in time, space, and purpose to achieve strategic objectives. Finally, the study assumes that operational art drives US military thinking and that any study of it has importance to the profession. These assumptions lend importance to the topic of the monograph and provide meaning to the conclusion.

This study encompasses six sections. Following this introduction is the literature review. The literature review provides an expanded discussion of the theory of operational art and the

hypothesis driving this study. The methodology follows, and includes how the study tests this hypothesis. This leads to the case study itself. Here, an in-depth inquiry into the Sino-Indian War provides an understanding of the strategic aims that drove China to initiate an offensive against India and the subsequent political and military objectives established. Once the case study is complete, this monograph correlates the findings and analysis to the research question, determining if the hypothesis is supported or not supported. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the study and discusses the findings and their implications for the theory of operational art.

Literature Review

This section presents a succinct background on the evolution of the theory of operational art in the US Army. This background will achieve a common understanding of the theory guiding the study and proceed to introduce and define key concepts related to the theory of operational art. Upon establishment of this lens for viewing the case study, a review of previous literature reveals what others interested in the Sino-Indian War have written on the topic and what assertions and conclusions they have made. This provides the opportunity to introduce and justify the hypothesis of this study and exposes its unique placement among previous thought on the Sino-Indian War. The section concludes with a summary of the theory of operational art and associated key concepts, a review of current perspectives on the Sino-Indian War, and reiteration of what hypothesis the case study is testing.

Establishing a clear understanding of the theory of operational art as the study intends to apply it is critical. The theory has evolved over the past two hundred years and taken on different definitions and levels of understanding. Early interpretations of history and theory led to a different definition than what the US Army accepts today. However, understanding this evolution is important to grasping the US Army's current concept of operational art.

In the nineteenth century, warfare changed dramatically. Following Napoleon's introduction of the corps system, which arranged troops into formations ranging from 10,000 to 20,000 in size, warfare became a contest of large units.⁶ The Industrial Revolution further dispersed these forces because of technological advances such as the combustion engine, railroad, and telegraph.⁷ This dispersion of corps sized elements increased warfare's spatial scope, making

⁶ Michael R. Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 5.

⁷ James J. Schneider, *Vulcan's Anvil: The American Civil War and the Foundations of Operational Art*, Theoretical Paper No. Four (New York: Presidio Press, 1994), 6.

victory through one decisive engagement implausible.⁸ The need to arrange multiple tactical engagements in a theater of operations to attain victory emerged, though the US military did not fully realize this concept until after World War One.⁹

Following the First World War, several key concepts relating to operational art emerged in the US Army. In 1920, Colonel William Naylor's *Principles of Strategy* proposed that, "the different groups of events or operations must be connected by the bond of some common, fundamental idea and should not be joined together in an arbitrary or haphazard manner."¹⁰ This was the emergence in the US Army of the understanding of a conscious act necessary to arrange tactical actions in time, space, and purpose, albeit not yet captured in doctrine.

Colonel Naylor also incorporated the military theories of Carl von Clausewitz and Antoine Henri Jomini who both discussed operational matters extensively. Clausewitz contributed the concepts of centers of gravity and culminating points, while Jomini provided the notions of lines of operations, basing, and decisive points.¹¹ These ideas represent half of the elements of operational art found in current US Army doctrine.¹² However, the concept of operational art outlined by Colonel Naylor and subsequently practiced in World War Two anchored the approach in large unit operations aimed at annihilation of the enemy. The shortcomings of this definition of operational art came to fruition in the age of limited warfare.

⁸ Schneider, *Vulcan's Anvil*, 21.

⁹ Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy*, 15.

¹⁰ William K. Naylor, *Principles of Strategy: With Historical Illustrations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: The General Service Schools Press, 1921), 150.

¹¹ Antulio J. Echevarria II, "American Operational Art, 1917-2008," in *The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present*, ed. John Andreas Olsen and Martin Van Creveld (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 143.

¹² Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, May 2012), 4-3.

Following the Second World War, the atomic bomb gave rise to limited warfare and made the employment of large formations to wage war too risky.¹³ Nuclear theorist Bernard Brodie argued that atomic weapons meant militaries no longer existed to win wars, but to prevent them.¹⁴ The understanding and evolution of operational art stagnated because the army did not know how to apply it outside of large unit operations aimed at the annihilation of enemy forces. Inability to achieve strategic victory through tactical success in Vietnam highlighted this lack of understanding.

The failures in Vietnam and the emerging Soviet military threat catalyzed a revision of military theory and doctrine.¹⁵ General William DePuy, influenced by the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, authored a new doctrinal approach in the 1976 version of *Operations*. However, with respect to operational art, it once again focused on large force employment.¹⁶ Later editions in 1982 defined the operational level of war as “most simply, the theory of large unit operations,” and the 1986 revision further stated that, “a major operation comprises the coordinated actions of large forces in a single phase of a campaign or in critical battle.”¹⁷ US Army doctrine also formally tied Clausewitz and Jomini’s key principles of center of gravity, lines of operation, and culminating point to the arrangement of large unit operations.¹⁸

¹³ Echevarria, “The Evolution of Operational Art,” 154.

¹⁴ Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 146.

¹⁵ Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy*, 267.

¹⁶ Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, July 1976), 1-2.

¹⁷ Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 1982), 2-3; Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, May 1986), 10.

¹⁸ Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, May 1986), 179-182.

This understanding of operational art, validated in the First Gulf War, remained through the opening phases of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The US Army perceived it as the perfection of war's first grammar as defined by Antulio Echevarria.¹⁹ However, with the emergence of insurgencies in both Afghanistan and Iraq, the US Army realized it faced a similar problem that it ignored after Vietnam. In the absence of large unit operations, it still failed to understand how to arrange tactical actions to achieve strategic objectives in a counter-insurgency. Echevarria termed this war's second grammar.²⁰ The acceptance of war's second grammar has spurred the US Army's current conception of operational art.

The current US Army theory of operational art realizes that attaining victory requires translating strategic objectives into tactical actions linked by purpose. It is also clear that modern operational art is not specific to echelon or formation.²¹ The resulting theory defines operational art as, "the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose."²² This modern theory of operational art and its associated definition in *Unified Land Operations* is the lens through which the case study analyzes the Sino-Indian War.

In conjunction with the theory of operational art, an understanding of additional key concepts will help comprehend its relationship to strategy and tactics. The pursuit of strategic aims and understanding the necessity of a linkage between strategy and tactics provide importance to the study. According to Everett Dolman, military strategy is able to link military means with political aims through the selective application of violence. The purpose of this is the

¹⁹ Echevarria, "The Evolution of Operational Art," 158.

²⁰ Ibid., 160-161.

²¹ ADP 3-0, 9.

²² Ibid.

pursuit of a continuing advantage.²³ This relates directly to the strategic aims of China and helps provide an understanding of why they initiated an offensive against India and how they distilled political objectives to further strategic aims. In the pursuit of a continuing advantage through war, tactics are a tool to end the violence and force negotiation from a position of increased power.²⁴ This was China's reason for launching an offensive against India. After repeated attempts to negotiate from a position of parity to no avail, China sought to enhance their bargaining position.

It is also necessary to understand why a linkage exists between strategic aims and political, military, and operational objectives. The Prussian military philosopher Carl von Clausewitz provides the earliest and most insightful thoughts on this. According to Clausewitz, "the strategist must therefore define an aim for the entire operational side of the war that will be in accordance with its purpose."²⁵ Policy derived from strategic aims provides the purpose. The resulting military and operational objectives serve this purpose through the application of war as a means to execute policy. If military means are meant to support policy objectives, then they must inherently be linked. This linkage extends down to the tactical engagements arranged by operational artists to achieve strategic objectives. How the Chinese accomplished this is the object of this study and a topic that others have not studied as the following review of literature demonstrates.

Scholarly writing on the Sino-Indian War of 1962 has traditionally focused on foreign relations between China and India and the causes of the conflict. The majority of early literature aims at studying the actions of both sides leading up to the war in detail, followed by an allusion toward blame for the conflict, with the conclusion changing as history continually drifts away

²³ Everett Carl Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York, NY: Frank Cass Publishers, 2005), 14-15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 177.

from the incident. Earliest western analysis repeatedly blamed China for the war. Xuecheng Liu in his study of the border dispute notes that scholarly writings immediately following the war assign fault to China based on emotional responses, portraying India as a victim.²⁶ Edwin Martin Coulter came to the same conclusion, stating that traditionally it was too easy to adopt the idea that China was the aggressor, without looking objectively at the facts.²⁷

The primary advocates of this conclusion wrote in the first decade following the war. It is noteworthy to acknowledge that a large amount of historical documentation from the participants in the war was not yet accessible. However, the three most influential western books on the topic at the time all overtly assign blame to China for the Sino-Indian War. In *Himalayan Battleground* by Margaret W. Fisher, Leo E. Rose, and Robert A. Huttenback, they accuse China of taunting India into attacking them to establish a basis for aggression and retaliation, noting that a Chinese foreign policy objective for some time had been to destroy the Indian reputation.²⁸ P.C. Chakravarti in *India's China Policy* and Dorothy Woodman in *Himalayan Frontiers* both note the violation of friendly Sino-Indian relations by China and highlight territorial expansion as the reason for China's offensive to start the war.²⁹

In 1972, Neville Maxwell widened the perspective on who caused the Sino-Indian War. Through a thorough analysis of government records in India and interviews with Indian officials, Neville concluded in his book *India's China War* that India was not innocent. They played a

²⁶ Xuecheng Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations* (New York, NY: University Press of America, 1994), 10.

