



PANCHSHEEL - PRINCIPLES & NATIONAL INTERESTS IN FOREIGN POLICY

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Rival claimants to paternity

- ‘...at his meeting with an Indian delegation [on 31 Dec 1953] ...Premier Zhou proposed for the first time the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.’ [Han Nianlong (Chief Ed.), *Diplomacy of Contemporary China*.
- Kaul: Acknowledges that Zhou had spelled out the Five Principles on the eve of the Tibet talks but asserts Zhou “had been echoing the thoughts of Nehru which had been conveyed to him by Panikkar and me, adding only the phrase ‘mutual non-aggression’”... “The credit for formulating and popularising the Five Principles goes to Nehru, if any one person can claim it.”
- Nehru: “Peaceful coexistence is not a new idea for us in India...About 2,200 years ago, a great son of India, Ashoka, proclaimed it and inscribed it on rock and stone....” [L.S. Sep 17, 1955]
- Panikkar suggested baptism of Five Principles as Pancha Shila

DNA test confirms Chinese paternity

- Art 56 of CPC Common Programme (1949) prescribed “equality, mutual benefit and mutual respect for sovereign territory” as basic principles for establishing diplomatic ties. Zhou’s letter of 2 Oct 1949 to Nehru proposed establishing diplomatic ties on basis of these principles. (Thus principles not product of Panikkar-Kaul evangelism.)
- PRC insisted establishment of diplomatic ties must be negotiated, taking India by surprise – 3 principles not mere literary adornment but a sort of Chinese Hallstein Doctrine.
- “Mutual non-aggression” and “peaceful coexistence” added by Zhou in 1953 as part of China’s new diplomacy in wake of Korean War and US containment strategy. Zhou outlined new diplomatic strategy to senior officials on 5 June : Korea proved war not inevitable - China needed respite from war to build up strength – contradictions between US and the two “intermediate zones; economic reconstruction primary aim of western Europe, needs access to Chinese market - and image makeover - “US war threats will widen the gap between between the US and the West European countries and cause most of the nations in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa to keep their distance from America.”
- ‘Peaceful coexistence’ to drive a wedge between US and the two “intermediate zones”.
- Parallel debate on ‘peaceful coexistence’ in Soviet Union

Panchsheel & Tibet negotiations - 1

- Boundary not on agenda but both sides acutely conscious of issue - Internal debate in both countries – internal debates in India (Bajpai) and China (Zhang).
- *‘According to Indian documents, they emphasise that “India and China have no territorial disputes”. (Nehru, the Indian politician, also stated so during his speech in the Upper House of the Parliament). This is where the plot of India lies. Today, India occupies Dawang (Tawang) Region according to the 1914 Simla Accord. However, it claimed the absence of disputes just to force us into implicitly acknowledging and legitimising their occupation.’ (Gen Zhang Jingwu, Oct 21, 1953) [Gen Zhang proposed China should denounce Simla Agreement and call upon India to ‘withdraw from Tawang and Lower Luoyu.’]*
- Boundary concerns reflected in Chinese formulations on border trade passes and Indian position on Five Principles

Panchsheel & Tibet Negotiations - 2

- Chinese proposal: Joint communique/press release on Five Principles, parallel to Tibet agreement. [Aim: focus on 'peaceful coexistence' as general code of conduct, not just bilateral context]
- Indian proposal: Incorporate principles as an operative article in Tibet agreement [Aim: focus on applicability to territorial integrity / boundary.]
- Compromise: Five Principles incorporated in Tibet agreement but only in preamble
- No exaggerated expectations. Kaul's preliminary report & Nehru's instructions re border check posts.
- "No country can trust another country...it is a question of our following a policy which makes it more and more dangerous for the other country to break trust. "[JN in Lok Sabha, 29/9/1954.]

Evolution of Indian position (1954-55)

- Panchsheel and border – Tibet Agreement
- ' Buttressing non-alignment & 'zone of peace in wake of Pak accession to US-led military pacts - 'peaceful co-existence'- Nehru's concern over Burma and Laos
- Indo-China – Nehru's instructions to Raghavan on eve of Geneva Conference
- Sino-Indian joint communique during Zhou's visit in June 1954 widens context of Panchsheel from bilateral to universal level.
- Bringing Burma on board – “You said... that it was difficult to rely upon any assurances that might be given by the Chinese Government. I agree that there is some force in that...It is not really a question of placing implicit reliance in the word of a government, but rather of judging circumstances and taking action accordingly... In the present circumstances, I think it is to the advantage of the Chinese Government to be friendly to India, Burma and Indonesia.” [Nehru to U Nu, 1954]
- Panchsheel and non-interference in internal affairs – Indo-Soviet joint statement, June 1955 – enunciated the Five Principles as basis for Indo-Soviet relations - 'Non-interference in each other's internal affairs for any reasons of an economic, political or ideological character'.

