



India and the Cold War

Author(s): R

Source: *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Summer, 1955), pp. 256-268

Published by: Middle East Institute

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4322720>

Accessed: 24-02-2020 09:39 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Middle East Institute is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Middle East Journal*

JSTOR

INDIA AND THE COLD WAR

R

THE AMERICAN VIEW of the world is a simple one. Its simplicity is the consequence of Americans' fortune, which is greater than most of them often credit. Never before in history has any people attained so high a degree of prosperity and well-being. The future is bright and unlimited. Americans have no worries of any consequence — except one. Only one thing threatens ruin. That one thing is Communism — particularly as propagated by the Sino-Soviet combine wielding the ultimate nuclear weapons. Americans react to this Communist threat with all the single-mindedness that the instinct of self-preservation can produce. Their every national action is conditioned by it.

When Americans are face to face with Communist power their course of action is clear. They have learned from bitter experience that it calculates their destruction, and that the only effective response is superior force. But there are others in the world — neither Communist nor sharing the prosperity Americans seek to protect — whose view of the world and its perils is far different. These are the world's neutrals, and their number is legion.

The leading exponent of neutralism is India. She speaks in her own right for 370 million people, a substantial chunk of the human race, and strongly influences hundreds of millions more. Yet to most Americans India is an enigma. The Indians seem blind to the perils of Communist imperialism, and refuse to join with the United States and its allies in opposing its threat. To all appearances they appease the Red Chinese on every side, and carry on sweet conversations with them. Their self-righteous neutralism during the Korean conflict was deeply resented by Americans whose blood was being spilled resisting Communist aggression. Their stubborn refusal to concede any moral justification to the French and American positions on Indo-China is often infuriating, considering that India's security is equally threatened. The refusal of transit rights for American planes flying French reinforcements to relieve the hard-pressed garrison at Dien Bien Phu could only evoke a suppressed anger. Most disturbing of all are the Indian efforts to persuade other nations to follow her neutralist lead.

What makes the Indians act that way? Are they really pro-Communist at heart? Upon the accuracy and sensitivity of our response to these questions much will depend — not only the course of neutralist action in the Cold War itself, but what for our children may prove even more important — the character of a world from which Communism has been ex-

◆ R, the anonymous author of this article, has been a student of South Asian affairs for the past seven years. He resided in various parts of India from 1949 through 1953, when he was in close touch with Indians in many walks of life. Prior to that time he spent several years in parts of the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

terminated. We can only seek that answer by projecting ourselves into the Indian's position, and trying to see things — first his immediate surroundings, and then the world at large — as he sees them.

THE CLASH AND FUSION OF VALUES

The Indian's first thought, as it is with most of us, is of his own immediate problems, and nearly all of these arise from the impact of the technological culture of the West on the agrarian traditions of the East. The West brought many gifts to India, including its very concept of nationhood. But the impact brought ills as well, and produced a social revolution that has threatened at times her disintegration and collapse. In the few years since independence, however, the Indians have been evolving a synthesis of the values of the West with their own indigenous traditions, and their attitude toward the world at large cannot be understood outside its context.

The traditional Hindu culture is an ancient one of great dignity. It is based on the value system of the rice-growing monsoon village. There, if one asked for little, life was easy and kind. The serene and passive mind and the renunciation of desires were the highest moral values. Life was noncompetitive, for there was enough food for all. So too, it was immobile, for it depended upon the paddy field and the family unit that tilled it. Fertility — both of the soil and of the loins — was the bounty of the gods and evoked an awed reverence. Death was a common event, and only a handful of village sages reached old age. But this was not so disturbing, for death was only a punctuation in the cycle of the soul which had lived before birth and would continue to live after death in other incarnations. Then one day, when the soul had achieved sufficient serenity, it would be released from the toils of the mundane to merge in perfect bliss with the infinite world soul — *brahman*. It was not a bad life, so long as you were left alone to enjoy it.

But the Indian was not left alone. First the Muslims, then the British, came, and each spread an overlay of dominion on the old Hindu culture. The Muslim culture and the Hindu never mixed, and the friction between the two is even sharper today than during the Moghal *raj*. In the case of the British it was different. The British first came to India in quest of wealth, and naught else. They found a bonanza. So long as mercantile profit remained the prime motivation for British activities in India there was no conflict with the indigenous Hindu culture. The British amassed the wealth they came for, and the Hindu villager pursued his life apart, largely unaffected by these strange adventurers from the West.