²⁷ Edwin Martin Coulter, *The Diplomacy of the Sino-Indian Border Dispute: 1950-1962* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1985), 82.

²⁸ Margaret W. Fisher, Robert A. Huttenback, and Leo E. Rose, *Himalayan Battleground: Sino-Indian Rivalry in Ladakh* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1963), 145.

²⁹ P.C. Chakravarti, *India's China Policy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1961), 141; Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian, and Russian Rivalries* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1969), 302-303.

major role in provoking Chinese aggression through their forward policy and lack of desire to negotiate a boundary settlement.³⁰ Te-Bien Allen Yeh complemented this notion in 1977, arguing in *The Frontiers of China* that China never wanted to increase its territory, evident in the fact that they repeatedly tried to negotiate with India.³¹ He also states that little evidence exists that China sought to translate territorial claims into expansionist policy.³²

Contemporary literature concerning the Sino-Indian War has supported the notion that Chinese strategy focuses on defense and its employment of the PLA as a means to facilitate this strategy. Andrew Nathan and Robert Ross in *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress* contend that the Chinese use force to defend territory and deter invasion, emphasizing continental defense and the protection of national borders.³³ Andrew Scobel in *China's Use of Military Force* goes as far as characterizing Chinese strategic culture as, "The Chinese Cult of Defense," noting that China conducts military offensive operations as a self-defense counterattack, only as a last resort and after issuing a series of warnings.³⁴ In his analysis of the Sino-Indian War, Henry Kissinger in *On China* reiterates that the war centered on China's constant struggle to maintain historic territorial integrity and China constantly engaged in military conflict when it considered others challenging its historic borders.³⁵

³⁰ Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1972), 475.

³¹ Te-bien Allen Yeh, *The Frontiers of China: A Study of the Boundary Policy of the People's Republic of China* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1985), 73.

³² *Ibid.*, 9.

³³ Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 138.

³⁴ Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15, 32, 193.

³⁵ Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York, NY: The Penguin Press, 2011), 184-185.

In relation to the specific topic of this study, only one essay briefly addresses operational art in the Sino-Indian War. Peter Ofstedal wrote “Operational Art in Modern Chinese Warfare” at the Naval War College in 1996. Using the Sino-Indian War as a brief case study, he claims that China failed to define strategic and operational objectives in accordance with political aims. This absence of operational art resulted in China’s failure to force India to the negotiation table concerning the border.³⁶

However, other literature suggests that the Chinese may have indeed practiced operational art. Bhim Singh Sandhu wrote in the *Sino-Indian War of 1962* that China’s attack was a well-planned offensive, advancing rapidly against India along established lines of communication.³⁷ Additionally, John Rowland wrote in *A History of Sino-Indian Relations* that the Chinese offensive “was a full-scale and obviously well-planned attack, launched skillfully across the world’s highest mountain range.”³⁸ These sentiments allude to a deliberate approach the Chinese employed to plan and prepare for a campaign against India.

This study focuses directly on China’s deliberate approach. As demonstrated thus far, scholars have written a great deal about the Sino-Indian War. However, no publication has systematically analyzed how China translated tactical actions to achieve strategic objectives. Little to no literature exists that shows the linkage between strategic aims, political objectives, and military objectives and their relationship to the operations the PLA conducted. Furthermore, no evidence exists to illustrate whether China intentionally nested these objectives through a process of operational art or if the outcome of the war resulted from random factors. This study

³⁶ Peter Ofstedal, “Operational Art in Modern Chinese Warfare” (paper, Naval War College, 1996), 8-9.

³⁷ Bhim Singh Sandhu, *Sino-Indian War of 1962: A Framework and Case Study of International Conflict Resolution* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1985), 214.

³⁸ John Rowland, *A History of Sino-Indian Relations: Hostile Co-Existence* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1967), 166.

seeks to fill this gap by demonstrating that when the Chinese military commanders understood the strategic political objectives in the Sino-Indian War, it allowed them to arrange the appropriate tactical engagements to link the military objectives to the political objectives.

In summary, the theory of operational art as defined by *Unified Land Operations* provides the theoretical lens through which this study will analyze the Sino-Indian War of 1962. Complementing this theory, understanding the pursuit of strategic aims and the relationship between strategy and tactics provides significant importance to the study. The majority of literature reviewed focuses on Sino-Indian relations and causes for the war itself. Further writings discuss China's use of their military as a means to deter aggression and maintain territorial integrity. More pertinent to this study are the works of Peter Ofstedal who asserts that China failed to achieve their political objectives due to a lack of operational art and Sandhu and Rowland, who both note that the Chinese planned their offensive in detail to achieve victory. The inquiry into how the Chinese intentionally linked objectives based on common purpose and understanding is the object of this study. What follows is a discussion of the methodology used to address the hypothesis.

Methodology

This section details the methodology used in this study to determine if the PLA understood or practiced operational art in the Sino-Indian War and whether they applied it as defined by US Army doctrine. First, it discusses the validity of using a case study as the method of inquiry to gather evidence. Second, it explains the method of structured, focused approach and lays out the research questions this study will focus on to establish a link between Chinese political and military objectives and subsequent operations conducted in the Sino-Indian War. This section concludes with a description of the qualitative analysis that the monograph will use to analyze the evidence gathered in the case study and relate it to the hypothesis.

This monograph uses the case study methodology to analyze whether the Chinese practiced operational art in the Sino-Indian War. Based on the perspective described by Stephen Van Evera, the case study serves as one of the basic observational testing methods for analysis.³⁹ As a method of inquiry, case studies best serve to test a hypothesis by capturing evidence that substantiates predicted research question outcomes.⁴⁰ Within this body of work, using a case study to gather evidence on the congruency of strategic aims, subsequent objectives, and military operations serves well to test the hypothesis and confirm Chinese application of operational art.

In executing a case study, this work applies the method of structured, focused approach detailed by Alexander George and Andrew Bennet in *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*.⁴¹ Structurally, the monograph will apply a set of standardized questions to the case study. These research questions directly relate to the theory of operational art and enable

³⁹ Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 50.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

⁴¹ Andrew Bennett and Alexander L. George, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 67.

the attainment of appropriate data to compare to the hypothesis.⁴² Furthermore, the Sino-Indian War is an event that provides insight that researchers can apply to many different theories such as deterrence, foreign policy, or conflict resolution among many others. This study is concerned with the aspect of operational art. Using this approach ensures focus and negates the possibility of diverse interests interfering with the concern of the case study.⁴³

The model this study will use to determine whether the Chinese used operational art in the Sino Indian War involves the identification and comparison of variables associated with the theory detailed in the literature review. The variables necessary to research the hypothesis are Chinese strategic aims, political objectives, military objectives, operational objectives, and operations conducted by the PLA in the Sino-Indian War.

To this end, the following structured, focused questions provide the empirical evidence needed to establish a clear linkage between political and military objectives and determine whether the PLA arranged the resulting operations in time and space to achieve these objectives. The first four questions relate directly to the objectives of the higher-level political and military leadership. First, what were China's strategic aims in relation to the Sino-Indian War? These aims constitute the overarching reasons why the Chinese chose to go to war with India and provide insight on the long-term goals China established to achieve a position of relative advantage. Second, what were China's political objectives? These objectives should illustrate the small steps China intended to take in the form of policy to achieve their strategic aims. Next, what were China's military objectives? These military objectives should directly correlate to the attainment of policy. Fourth, what were China's operational objectives? Once the Chinese made the determination to go to war with India, their campaign objectives would ideally distill directly from the strategic military objectives.

⁴² Bennett and George, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 69.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 67, 70.

The last two questions are concerned with the actions taken by the PLA in the conduct of the war. Understanding what operations the Chinese conducted against the Indian Army and how they arranged these operations in time and space provides the final data needed to determine whether China's application of force was in concurrence with their stated objectives at each stratum. Answering these questions provides the insight needed to support or refute the hypothesis in this study.

Once this data is gathered, this monograph will conduct a qualitative analysis to determine similarities and differences between the objectives of each level of authority. It will also compare the operations of the PLA with the operational objectives of the campaign. The analysis will seek to determine what variation exists across the spectrum of objectives and subsequent military operations. The criteria for determining whether the Chinese applied operational art in the Sino-Indian War is change. If the Chinese intentionally made their objectives and subsequent military actions complementary in a cascading effect from strategic aims to military action on the ground, they may well have achieved political objectives through the application of operational art. However, if the study cannot determine a clear linkage between any of the objectives or military operations because of any change in purpose, then Chinese victory in the Sino-Indian War may not have resulted from a deliberate process, but from a random occurrence of events.

This section introduced the methodology the study uses to test its hypothesis. The case study methodology provides the most suitable technique for collecting data specific to the purpose of this monograph. The structured, focused approach serves to standardize this data collection through the application of research questions directly related to operational art. It also facilitates data analysis by generating knowledge to each question that is easily comparable. The research questions specifically focus on gathering information that facilitates the determination of the use of operational art. Once assembled, the study will qualitatively compare the information for each question and logically infer whether any change exists between the Chinese aims and

objectives, as well as the military operations executed to achieve them. The following case study explores these variables in detail.

Case Study

Discovering whether the Chinese achieved their political objectives by using operational art in the Sino-Indian War requires a detailed inquiry into the war itself and the accompanying strategic environment. This section provides a case study of the Sino-Indian War and presents the information needed to analyze whether the Chinese purposely linked political and military objectives and subsequent military operations. It begins with an overview that includes the historical background and strategic context that led to the war. Following the overview, the case study will answer each of the six structured, focused questions directly with the accompanying supporting evidence. This section ends with a summary of the case study.