But during the first half of the last century a far-reaching change occurred in the British outlook. They began to develop a conscience. The leaders of English thought revolted at the prevalence at home and abroad of the unbridled greed and lust for wealth that accompanied and preceded the Industrial Revolution. Out of their revulsion came the Reform Move-

ment. At home it led to the abolition of the sweat shop, the English Bill of Rights, and a whole body of social legislation on which the tradition of British liberalism was founded.

India today owes many of her greatest assets to the disciples of liberal reform who wrought the Empire of India. Out of trading posts in the jungle they built cities that rival the metropolises of the West. They built roads, railroads, hospitals, factories, and so on and on. In a noble fighting tradition they built the Indian army, one of the largest and finest in the world today. They created an incorruptible and dedicated civil service, one of the best ever known, to which much of India's stability through the tempest of independence is owed. They brought to India the English educational system, then best in the world, and trained her present-day leaders in the best traditions of British scholarship.

The greatest debt the Indian of today owes to Britain is the tradition of justice and democracy. The Indian parliamentary system is a heritage from the British, as well as the liberal Indian concepts of freedom. There is probably no country in the world where a wider range of political opinion and expression is tolerated than in India. In fact, a by-product of this tradition was the desire for self-determination, out of which evolved the independence movement and the very concept of India as a unified national state.

One might then ask, what harm did the British do to India under their liberal reform policies? Impassioned Indian nationalists are inclined to rant about British looting of the Indian economy, but their argument is not very convincing to the objective observer. The British unquestionably put at least as much into India as they took out. Actually, the greatest physical problem they brought to India was the backlash of one of their most laudable achievements — the substantial lowering of the death rate. As the birth rate has remained about the same, the net result has been a geometrically progressing increase in the population, beginning about a hundred years ago and continuing at a current rate of about 1.4 percent per year. This means that with a population of 370 million today, ten years from now there will be over 50 million new Indian mouths to feed — considerably more than the entire present population of France. But already there is not enough food to go around. The Indian's average caloric intake is only about half the minimum established by the Food and Agriculture Organization as necessary to sustain health. The pressure on the land compounds the problem through the fragmentation of holdings and the increase in agricultural unemployment and peasant debt. A chronic ache has spread across the land of India, not the old-fashioned famine of the catastrophic sort, but the slow debilitation of malnutrition, sapping vigor and laying the people prey to disease.

Some propose birth control as a solution. Apart from the moral resistance this proposal evokes in some quarters, the prospect of inducing hundreds

of millions of Indian peasants to adopt effective birth control methods is so dim that it cannot be seriously entertained as a realistic approach to the problem.

The answer obviously lies in developing the technical level of the economy, and it is in this direction that serious persons have bent their efforts. But the effort to develop a technological economy has in itself produced a profound social upheaval. The competitive and entrepreneurial aspects of such a system go against the grain of the old agrarian passivity. The social mobility which such an economy demands tends to shatter the inflexible structure of the Indian village and family. The urban and industrial environments call for a new type of social organization and a new set of values.

Amid the agonizing confusion and conflict of values that accompany cultural change, many extremist solutions have been proposed. Some seek escape by withdrawal, by retrogression to archaic traditions and forms. Others would break the Indian Union into sectional fragments. Yet others espouse a sort of Hindu fascism that would set the nation on a path of conquest against the Muslim.

Of course the most dangerous and virulent of these extremisms is Communism, another importation from the West. In the general elections of 1952 some 5 million Indians voted for the Communist Party and its splinters, and it now forms the principal parliamentary opposition. The Communists have seriously penetrated the labor movement, the educational system, the press, and even the Government to a moderate degree. They also enjoyed a few years back a limited success in peasant revolt.

The prototype of the Indian Communist Party member is the young unemployed intellectual. The Indian universities turn out thousands of graduates a year, and the intermediate schools tens of thousands more. In spite of the need for development, the economic system cannot absorb these young graduates; there just are not enough new jobs commensurate with the level of education and training they have acquired. This is a blow to the pride and to the sense of personal identity and function within the social body, as much as to the belly. These young men are forced to take jobs as menials, or as clerks if they are lucky. In any case, they are fortunate indeed to earn as much as 50¢ a day. Living in squalor and eating one small meal of rice a day, they are likely to pass their leisure hours feeding their bitter and frustrated emotions on the cheap Communist literature that abounds on every street corner. Communism offers this angry young man a pat solution for all his problems, a course of positive action as a release for his bitterness, and a feeling of function and self-importance which he believes his own social system has denied him. Thus Communism sweeps through the ranks of the educated Indian youth and on through the school system that produced him, like a wave of juvenile narcotics addiction.