The Sino-Indian War of 1962 was the climax of a border conflict between China and India whose roots trace back to the imperial expansion of Britain. Britain's failure to achieve an agreed upon demarcated border between India and China during their colonization period left a flashpoint that opened a rift between the two countries following their establishment as new nations after World War Two. India inherited the historical boundary that Britain established with Tibet along the ridge of the Himalayas known as the McMahon Line. China rejected this boundary as illegal in its view of Tibet under its suzerainty, and not a sovereign nation able to negotiate independent agreements.⁴⁴ China claimed its boundary as the southern foothills of the Himalayas.⁴⁵ Unable to reach a diplomatic solution, China initiated an offensive into the disputed territories of Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh to settle the border issue.

This dispute over the border concerned two critical territories, the Aksai Chin in the west and Arunachal Pradesh in the east. China claimed the Aksai Chin as part of the Xinjiang province while India claimed it as a part of Kashmir. For China, it provided a strategic link between Tibet and Xinjiang. For India, it was simply a territorial claim that it inherited from Britain during its

⁴⁴ Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*, 118.

⁴⁵ Kissinger, *On China*, 185.

independence and was unwilling to relinquish, fearing an outward display of weakness as a newly formed postcolonial country. The Arunachal Pradesh in the east belonged to Tibet, a region China recognized under its mandate and controlled autonomously. India claimed Arunachal Pradesh based on historical links between India's Buddhist culture and Tibetan Buddhism.⁴⁶

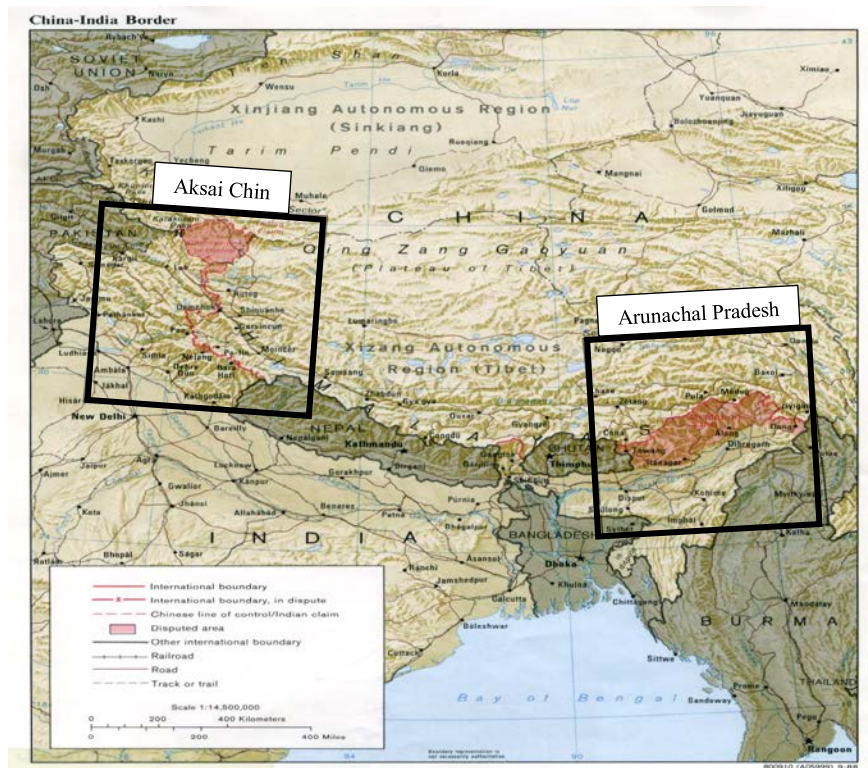


Figure 1. Disputed territories of the Aksai Chin in the western sector and the Arunachal Pradesh in the eastern sector

Source: Adapted from "Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection," The University of Texas at Austin, accessed January 28, 2016, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_india_border_88.jpg.

⁴⁶ Kissinger, *On China*, 186-187.

The origin of this border dispute is a consequence of British imperial concerns over the expansionist threat of Russia in the early 1900s.⁴⁷ The British feared an incursion on their colonial claims in Central Asia and sought to limit the influence of Russian expansion, using Tibet as a buffer between the two superpowers. Diplomatic efforts to define the extent of colonial influence resulted in the Anglo-Russian treaty of 1907. Both Britain and Russia recognized the suzerain rights of China over Tibet and agreed to avoid any negotiations with Tibet except through the Chinese government.⁴⁸

While Britain recognized Tibet as an autonomous state under China to appease Russian concerns, they also desired to limit Chinese influence in Tibet to maintain security of their northern Indian frontier. Following the 1911 Republican Revolution in China and their renewed effort to establish increased control over Tibet, Britain pursued a new policy that would place Tibet under increased dependence on the Indian government and keep both Chinese and Russian influence in Tibet at a minimum.⁴⁹

Their strategy involved redefining China's political role in Tibet and establishing a defined border between India and China. The British proposed the Simla Conference in India to conduct three party talks between Britain, China, and Tibet to achieve their strategy. To ensure Chinese participation, the British warned China that they would not recognize the newly established Chinese government in Beijing and were prepared to negotiate directly with Tibet.⁵⁰ Under this diplomatic pressure and the inability to project a strong presence in Tibet, the weak

⁴⁷ Sumit Ganguly, "India and China: Border Issues, Domestic Integration, and International Security," in *The India-China Relationship: What the United States Needs to Know*, ed. Francine R. Frankel and Harry Harding (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), 106.

⁴⁸ Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations*, 49.

⁴⁹ Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian, and Russian Rivalries*, 147-149.

⁵⁰ Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations*, 54.

Chinese government attended the Simla Conference which began in October 1913 and ended in July 1914.

The British delegate was Sir Henry McMahon, Secretary to the Government of India and mediator between China and Tibet. He made two proposals. The first was to consider dividing control over Tibet into an Inner Tibet in the east, closer to China, and an Outer Tibet in the west, bordering India. China would administer great political control over Inner Tibet while Outer Tibet operated autonomously, providing for more British influence. The limit of Outer Tibet in the west included the Aksai Chin.

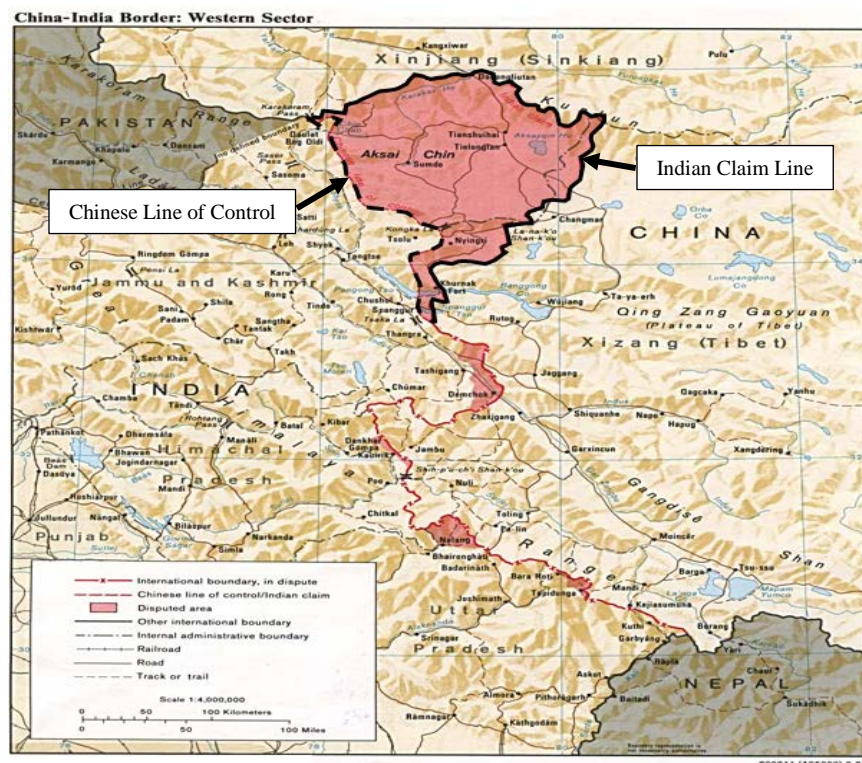


Figure 2. Disputed Aksai Chin territory

Source: Adapted from "Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection," The University of Texas at Austin, accessed January 28, 2016, https://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_india_w_border_88.jpg.

The second proposal was a firm boundary between Tibet and India known as the McMahon Line that followed the crest of the Himalayas, opposing China's claim to territory that extended to the southern foothills of the mountains, including Arunachal Pradesh.⁵¹

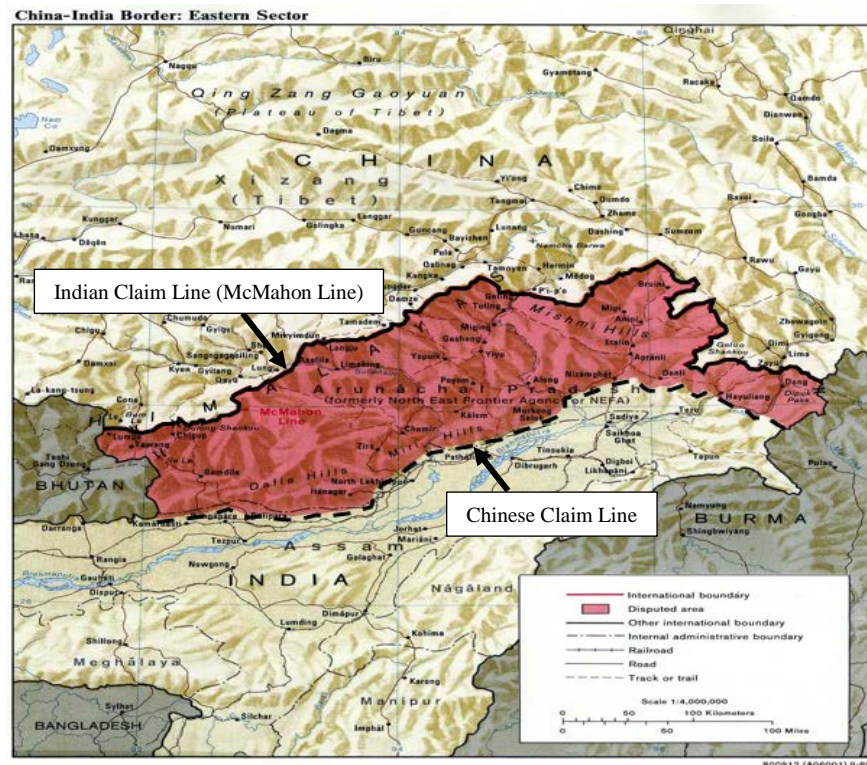


Figure 3. Disputed Arunachal Pradesh territory and McMahon Line

Source: Adapted from "Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection," The University of Texas at Austin, accessed January 28, 2016, https://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_india_e_border_88.jpg.

China refused to accept the new treaty and Britain proceeded to sign a joint declaration directly with Tibet, agreeing to the terms of the draft treaty and barring China from making additional

⁵¹ Fisher, Huttenback, and Rose, *Himalayan Battleground: Sino-Indian Rivalry in Ladakh*, 76.

proposals. Shortly after the Simla Conference, the First World War began, consuming British and Chinese affairs and relegating the dispute over Tibet to the background.⁵²

Following the Second World War, India gained its independence from Britain in 1947, accepting all previous territorial claims by the British as their boundary. Two years later in 1949, the communist party took control of China and established the People's Republic of China. With India accepting all British territorial claims and political agreements with Tibet as their legitimate inheritance and the newly formed Communist China viewing them as legacies of imperialism that encroached on their sovereign territory, dispute over Tibet and the Sino-Indian border remained as the central factor in the relations of these two new governments.

In 1950, Mao Zedong announced that the liberation of Tibet was one of the main tasks of the People's Liberation Army.⁵³ India protested this action, but neither country was in a position to start a war over the matter. The Cold War and its effects loomed over Asia, with China engaged in conflict against the US in Korea and India preoccupied with Pakistan over Kashmir.⁵⁴ Both countries felt the potential for a shift in the strategic balance of power in South Asia due to the overarching Cold War between the US and Soviet Union. In light of this, China and India both agreed to strengthen their relationship and proceed through peaceful means.

In 1954, Sino-Indian talks resulted in the Panchsheel Agreement and a new relationship. The agreement centered on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.⁵⁵ The

⁵² Chih-Hung Lu, *A Border Problem Between China and India* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1985), 58-59.

⁵³ Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian, and Russian Rivalries*, 217.

⁵⁴ Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations*, 90.

⁵⁵ Maxwell, *India's China War*, 73.

agreement also contained India's formal recognition of Tibet as a region of China, but the establishment of a concrete boundary between Tibet and India remained elusive.⁵⁶

Relative cooperation between India and China prevailed following the Panchsheel Agreement. However, two separate incidents at the end of the 1950s reignited tension between the two countries with regard to Tibet and the border. In 1958, the Indian government discovered that Chinese military engineers had constructed a highway through the Aksai Chin region of Ladakh, in territory India claimed. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India complained directly to Premier Zhou Enlai of China who reiterated that the highway connected the Chinese provinces of Tibet and Xinjiang across Chinese territory.⁵⁷ Subsequently in 1959, the Indian government granted asylum to the Dalai Lama during the Tibetan revolt, leading to the Chinese belief that India was actively undermining their control of Tibet. In view of these actions, the two sides made one last major attempt at achieving a diplomatic solution.

In 1960, Zhou traveled to New Delhi to negotiate a peace. He offered to trade the eastern territory of Arunachal Pradesh to India for the Aksai Chin region. Nehru rejected this proposal and instead adopted a new military strategy. The Forward Policy placed small Indian military contingents throughout the disputed border region to assert India's position on the areas claimed by China.⁵⁸ Initial clashes between Chinese and Indian forces on the disputed border caused Mao to withdraw Chinese troops twenty kilometers to avoid a major crisis. India viewed this action as a signal that China would not resist India's claims.⁵⁹ They ordered their forces, to "patrol as far

⁵⁶ Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian, and Russian Rivalries*, 224.

⁵⁷ Ganguly, "India and China: Border Issues, Domestic Integration, and International Security," 112.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁵⁹ Kissinger, *On China*, 187.

forward as possible from our [India's] present position toward the International Border as recognized by us ... [and] prevent the Chinese from advancing further and also to dominate any Chinese posts already established on our territory.”⁶⁰

The Central Military Commission (CMC) in China cancelled the withdrawal orders and countered Indian action by building more outposts. China still hoped to avoid a larger conflict and ordered Chinese troops not to fire unless Indian forces approached to within fifty meters of their positions. These actions did not deter India and they continued to encroach deeper into contested territory. Failing to prevent further Indian advances without bloodshed, China began to plan for a military campaign to force India into negotiations and end their Forward Policy.⁶¹ On October 20, 1962, China began an attack on two fronts into both the Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh regions. This campaign surprised the Indian military and resulted in a convincing military victory for China. Within a month, they achieved a deep incursion into northern India in the east, forced Indian troops to concede multiple outposts in the west, and inflicted heavy losses on the Indian army. On November 21, the Chinese declared a unilateral cease-fire and withdrew its troops to the prewar boundaries.⁶²

The first structured, focused question is what was China's strategic aim with regard to India at the time of the Sino-Indian War? The strategic aim of China was to restrain India's power in Southeast Asia by preventing its ability to challenge China's borders and destabilize Chinese rule in Tibet.⁶³ Following the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949, China's primary long-

⁶⁰ John W. Garver, “China's Decision for War with India in 1962,” in *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*, ed. Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 106.

⁶¹ Kissinger, *On China*, 188-189.

⁶² Ganguly, “India and China: Border Issues, Domestic Integration, and International Security,” 115.

⁶³ Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*, 118.

term objective was to maintain neutral, controllable, or friendly powers on its borders.⁶⁴ Doing so would allow China the stability to consolidate power as a newly formed communist government and increase its influence in Asia, and eventually on the world stage. Concerning India, this meant maintaining sovereignty over Tibet and rejecting the boundaries that India claimed as an inheritance from British imperialism.

India's continuation of Britain's encroaching Himalayan policy on both the border issue and sovereignty over Tibet solidified China's strategic aim. They were wary of India's potential to undermine Chinese control of Tibet and viewed any such attempts as interference in Chinese internal affairs. These concerns increased with India's objection to Chinese military action in Tibet in 1950 and the granting of asylum to the Dalai Lama in the 1959 Tibetan revolt.⁶⁵

China was also wary of infringement on their rights of self-determination concerning authority and territory amidst the growing influence of the Cold War. History shaped China's deep abhorrence for imperialism, particularly the Second Sino-Japanese War and involvement against the US in the Korean War. With both the US and Soviet nations vying for influence in Asia through economic and security aid to India, past conflict over the Himalayan border came to the forefront. China accused India of serving, "the Anglo-American imperialist designs for the annexation of Tibet" and promoting imperialist intentions.⁶⁶

China viewed these actions by India as an assumption of a right to lead in Asia. Indian perception was that they possessed a seniority to the newer People's Republic of China, evident in Prime Minister Nehru's representation of himself at the Bandung Conference as the elder

⁶⁴ Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian, and Russian Rivalries*, 304.

⁶⁵ Maxwell, *India's China War*, 272.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

brother of Premier Enlai, willing to advise his younger counterpart.⁶⁷ This sentiment was in direct contradiction to the nationalism of the new communist government in Beijing determined to restore greatness to China and make it the leading power in Asia.⁶⁸

The evidence suggests that the strategic aim of China in relation to the Sino-Indian War was to check Indian authority in Southeast Asia by preventing them from challenging Chinese borders in the Himalayas and negating their ability to destabilize Chinese authority over Tibet. Suspicion of imperial sentiments displayed by India in their relationships with the US and Soviets and unwillingness to yield influence to India bore this strategic aim that China was prepared to advance through any means necessary.

The second structured, focused question is what was China's political objective in the Sino-Indian War? The political objective of China was to "teach a lesson" to India about China's stance on sovereignty and territorial issues in order to establish the conditions for long-term peace and stability on the border with India.⁶⁹ China based this objective on a growing aggressiveness by India regarding militarization of the border and perceived territorial encroachment resulting from their Forward Policy.

China repeatedly sought to peacefully resolve the border dispute with India. They hoped to avoid war and settle the dispute diplomatically by offering multiple chances to negotiate.⁷⁰ Most notably, China offered to trade the eastern territory of Arunachal Pradesh to India for the Aksai Chin region in the west. They viewed this as a responsible settlement and displayed that

⁶⁷ Maxwell, *India's China War*, 274.