Fortunately, however, these juvenile delinquents and the Communist dope

peddlers who feed on them — while constituting a serious menace — are far from representative of India. The more mature and balanced minds are still firmly in control of the nation. It is important to remember that, while 5 million Indians voted pro-Communist in 1952, 100 million voted non-Communist, mainly for the Congress Party led by Jawaharlal Nehru.

In these electoral contests Congress leaders and party workers stump the country from village to village deriding and ridiculing Communism with a passion such as can only develop in the heat of an election campaign. Moreover, before the adoption of the four-year-old decision of the Congress government to deal with Communism in the open and at the polls, it had arrested Communists by the thousands and kept them penned up in preventive detention camps. Congress bitterness against the Communists goes back at least to the early days of World War II, when all the Congress leaders were clapped in jail while the Communists roamed free, fattening themselves in a wartime alliance with the British. Few political parties anywhere in the world can boast a more energetic and consistent opposition to domestic Communism than can the Indian National Congress.

Communism clashes with the democratic ideals of freedom and justice absorbed by the Indians from the British. But it also clashes with an essential value concept carried over from the old Hindu culture. This concept comprises the moral essence of Hinduism, deeper and more enduring than its other more formal aspects, and to this day it sets the moral tone for the Indian social body. It is somewhat comparable in quality to the Westerner's value concept of Christian love and compassion for one's fellow men which underlies and persists beyond the more formal expressions of Christianity. It is known by the Sanskrit word *ahimsa*. The term is usually translated "nonviolence," but it is a concept much broader and deeper than the translation implies. *Ahimsa* is a state of mind, a passive state. It encompasses a note of imperturbability, patience, imperviousness, and serenity. It is a prime element of the Hindu's inner adjustment of his soul to the infinity of the world soul — *brahman*. Westerners are apt to misconstrue its nature as a passivity of weakness. The British learned otherwise in their dealings with the peaceful but absolutely unyielding Gandhi. It is capable of expression as a quixotic, indeed a suicidal, stubbornness, and can be extremely frustrating to the action-minded Westerner. But he may take comfort in the knowledge that it is equally frustrating to the Communist, for the rabidity and violence of Indian Communism offends this deeply engrained morality.

But while Communism is rejected by most Indians, capitalism has no greater appeal. The concepts of economic individualism, enlightened self-interest, and the profit motive on which the capitalist system is based are completely foreign and incomprehensible to the Indian. In fact, the word "capitalist" evokes images of hatred in the Indian mind — the moneylender, the absentee landlord, the profiteer, and the British *sahib*. Capi-

talism, to the Indian, is synonymous with exploitation. And under the circumstances, there now exists in India neither the machinery for capital financing nor the sources of private capital on which an adequate free enterprise system could be based.

The Indians have found their doctrine in democratic socialism. Its ideal of the welfare state and the nationalized economy under a liberal system of parliamentary democracy sets well on the Indian cultural heritage, and is entirely compatible with the concept of *ahimsa*. It is the same doctrine — Fabianism — that is espoused by the British Labour Party with which the Indian leaders enjoy an exceptional rapport. Distasteful as this doctrine may be to most Americans, it has provided India with a badly needed sense of dynamism geared to the gradualist tempo of the Indian culture.

Under its precepts India embarked in 1951 on a Five Year Plan of development. It represents the Indian answer and challenge to Communism. The Indian leaders look upon it as a contest, a competition, with the Chinese Communists who have been contemporaneously pursuing their own development programs in a similar economic environment. Through propaganda channels the Chinese tout every advance they make, and many they do not. But the world hears little of India's progress, though it has been dramatic and at times startling.

In the first three years of the Plan the rise in estimated national income has been three times greater than the increase in population, and the per capita income of the Indian citizen has risen by 5 percent. Agricultural production has increased 18 percent over the 1951 level, and industrial production 40 percent over 1950. Seven million acres of land have been newly irrigated, and extensive land reform has been carried out. The West Bengal-Orissa-Bihar iron, steel, and coal triangle is well on the way to becoming the greatest center of heavy industrial production in all of Asia. In spite of the inflationary pressures of partition and the Korean war, all this has been achieved against a background of remarkable financial stability and a steady cost of living index.

Politically speaking, the state of the Indian Union is also sound. A well balanced, federal, democratic constitution has been in force for five years. Under its provision for universal adult suffrage, the world's greatest electoral venture was successfully carried off in 1952, confirming in power a stable and responsible government.

But most important is the intangible factor of morale. There is hope in India today, even a sense of excitement, contrasting sharply with the disillusionment and pessimism of only five or six years ago. Indian national spirits today are higher than they have ever been before. Yet this progress, this hope, hangs by a slender thread. A serious disturbance in the productive machine or in the balance of distribution could still plunge India into a socio-economic morass. And the Communists are waiting like vultures for this to come to pass.

It is in this context that the prospect of a major war, and particularly one fought in Asia, so frightens India. She is less concerned over the possible outcome of such a war than by the prospect of Asia in shambles and the probable effect on India herself of any war at all. She fears its contagion and the possibility of being forced to take sides. Above all she fears the economic consequences of war, whether India were directly involved or not, and their effect on her delicate internal situation. It is primarily out of this fear, rationalized by the nonviolent moral concepts of *ahimsa*, that come India's active policy of neutralism and her assertive efforts to preserve the peace.

THE WORLD VIEW

The Indian attitude toward the West is the product of intimate acquaintance with Westerners and their ways. As we have seen, the Indian respects, and has absorbed into his own system, many of the institutions and values of Western democracy and technology. But there is at the same time a strong undercurrent of resentment and disapproval.

The felling of resentment is largely a nonrational, psychological phenomenon that warps the Indian's image of the West and moulds his views on specific issues of international affairs. It has its roots in the Indian reaction to the twin philosophies of paternalistic authoritarianism and white superiority espoused by the British administrators of the Indian Empire up to very recent times.

The English Reform Movement itself was predicated on the theory that the sovereign, through government, had the moral right and duty to intervene in social, economic, and even personal affairs which theretofore had been considered beyond the proper province of legislation. The British practice of this political philosophy in India was naturally prone to being construed by the Indian as — among other things — a patronizing arrogance and a smug assumption of moral superiority. The reformer is seldom liked by those being reformed, especially when he has a heavy paternalistic hand.

But paternalism was given a particularly bitter coating by the frank British assumption, throughout the life of the Empire, of white racial superiority. The Indian felt it in the insult of being excluded from the white man's house, his club, his theater, and even his shops. Not long ago the Indian had to get off the sidewalk and into the gutter to let the white man pass. There is hardly a living Indian who has not personally felt at one time or another the sting of racial indignity at the hands of the white foreigner, and his sensitivity on the subject is apt to verge on the neurotic. It is this that gives the powerful emotional charge to the Indian's espousal of the cause of Afro-Asian nationalism. To him it is more than just a political movement. It has all the fervency of a racial crusade against oppression.

The devil's role was of course played by the British until independence.

But the British are gone now for the most part, and over the past five years or so the Americans have slipped into that unpleasant spot. One reason for this is the mere fact of power — economic, military, and diplomatic — and its similarity in physical and geographical attributes to that formerly wielded by the British.

Another reason is that the Indian often sees in the Americans' dealings with him, whether rightly or wrongly, a patronizing approach and missionary motivation that reminds him uncomfortably of the old British paternalism — he sometimes thus conceives the best intentioned efforts to assist him. Propaganda also, at times, when the United States is trying most zealously to sell the American way and damn the Communist, evokes this negative reaction. The Americans' single-minded preoccupation with the peril of Communism intensifies it. To the Indian, to whom Communism is only one of many perils, this often seems hysterical, and at best a readiness to sacrifice others' welfare to the requirements of American military security. By selecting intemperate passages from the American press and rostrum, he can make a convincing case for himself that this is the true character of the American attitude. When he adds this belief to the fact of U.S. power, he sees the United States as fully capable of creating a new type of cultural and economic imperialism that would require a distasteful conformity to an American norm — not, granted, out of malice, but to save the world from itself and to assure that it runs the way Americans think it should.