⁶⁸ George N. Patterson, *Peking Versus Delhi* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), 47.

⁶⁹ Cheng Feng and Larry M. Wortzel, "PLA Operational Principles and Limited War: The Sino-Indian War of 1962," in *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience Since 1949*, ed. David M. Finkelstein, Michael A. McDevitt, and Mark A. Ryan (Armonk, NY: East Gate Book, 2003), 187-188.

⁷⁰ Gerald Segal, *Defending China* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985), 140.

they were willing to concede some territory to maintain peace. However, India not only rejected the offer, but also instituted the Forward Policy, employing their military to compel China to relinquish its territorial claims.⁷¹

In clashes that followed, China continued to seek an avoidance of war by withdrawing twenty kilometers from the disputed border. When these efforts failed, escalation towards war began. Continued Indian infringement led the PLA to resist new Indian outposts by building Chinese outposts around them. Mao defined this policy as “armed coexistence,” but issued strict orders preventing Chinese troops from firing on Indian forces unless they came within fifty meters of Chinese outposts, still hoping to avoid a larger conflict.⁷² These efforts at deterrence failed, culminating in Prime Minister Nehru of India ordering the Chinese evicted from the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) on October 12, 1962.⁷³ China offered one last chance for peace by setting a deadline for negotiations of October 15. India ignored this deadline.⁷⁴ China’s original policy of preventing Indian advances and avoiding bloodshed failed, and their policy changed to “teaching India a lesson” and forcing them back to the negotiation table.⁷⁵

The evidence demonstrates that China’s political objective in the 1962 Sino-Indian War was to “teach India a lesson” in order to establish the conditions for long-term peace and stability on their border. India’s aggressive Forward Policy and China’s failures at deterrence forced them

⁷¹ Ganguly, “India and China: Border Issues, Domestic Integration, and International Security,” 112-114.

⁷² Kissinger, *On China*, 188.

⁷³ Maxwell, *India’s China War*, 66, 84. The North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) is the previous name for the territory of Arunachal Pradesh, which Britain gained from the Tibetan government during the 1914 Simla Conference. They established it as a political division following the conference, calling it the North East Frontier Tracts, which India renamed to the NEFA following their independence.

⁷⁴ Segal, *Defending China*, 142.

⁷⁵ Kissinger, *On China*, 189.

to adopt this political objective, which Mao Zedong believed would gain China ten years of stability on the Sino-Indian border. China considered this political objective as a counterattack and self-defense measure to force India back to the negotiation table and establish stability on its southern border.⁷⁶

The third structured, focused question is what were China's military objectives in the 1962 Sino-India War? China's military objectives were to eliminate Indian outposts forward of the line of control between the two countries and destroy the units of the invading Indian army.⁷⁷ These objectives stemmed from the basic guidance issued by the Chinese Communist Party Central Military Commission "to beat Indian troops soundly" and "to wipe out the invading Indian forces totally and rapidly."⁷⁸

With the failure of negotiations and deterrence, China increased their military response to the "nibbling policy" of India. Initially, they sought to drive Indian troops back across the border by increasing their troop strength in contested areas and encircling Indian outposts with their own, while avoiding unnecessary bloodshed. However, after Prime Minister Nehru's order to attack Chinese border troops in the NEFA on October 12, 1962, China made the decision that it could no longer avoid a war with India.⁷⁹ The CMC developed a counterattack to destroy Indian forces and advance south into Indian territory "in order thoroughly to rout the Indian reactionaries and to shatter their plan of altering the border status quo by armed force, and to create the conditions for a negotiated settlement."⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Feng and Wortzel, "PLA Operational Principles and Limited War," 188.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁸⁰ Maxwell, *India's China War*, 449.

China viewed the destruction of Indian forces and incursion deep into Indian territory as necessary to ensure Indian provocation would cease into the future and ensure the Indian Government would negotiate. If China had chosen less extensive objectives, the Indian Government would continue their Forward Policy using their army as the means, forcing China into a prolonged conflict along the border.⁸¹ Additionally, China wanted to send a clear message to India that its initial restraint along the border was not a sign of weakness. The Chinese newspaper, *People's Daily*, published an article on July 21, 1962 stating, "The Indian authorities have been betting on the basis of a wrong assessment of the situation: they take the attitude of the Chinese Government in setting great store by Sino-Indian friendship and trying to its utmost to avoid a border clash to be a sign of weakness and think it possible to bring China to her knees by the use of force."⁸² Given China's strategic aim of restraining Indian power in Southeast Asia, they chose to send a strong message through the destruction of the invading Indian forces and demonstration of their ability to invade Indian territory at will.

The evidence suggests that China's military objectives in the 1962 Sino-India War were to eliminate Indian outposts forward of the line of control and destroy the units of the invading Indian army. China decided they could no longer accept India's aggressive advances across the border. Efforts at diplomacy and deterrence to resolve the dispute without bloodshed failed and they chose to settle the conflict militarily. China chose these military objectives to ensure India could no longer conduct their Forward Policy and to demonstrate their strength over India.

The fourth structured, focused question is what were China's operational objectives in the Sino-India War? China's operational objectives were to destroy the fighting capability of the Indian Fourth Division in the NEFA and the Indian 114th Brigade in the Aksai Chin area.

⁸¹ Maxwell, *India's China War*, 449.

⁸² Allen S. Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1975), 82.

Additionally, they intended to capture all Indian posts on Chinese claimed territory, particularly in the strategically important Aksai Chin.⁸³ Mao ordered the PLA, “to impose a ‘fierce and painful’ blow on India and expel India from the territory China claimed in Kashmir west of the Johnson Line and in NEFA south of the McMahon Line.”⁸⁴ Destroying the Indian Fourth Division in the east and 114th Brigade in the west would serve as the “fierce and painful” blow and capturing the Indian outposts resulting from the Forward Policy would force India out of the territory China claimed.

Following the decision to launch an offensive against India, the Chinese focused their initial operational plans on the forces India stationed along the border. In the NEFA, India deployed the Fourth Division consisting of about 16,000 troops, including the Seventh Brigade, which was the decisive combat strength of the division. The PLA attack that began on October 20th focused solely on this brigade, destroying the unit within one day of fighting.⁸⁵

⁸³ Feng and Wortzel, “PLA Operational Principles and Limited War,” 182-186.

⁸⁴ Bruce Riedel, *JFK’s Forgotten Crisis: Tibet, the CIA, and Sino-Indian War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), 112.

⁸⁵ Feng and Wortzel, “PLA Operational Principles and Limited War,” 183-184.

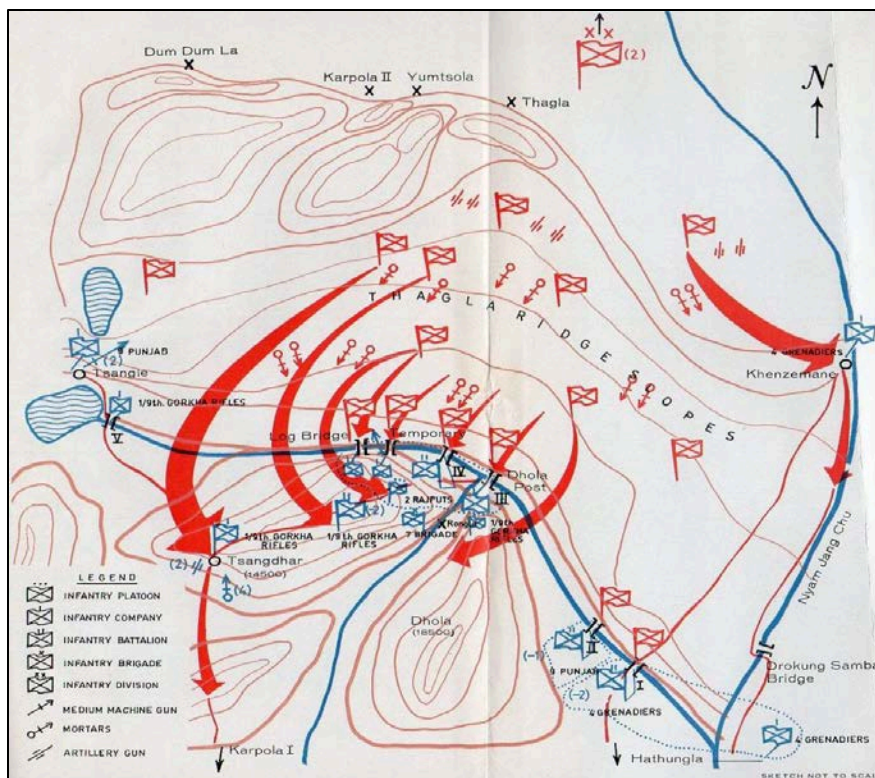


Figure 4. Chinese attack against the Indian Seventh Brigade in the NEFA
(Sketched by Brigadier J.P. Dalvi, commander of the Indian Seventh Infantry Brigade)

Source: J.P. Dalvi, *Himalayan Blunder: The Curtain-Raiser to the Sino-Indian War of 1962* (Bombay, India: Thacker & Company Limited, 1969), 499.