The Indian has no complaint against the United States with respect to its own colonial peoples, and is duly grateful for the restrained moral support that President Franklin Roosevelt and the American people gave to the Indian independence movement. But he has a most unhealthy fascination of horror with the negro problem in the United States. It looms in his attention out of all proportion to reality. Communist propaganda is responsible for this in part, but it is also due to a neurotic hyper-sensitivity on the subject of racism.

This gives an emotional content to the principal Indian complaint against the United States in the field of international affairs: that in current issues involving Afro-Asian nationalist aspirations — especially in North Africa and Indo-China — she seems always to support the European colonial powers. Actually this support is more apparent than real, and is mainly a reflection of an over-riding need to keep European security alliances intact. But to the Indian, who is so emotionally involved and inclined to be reckless where any question of Afro-Asian nationalism is concerned, it appears as an endorsement of racial imperialism.

In a more unbalanced expression of this racial hypersensitivity, most Indians actually believe that the United States dropped the A-bomb on the Japanese rather than the Germans because she wanted to spare the white Europeans but did not care about killing Asians. This also, they

believe, is why the U.S. tests the H-bomb only in the Pacific, well away from the white man's world, but in callous disregard of the exposure of Asians to its perils. He thus sees in a seemingly greater inclination to fight the Red Chinese than the Russians a further confirmation of America's lower valuation of Asian lives. In the neurotic bitterness of these delusions, the Indian reading a news story of Americans suffering a military beating from Asians, as in the retreat from the Yalu, is apt to feel a secret sense of racial satisfaction.

As might be expected, the Communist make all the capital they can out of these racial passions. But they do not initiate them, nor are they necessarily equivalent to pro-Communism. In fact, they could persist long after Communism is dead.

In addition to these exaggerated fears of a fancied American imperialism and racism, India has another sharp bone of contention with American policy. In pursuing its anti-Communist collective security policies, the United States has recently extended arms aid to Pakistan as a means of bolstering the defenses of the strategic Middle East against possible Soviet aggression. No one can well question the wisdom of this move from a security point of view. But India has taken it ill indeed.

The British, as already indicated, were not the only conquerors of Hindu India. Some centuries before their advent, waves of Muslim invaders came out of the northwest and by conquest established dominion over the greater part of India for some hundreds of years. The invaders soon lost their racial identity in the great melting pot of India, but they stubbornly maintained the purity of their Islamic religion and way of life.

The Hindu culture and the Muslim are about as far apart as the poles. Not only have they mutually incompatible rituals, taboos, and totems, but their respective value systems are in basic conflict. The passivity and non-violence of the Hindu is incomprehensible and irritating to the self-asserting, aggressive Muslim who takes pride in the historic spread of Islam. The militancy and messianic character of Islam offends and disturbs the tolerance of the Hindu. The mystical self-effacement of the Hindu, and his nameless suffusion in caste and the commonalty of the rice-growing monsoon village, contrast with the Muslim's dogmatic worship of "the one and only true God," and the individualism of the desert nomad whose way of life Islam embodies. Although the two cultures have lived side by side for centuries, in fact surrounded by one another, they never mixed or drew closer together to any significant extent.

When in 1947 the Muslim and Hindu portions of the subcontinent were partitioned into separate nations, simultaneously with the achievement of independence, all the friction and animus that had been largely quiescent for centuries on both sides burst suddenly into a holocaust of violence that swept across the northern plain of India from Bengal to the Punjab and back. No one knows how many were slaughtered. The estimates run in the

neighborhood of half a million on each side. At the same time, in the hope of escaping the slaughter, some 15 million Hindus and Muslims abandoned their ancestral homes and sought refuge among their coreligionists, in one of the greatest mass migrations of history. To this day many of these homeless refugees cluster in crude huts throughout the subcontinent, barely subsisting, burdening the already strained economies, and keeping fresh the recent memory of atrocity and upheaval.

Thus the disputes over Kashmir and rights to the waters of the upper Indus tributaries, and all the other bones of current political contention, are really only the surface extrusions of a conflict far deeper and more impassioned than the immediate significance of these issues would suggest. It rises from the heritage of conquest, the friction of antagonistic values, and the fresh memories of recent violence — of stacks of corpses and mobs possessed of a killing frenzy, of tragic hordes of homeless refugees and scorched earth.

It would take a bold man indeed to attempt to assess blame or right or wrong in this complex history of Hindu-Muslim conflict. The important fact is that it exists and that each side conceives survival to be the stake. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Indians should suspect the motives of Pakistan in requesting American arms, and that they should construe the granting of them as aid to their natural enemy.

Finally, there is an uneasy feeling in India that the United States is reckless and unyielding in its dealings with the Communist powers, and that this could precipitate a major war. This feeling is partly attributable to the fact that the strategic defensive lines drawn by the United States against the Communist powers lie largely in geographic sectors where India feels no direct threat to her own security. But it evokes all the Indian's fears of the effects of a war on her own internal stability, fears which she rationalizes and articulates in the moral terms of pacifism.

Thus the Indian attitude toward the West generally, and the United States in particular, is a complex and often ambivalent mixture of respect for Western democratic values and technologies, with exaggerated fears of a renaissance of racial imperialism, anger over aid to the Muslim enemy, and general disapproval couched in moral terms but rooted in divergent concepts of strategic self-interest.

The roots of India's isolationism have already been described — her preoccupation with internal problems and related fear of war, and her determination to be free of any hint of Western control or coercion. But whether the individual Indian likes it or not, international events have forced themselves on his attention. However, they are not the same events that have most concerned Americans, whose education as to real nature of Soviet — and later Chinese — Communism was acquired rather slowly over the late 1940's. Some of the landmarks in that process were the Iranian crisis of 1946, the fall of Czechoslovakia in 1948, the Berlin blockade and

the spy trials, and finally the North Korean attack in 1950. During those years the Indian people were preoccupied almost exclusively with their own troubles — the freedom struggle, the Hindu-Muslim rioting and population upheavals, the threat of war with Pakistan, widespread crop failures, and a thousand other problems that attended independence and Partition. When the Korean conflict began, the Indian attitude toward international Communism was at about the same stage of development as the American attitude just after World War II. It still has not caught up.

Not only were the Indians distracted during this early phase of the Cold War when the Soviet Union was the principal protagonist of international Communism, but they are almost totally unfamiliar with Russians as individuals, and for geographic reasons see no threat to their own security from the continental power of the USSR. Moscow is a world away from New Delhi, separated by deserts, the Pamirs, and intervening nations. The threat the Indians see on their northwest frontier is not the Red army, but the Pakistani.

But as the Cold War began to intensify in Asia, India was compelled reluctantly to take cognizance of it. Even in this closer theater, though, she has seen little threat to her own security from Red Chinese expansion toward Korea and Formosa, or even along the eastern coast of Indo-China. Moreover, the anti-imperialist aspect of the Chinese Communist movement attracts positive Indian sympathy. Although the Indians firmly reject Communism as an ideology for their own nation, they look upon the Red Chinese as fellow Asians, and have great compassion for their efforts to expel Western influence and crush the remnants of colonialism in Asia.

On the other hand, while the Indian fully espouses the democratic political doctrines of the West, he sees that doctrine espoused in Asia by the soldiers of the white powers who symbolize in his mind the imperialism of yester-year from which he has so recently won his independence. Those Asian elements whose survival depends on the support they can elicit from the West — like Syngman Rhee, Chiang Kai-shek, and Bao Dai — the Indian thinks of as toadies of the West and representatives of feudalism and Oriental plutocracy. Thus the rationalism of his espousal of democracy and opposition to Communism is offset by the emotionalism of racial sensitivity and anti-imperialism. The net result is a genuine neutralism of mind as to the broad issues of the Cold War.

But there is a military threat pressing in on India from Red China that is not remote and that involves no question of Western imperialism. It is a new and unfamiliar peril, for never before has Chinese power directly confronted India or impinged on her vital interests. The Red Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950 brought Indian and Chinese military forces face to face in the passes of the Himalayas. True, China had for several hundred years exercised a loose suzerainty over Tibet. But it was a very tenuous and remote relationship of only little concern to the British master and no con-

cern at all to the Indian subject. But this time it is different. The Chinese Communists invaded Tibet in force and took over the country lock, stock, and barrel. Today Indian and Chinese soldiers face each other at innumerable border posts all the way from Ladakh, the "Little Tibet" of Kashmir, down along the Nepal Himalaya to Sikkim and Bhutan, and on around the remote sweep of Assam. The Indians watch nervously as the Chinese build roads and airfields adjacent to the frontier, and as they develop the fertile Chumbi valley pointing like a finger toward the Bengal plain. The Chinese have broadcast claims of jurisdiction over Nepal, an Indian protectorate, on the basis of an earlier vassalage to the Manchu Empire, and have published official maps showing substantial chunks in Indian and Nepalese territory as Chinese.