In the Aksai Chin, the PLA placed more operational focus on the capture of Indian outposts and the reclamation of territory in the vital corridor linking Tibet and Xinjiang. In this region, India deployed the 114th Brigade consisting of 6,000 troops, of whom 1,300 occupied approximately forty outposts. Chinese forces conducted a series of tactical actions against each of these Indian outposts, capturing one after another. Within nine days, Chinese forces in the Aksai Chin captured the majority of these outposts and destroyed major portions of four Indian battalions in the brigade.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Feng and Wortzel, "PLA Operational Principles and Limited War: The Sino-Indian War of 1962," 184-186.

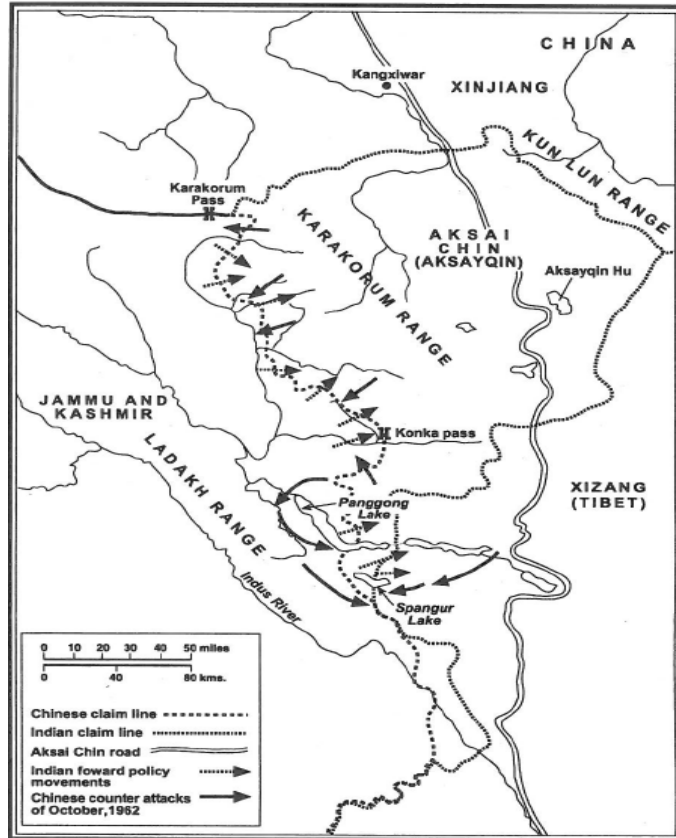


Figure 5. Chinese attacks in the Aksai Chin focused on Indian posts east of the Chinese claim line

Source: Cheng Feng and Larry M. Wortzel, "PLA Operational Principles and Limited War: The Sino-Indian War of 1962," in *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience Since 1949*, ed. David M. Finkelstein, Michael A. McDevitt, and Mark A. Ryan (Armonk, NY: East Gate Book, 2003), 187-188.

While there is a lack of western literature devoted to the PLA operational warfighting experience in the Sino-Indian War, the majority of evidence indicates that the PLA focused on two operational objectives. First was the destruction of Indian military forces conducting the Forward Policy, particularly the Indian Fourth Division in the NEFA. Second, in the Aksai Chin, they focused on the capture of Indian outposts built on Chinese claimed territory. In just ten days, PLA forces destroyed the fighting capability of Indian units stationed in the NEFA and Aksai Chin, denying them the means to continue their Forward Policy. They also captured a majority of outposts in the Aksai Chin, reclaiming territory lost to India.

The fifth structured, focused question is what operations did the Chinese conduct against the Indian Army? The Chinese conducted two major operations in the Sino-Indian War, one focused in the NEFA eastern sector and one focused in the Aksai Chin western sector. In both sectors, they executed attacks that focused on concentrating forces to achieve quick and decisive results. These attacks intended on encircling Indian troops and outposts in order to destroy them.⁸⁷ Actions in both sectors happened in two phases, resulting from the temporary ceasefire offered by the Chinese.

The operation in the NEFA developed into tactical actions executed along both the eastern and western ends of the McMahon Line beginning on October 20. In the west, the PLA fought along a line of operation beginning north of the McMahon Line and advancing south across the Thag La Ridge toward Towang, India's forward most established military base in the area. Within the first day of the attack toward Towang, the PLA destroyed the Indian Seventh Brigade and captured their commander.⁸⁸ In the east, the PLA conducted an attack on the Indian border post of Kibitu. The Chinese captured both Towang and Kibitu by October 28.

Following India's refusal to negotiate a settlement during a period of ceasefire, the PLA again launched attacks along the eastern and western portions of the McMahon Line. They captured the town of Walong in the east, gaining control of India's forward most airstrip and isolating Indian forces at the eastern end of the border. In the west, the PLA attacked south of Towang along multiple fronts, enveloping Indian forces and compelling a withdrawal of remaining units that allowed the Chinese to advance to within four miles of the Assam Plain, overlooking India.⁸⁹ During this second phase in the NEFA, the PLA destroyed four additional

⁸⁷ Feng and Wortzel, "PLA Operational Principles and Limited War," 182.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 183-184.

⁸⁹ "The Himalayan Border Crisis," *Keesing's Record of World Events*, vol. 8 (December 1962): 19109.

Indian brigades. They were also postured along the foothills of the Assam Plain, threatening to invade into the heart of India with only a single Indian battalion in front of them.⁹⁰

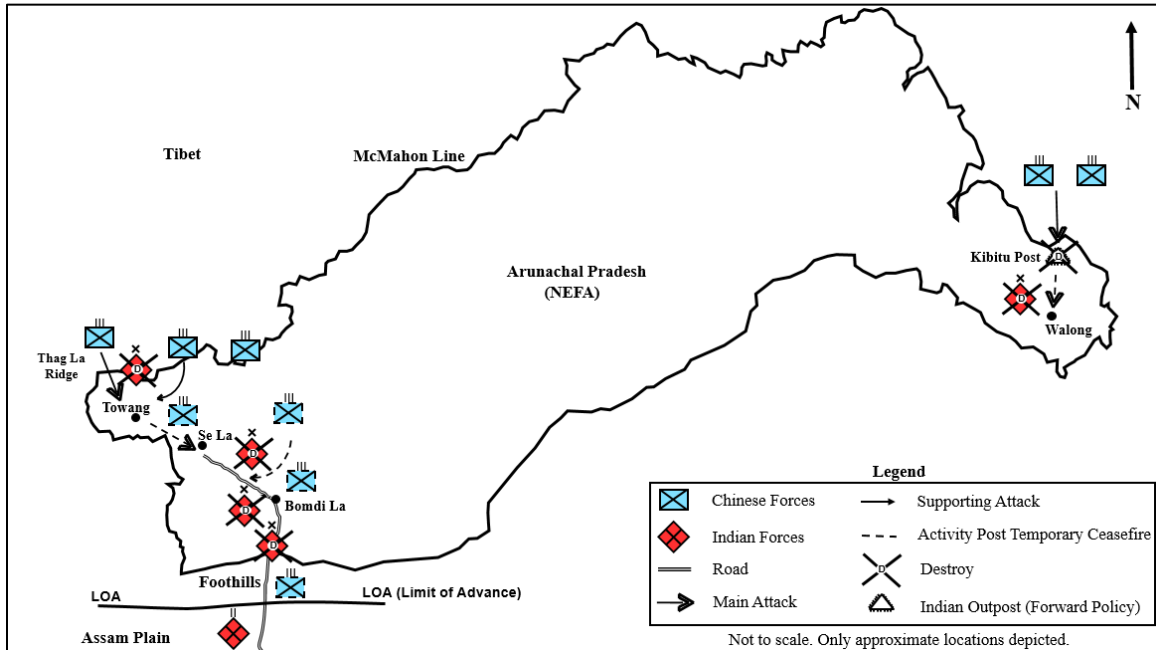


Figure 6. Chinese military operations in the NEFA

Source: Data from “The Himalayan Border Crisis,” *Keesing’s Record of World Events*, vol. 8 (December 1962): 19109.

In the Aksai Chin, the operation focused tactical engagements on the capture of Indian outposts and the destruction of Indian troops holding them. On October 20, PLA forces attacked Indian outposts in two separate areas. The first area was in the northwest plateau just south of the Karakoram Pass. The second area was one hundred miles southeast near the Pangong Lake.⁹¹ The PLA systematically attacked and captured each outpost. By October 29, they captured all posts around the Pangong Lake, destroyed major portions of four Indian battalions of the 114th Brigade,

⁹⁰ Feng and Wortzel, “PLA Operational Principles and Limited War,” 187.