Fortunately for India, the Himalayan barrier that forms the Indo-Tibetan frontier is, while far from impenetrable, certainly a formidable one. Chinese communications in Tibet, in spite of the road-building program, are still very difficult. Red China's immediate motive is seizing Tibet appears to have been to assert Chinese imperial and nationalistic claims and to extend its control to the feasible maximum. Thus the threat to India, while ominous, seems not to be an imminent one.

Nevertheless, the Indian leadership has been profoundly disturbed over the development. India's efforts to bolster defenses along her northern frontier and to strengthen border controls bear witness to the nervousness produced. Her efforts — sometimes clumsy and heavy-handed — to eliminate the political instability and power vacuum in Nepal and her other march states along the Tibetan border are also products of this fear.

India would fight to resist a Chinese advance across the Himalayas, whether against her own territory or that of her border states such as Nepal, but only as a last resort. In her preoccupation with internal problems and other fears, she will go to extreme lengths to avoid a conflict that would in her view spell disaster regardless of the outcome. Meanwhile, she is compelled to accept the fact of the Red Chinese conquest of Tibet, and seeks with soothing words to calm the purring panther on the window ledge.

But Tibet is not the only point of impingement of Indian and Chinese interests. India has not been deeply concerned over Red Chinese encroachment on Vietnam, for Vietnam has always had cultural affinities with the Chinese, despite resentment on the part of the Vietnamese against Chinese political influence. In fact, India has tended to view the conflict there exclusively in an anti-imperialist context. But Laos and Cambodia, the inland states of Indo-China, are different. Their cultures, as well as that of Thailand, are of Indian origin. Hindu India, from time immemorial, has always faced east, a fact until recently obscured by the overlay of European domination of the area. Its cultural zone surrounds the Bay of Bengal and abuts upon the Chinese in the hills of northern Burma and along the eastern frontiers of Laos and Cambodia. The Communist successes in Vietnam

have brought this geo-cultural fact forcefully to the attention of the Indian leaders.

But even more compelling than this realization of common cultural bonds is the threat to India's territorial security posed by a possible Chinese encroachment into the littoral area of the Bay of Bengal. The full impact of this new peril has been most keenly felt by Burma, whose leaders have expressed their alarm to India, to whom they naturally look for aid.

India is reported to have warned the Indo-Chinese Communists not to encroach on Laos and Cambodia, but she continues to count mainly on sweet and soothing words. One must read between and beneath the honeyed phrases to catch the undertone of apprehension and distrust.

India's hopes of appeasement are obviously unrealistic, but it must be borne in mind that the line of direct Sino-Indian contact is only in the process of being established. It is taut in the Tibetan sector and somewhat more slack in Southeast Asia. India would not be likely to fight for Laos and Cambodia, or even for Thailand, though a Communist advance there could be surely counted on to strain relations near to the breaking point. But if Burma were attacked, she would almost surely fight.

Yet India is so stubbornly determined to keep the West out of Asia at all costs that she may be expected to react to this developing threat to her security in her own way and under her own power, turning to the West for aid only as an extreme last resort, if at all. For the present, she not only adamantly refuses to join a collective defense organization, like SEATO, which depends on the West for its military teeth, but sharply condemns such alliances as gratuitous and objectionable Western interference in Asian affairs.

All this adds up to a horned dilemma for Americans, who are aware of the magnitude and immediacy of the Communist menace, yet sympathetic with Afro-Asian nationalist aspirations. No American in his right mind would suggest that his country's security be jeopardized one iota merely for the sake of Afro-Asian sensitivities. Yet if those sensitivities are rubbed raw they could generate a bitterness that would drive the Afro-Asian peoples quixotically into the arms of the Communists. This could happen, as well, if the internal stability of the Afro-Asian nations were shaken by economic crisis or failure to achieve the progress that their peoples expect and demand. Even a world from which Communism had been exterminated would not be very pleasant if a new crop of bitterness were to grow in the place of the old one.

America's relations with India and the other Afro-Asian neutrals will be a test of its maturity as a great power. Patience, delicacy, and charity are required, and also steadiness in response to crisis and criticism. But above all sophistication is called for — a recognition that all do not see the world through the same eyes — and a tolerance and respect for the divergent views.