⁹¹ “The Himalayan Border Crisis,” *Keesing’s Record of World Events*, vol. 8 (December 1962): 19109.

and recovered 1,900 square kilometers of Chinese claimed territory.⁹² The Chinese conducted additional attacks on November 18 following the ceasefire. Over the following two days, they destroyed six additional southern outposts west of the Spangur Lake and forced a withdrawal from the Daulat Beg Oldi post near the entrance to the Karakoram Pass in the north. Once hostilities in the war ended, the Chinese occupied all outposts that they claimed within their border.⁹³

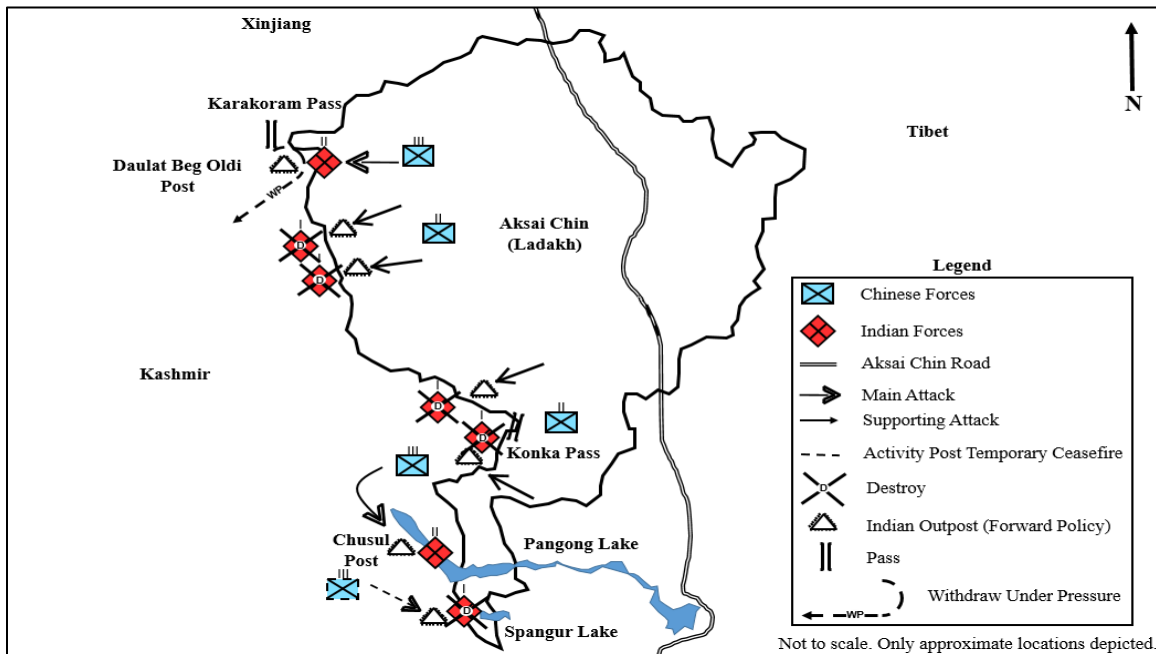


Figure 7. Chinese military operations in the Aksai Chin

Source: Data from “The Himalayan Border Crisis,” *Keesing’s Record of World Events*, vol. 8 (December 1962): 19109.

The evidence suggests that the Chinese conducted two major operations in the Sino-Indian War. The first operation focused on the NEFA in the Arunachal Pradesh region. Here, the

⁹² Feng and Wortzel, “PLA Operational Principles and Limited War,” 186.

⁹³ “The Himalayan Border Crisis,” *Keesing’s Record of World Events*, vol. 8 (December 1962): 19109.

PLA concentrated on the destruction of Indian forces conducting the Forward Policy and advanced one hundred miles south of the McMahon Line before posturing themselves on the foothills of the Assam Plain south of the Himalayas and overlooking the Indian mainland. One thousand kilometers to the west, the PLA conducted a second operation in the disputed Aksai Chin, focused on capturing Indian outposts in Chinese claimed territory, which they successfully achieved.

The sixth structured, focused question is how did the Chinese arrange military operations in time and space? The Chinese conducted simultaneous attacks in both the North East Frontier Agency and Aksai Chin regions. As detailed above, the Chinese conducted two operations in the Sino-Indian War. These operations were concurrent attacks that the PLA executed over 1,000 kilometers apart, on India's western and eastern borders. Near the McMahon Line in the NEFA, PLA forces attacked the Indian Seventh Brigade, while at the same time executing an operation in the Aksai Chin to retake control of territory claimed by China.⁹⁴

China developed an operational approach based on a combination of political and military factors. These factors led to the delineation of the main and supporting efforts, as well as the decision to attack simultaneously. Following the October 10 Indian attack against PLA troops on the Thag La Ridge and the order issued on October 12 by Indian Prime Minister Nehru to attack Chinese frontier guards on the contested border, the Chinese CMC issued an order to counterattack and destroy any Indian forces that had crossed the McMahon Line in the NEFA. In the same order, they specified that Chinese troops in the western Aksai Chin region would play a supporting and coordinating role.⁹⁵ These orders implied that the attack in the NEFA would be the main effort while the attack in the Aksai Chin would serve as a supporting effort.

⁹⁴ Riedel, *JFK's Forgotten Crisis*, 114.

⁹⁵ Feng and Wortzel, "PLA Operational Principles and Limited War," 182.

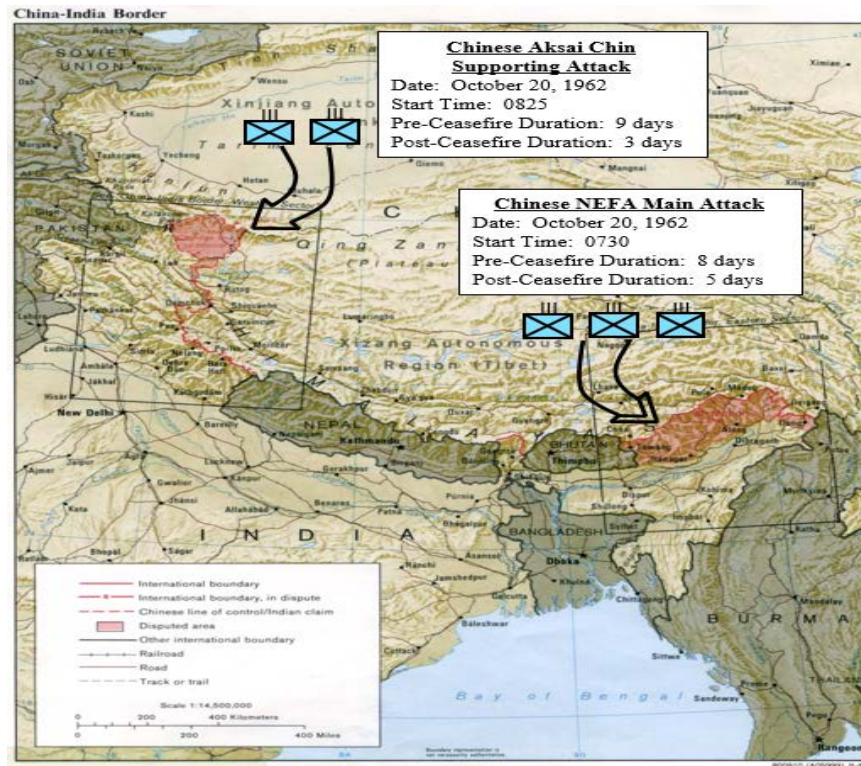


Figure 8. Simultaneous Chinese main and supporting attacks in the Aksai Chin and NEFA

Source: Adapted from “Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection,” The University of Texas at Austin, accessed January 28, 2016, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_india_border_88.jpg.

The PLA chose to focus their main effort in the east for three reasons. First, it was the location of India’s initial aggression and origin of major attacks on Chinese outposts. Second, the terrain was more favorable for conducting an attack against Indian forces, allowing the PLA to fight down mountain ridges against Indian forces defending uphill. Finally, the NEFA was the location of the major units of the Indian Army conducting the Forward Policy. Destruction of these forces would ensure accomplishment of their military objectives.⁹⁶

In attacking simultaneously, PLA commanders hoped to apply military power across the breadth of their operational area, resulting in the achievement of mass and surprise against the

⁹⁶ Feng and Wortzel, “PLA Operational Principles and Limited War,” 182.

Indian forces. By accomplishing both, they could overwhelm Indian military leadership and gain and maintain the initiative throughout the war. They believed this simultaneity would force the defending Indian units into operational shock and achieve quick, decisive victory.



Figure 9. Headline from the Indian newspaper, *The Sunday Standard*, noting simultaneous Chinese offensives

Source: Soumyadip Choudhury, “1962: Newspaper front page from 50 years ago when China attacked India,” Cutting the Chai, October 23, 2012, accessed February 18, 2016, <http://www.cuttingthechai.com/2012/10/6074/1962-newspaper-front-page-from-50-years-ago-when-china-attacked-india/html>.

The evidence demonstrates that the Chinese conducted simultaneous operations in both sectors of their operational area. The PLA conducted two separate, but linked attacks against Indian forces in both the NEFA and Aksai Chin coordinated to begin at the same time. They clearly designated the attack in the NEFA as the main effort, while the attack in the Aksai Chin served as a supporting effort. This simultaneity across a 1,000 kilometer front allowed them to achieve mass and surprise, resulting in an overwhelming victory for the Chinese.

This section provided a case study of the Sino-Indian War of 1962 following the structured, focused approach to collect the evidence needed to test the hypothesis of this monograph. It began with a broad overview of the strategic background that led to the war.

Following this background, the case study answered the six structured, focused questions in detail. This provided the empirical evidence needed to analyze whether the Chinese government clearly defined strategic political objectives and whether Chinese military commanders were able to understand them and arrange tactical engagements appropriately to nest military objectives with political objectives. The following section will present the findings of the case study and analyze whether the evidence supports the hypothesis.

Findings and Analysis

This section presents an analysis of the evidence based on the answers to the six structured, focused questions from the case study. It begins with a review of the research question, followed by an analysis of the hypothesis. In the analysis, this study determines whether the evidence supports the hypothesis, does not support it, or provides a mixed outcome, followed by an explanation based on the evidence. Additionally, the section examines the impact of these findings in relation to the current literature on the topic. The section ends with a summary of the findings.

This study intended to investigate if the PLA understood operational art in the Sino-Indian War of 1962. Furthermore, it sought to determine whether they applied the concept as defined by current US Army doctrine. Many uncertainties surround the Chinese attainment of strategic objectives through the use of force. Observers question whether they attain their political objectives through the application of a formal process that binds military objectives to political objectives or whether they are the arbitrary results of factors such as an unprepared opposing military, or just overwhelming size and motivation as suggested by Andrew Nathan and Robert Ross in *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*.⁹⁷ However, the evidence presented in the case study suggests otherwise. In the Sino-Indian War of 1962, a clear linkage existed between the objectives of the political and military apparatuses of China. As such, the PLA did understand and apply operational art consistent with the current US Army's definition of the concept.

The hypothesis of this monograph stated that when Chinese military commanders understood the strategic political objectives in the Sino-Indian War, it allowed them to arrange the appropriate tactical engagements to link their military objectives to the political objectives. The evidence supports this hypothesis. This monograph established early on in an explanation of the theoretical framework that policy derived from strategic aims provides the purpose necessary

⁹⁷ Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*, 143.

to guide operational planning. For military means to support policy objectives, a strong linkage must exist, which military planners facilitate through the application of operational art.

In the Sino-Indian War, a strong foundation for the application of operational art by military commanders existed throughout the conflict, beginning with a clearly defined strategic aim and political objective that they understood. The case study established that the strategic aim of China in relation to India was to restrain India's power in Southeast Asia by preventing its ability to challenge China's borders and destabilize Chinese rule in Tibet. This aim led to a political process that failed to achieve a diplomatic solution. This failure combined with India's provocative Forward Policy led China to adopt a new political objective. They needed to teach India a lesson and establish the conditions for long-term peace and stability on the border with India. Accomplishment of this objective would undoubtedly restrain India's regional power and increase that of China. They chose military force as the means to achieve this objective.

Strategically and militarily, the Chinese stress a clear connection between the use of force to achieve political objectives.⁹⁸ They understood the Clausewitzian concept that, “[military] goals arise out of the political relations of the two antagonists to each other, and to other states that may be involved.”⁹⁹ They exhibited this in the subsequent military and operational objectives translated accordingly to achieve the political objective. To teach India a lesson, China needed to destroy the means India was using to demonstrate their influence and regain lost territory. The subsequent military objectives of eliminating Indian outposts established on Chinese claimed territory and destroying the units of the Indian army conducting the Forward Policy would be a severe blow to Indian prestige and ensure long-term peace and stability on the border.

⁹⁸ Feng and Wortzel, “PLA Operational Principles and Limited War,” 189.

⁹⁹ Daniel Moran and Peter Paret, eds. and trans., *Carl Von Clausewitz: Two Letters on Strategy* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1984), 25.

Operationally, the objectives necessary to fulfill military strategic goals became evident to military commanders. They had to destroy the specific units conducting India's Forward Policy and any outposts built on Chinese claimed territory. They subsequently decided to attack and destroy the decisive combat strength of the Indian Fourth Division in the NEFA and to capture Indian outposts in the Aksai Chin. Achieving both objectives would leave India unable to threaten China's border in the short-term and ensured retention of the strategically important Aksai Chin.

Commanders in the PLA also chose these objectives based on their limited nature, calculating the impact of risk on political outcomes. Three main reasons drove their decision on the limited operational objectives chosen. First, the PLA would assume the risk of catastrophic failure, particularly in terms of logistics, if they conducted a large campaign over the Himalayas in the winter in pursuit of larger objectives within India. Second, they wanted to avoid a large American response which would turn the tide in the favor of India and chance failure at strategic objectives. Finally, commanders desired a quick, decisive victory to avoid a protracted conflict with India that would drain China of resources and distract them from establishing themselves as the regional superpower.¹⁰⁰

That the stated military and operational objectives linked directly with the political objective becomes evident, so much so that Brigadier J.P. Dalvi, commander of the Seventh Brigade of the Indian Army destroyed by the PLA in the NEFA recognized it. He stated in his account of the Sino-Indian War, *Himalayan Blunder*, that based on his own observations and findings as a prisoner of war, "They [Chinese] had a unified command and clear military and political objectives."¹⁰¹ These clear objectives allowed Chinese military commanders to develop and arrange operations that achieved the stated political ends.

¹⁰⁰ Riedel, *JFK's Forgotten Crisis*, 144.

¹⁰¹ J.P. Dalvi, *Himalayan Blunder: The Curtain-Raiser to the Sino-Indian War of 1962* (Bombay, India: Thacker & Company Limited, 1969), 153-154.

Military commanders developed two major operations to achieve their operational objectives. The Chinese General Staff Department and Central Military Commission required these operations to be subordinate to political and diplomatic needs.¹⁰² Consequently, both military operations derived from broader national interests. While China's bigger concern was over maintaining territory in the western Aksai Chin region which connected their provinces of Tibet and Xinjiang, PLA commanders realized that simply destroying all the Indian outposts and forces here might not compel India to negotiate or prevent future incursions. While this operation was necessary, politically and militarily, opportunity lay in the east along the disputed McMahon Line in the NEFA.

Chinese commanders recognized that the NEFA was the location of the major units of the Indian Army conducting the Forward Policy. The PLA needed to destroy these units to ensure long-term stability on the border. Destruction of these units also offered the best opportunity to display Chinese superiority to India on the regional and world stage. Additionally, the terrain in the NEFA offered more advantage to conduct a large-scale attack against defending Indian forces, while also allowing the PLA to incur deep into Indian territory and present a credible threat to the Indian mainland. Combining these political and military considerations allowed operational commanders to arrange two operations across a broad 1,000 kilometer front.

The PLA arranged these operations to support the attainment of their limited operational objectives and desire for a quick, decisive victory. By designating the operation in the NEFA as the main effort, while the operation in the Aksai Chin served as a supporting effort and attacking simultaneously, PLA forces overwhelmed Indian military leadership and demonstrably defeated Indian forces. They no longer had the means to continue their Forward Policy and they became acutely aware of China's ability to impose its will over India at any time. In this way, tactical actions directly contributed to attaining strategic objectives.

¹⁰² Feng and Wortzel, "PLA Operational Principles and Limited War," 189.

Along each subsequent level, the Chinese demonstrated a clear linkage between their objectives and the operations their military conducted to achieve them. The clear subordination of military action to political pursuits and the Chinese military commanders' understanding of them is evident. This understanding allowed them to arrange the appropriate tactical engagements to link military objectives to the political objectives. Successful PLA military operations opened up new political opportunities for China and positioned them as the regional leader in Southeast Asia.

This study did not seek to understand what events led to war between India and China or who was to blame for the war, but sought to understand if the PLA applied operational art to attain its objectives in a similar fashion to the US Army's current understanding of the practice. Subsequently, these findings broaden the literature that exists on the Sino-Indian War of 1962. They demonstrate that a clear linkage existed between strategic aims, political objectives, military objectives, and the operations the PLA conducted. Furthermore, they illustrate that China intentionally nested these objectives and translated appropriate military action to achieve them.

In summary, the PLA did understand and apply operational art as current US Army doctrine defines it. Based on the evidence presented in the case study, Chinese military commanders understood Chinese strategic political objectives in the Sino-Indian War, which allowed them to arrange the appropriate tactical engagements to link military objectives to the political objectives. The Chinese intentionally made their objectives and subsequent military actions complementary in a cascading effect from strategic aims to military action on the ground, achieving political objectives through the application of operational art. This knowledge broadens the literature on the Sino-Indian War and provides a frame of reference for how China will conduct future engagements involving the use of force. The following section concludes this monograph.

Conclusion

The world better understands Indian decision-making with regard to the border dispute and the ensuing Sino-Indian War than it does concerning the Chinese. Far more literature on the topic from the Indian side exists, originating from the poor outcome for India and a need to understand how it happened and how to improve.¹⁰³ Additional literature provides an analysis of why each country acted the way it did and typically offer a point of view on who to blame the conflict. However, little exists on how the Chinese accomplished their strategic objectives so successfully and in such a rapid manner.

This monograph set out to discover how the Chinese achieved such overwhelming success in the Sino-Indian War. Specifically, it asked whether the PLA understood the theory of operational art and if it applied it in a manner consistent with how the US Army defines it today. During this course of discovery, the study produced valuable insight into the theory of operational art. It provided an opportunity for greater understanding of the art of translating strategic objectives into the arrangement of tactical actions aimed at a common purpose. It also validated our current understanding of the theory by discerning a similar ideology in the Chinese military.

Current US Army doctrine states that operational art requires commanders to understand the strategic objectives to be successful.¹⁰⁴ This study demonstrated that if military commanders understand these objectives, they can translate them into an arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose, ultimately resulting in attainment of the understood strategic objectives.¹⁰⁵ By analyzing the Sino-Indian War through this lens, the study examined the relationship between strategic aims, policy, and objectives at each level of war from the Chinese

¹⁰³ Riedel, *JFK's Forgotten Crisis*, 92.

¹⁰⁴ ADP 3-0, 10.

¹⁰⁵ ADP 1-01, 4-8.

perspective. It also evaluated the translation of these objectives into operations and their arrangement toward a common end.

In the end, Chinese military commanders successfully executed operational art, merging political and military considerations to achieve an outcome that left China in an enhanced bargaining position against India. Their selective application of military force against limited objectives destroyed the image of India as a rising Asian power and exposed many of its strategic shortcomings. Successful military action against India allotted China the political initiative throughout the short war, allowing them to conclude it at the time and in the manner of their choosing.

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