Bandung – the invisible US hand

- Contrary to popular belief, Bandung Principles did NOT incorporate Panchsheel. Differences bridged by ambiguity - 'Peaceful Coexistence' replaced by 'live together in peace'; right of collective defence endorsed albeit in terms of UN Charter – Panchsheel only partly effective in expanding 'zone of peace'
- Under US inspiration (SEATO meeting in Feb 1955), its regional allies launched coordinated assault on 'Peaceful Coexistence as communist-inspired slogan.
- Compromise proposed by Zhou – 'live together in peace' – lifted from UN Charter
- Despite many similarities, Indian and Chinese interests not congruent – China could not object to collective defence; it also wanted to cultivate US allies in order to forestall possible US-led economic boycott. Zhou went out of his way to cultivate US allies like Pakistan, and even Thailand and Philippines which recognised ROC.

China and Five Principles (1954-57)

- TIBET AGREEMENT
- GENEVA CONFERENCE: Zhou advocates 5 Principles for Asia (on May 12 -within fortnight of Tibet agreement) – Cites agreement as evidence of China’s peaceful intentions (talk with Eden, May 14) – Zhou’s correct reading of differences in US camp.
- BILATERAL: 5 Principles & ties with India, Burma, Indonesia, Cambodia
- No obstacle to better ties with US allies Pak, Thailand, Philippines.
- INTER-SOCIALIST BLOC -1956 (Poland, Hungary) : Soviet declaration of Oct 30 affirms applicability of principles to relations between socialist states – China hails declaration on Nov 1 – reverses its position when Hungary says it will quit bloc; Beijing calls on Moscow to “suppress the counter-revolutionary armed rebellion”
- China endorses Soviet 1956 line but reverses stand in 1957 and informs CPSU that it no longer supports “peaceful coexistence”. – Détente vs. socialist solidarity and mutual defence treaty.

Recession

- Panchsheel largely dormant after 1958 in both East-West and India-China contexts
- Taiwan Strait crisis (1958)
- Bloody clash on India-China border (Oct 21, 1959) – Dalai Lama’s flight to India.
- Beginning of Sino-Soviet rift – divergent interpretations of “peaceful coexistence”.
- Zhou’s proposal of Sep 11, 1969 to Kosygin in wake of Ussuri clash– maintain state-to-state relations on basis of Five Principles, even though ‘proletarian internationalism’ no longer applicable to (social-imperialist) USSR - Ignored by Soviets.

Full Circle – a dramatic revival in 1972

- Full circle: originally conceived as a diplomatic tool to counter US in Asia, Five Principles now employed for normalising Sino-US ties.
- “ ...the two sides agreed that countries, regardless of their social systems, should conduct their relations on the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, non-aggression against other states, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence....the United States and the People’s Republic of China are prepared to apply these principles to their mutual relations.” [US-China Shanghai Communique, 1972]
- Basis of progress towards resolution of Taiwan question and **progressive** normalisation of Sino-US relations – PROSPECTIVE application – Chinese flexibility (US arms supplies to Taiwan)

Panchsheel in India-China relations – Part II

- Panchsheel revived in joint communique issued on Rajiv Gandhi's visit (1988), following agreement to delink border question from other issues
- Celebration of anniversaries – 60th anniversary – India represented at V-P level – contrast with China and Myanmar
- Panchsheel today arouses neither enthusiastic support nor bitter criticism, unlike in earlier years – Periodic reiteration jointly with China when border areas free from tension.
- PM Modi's alliterative 'new Panchsheel' – Aim unclear: simply an alliterative flourish or proposal for replacement? Does it give the 'old' Panchsheel a decent burial or will the old and new co-exist?

Conclusions

- 'Panchsheel' rooted in transient national interests; not Indian philosophy.
- It originated in mid-1950s, when for a few years, Indian and Chinese interests converged substantially, in wake of new US policy of 'containment', including induction of Pakistan in military pacts.
- It contributed to consolidating non-alignment/'zone of peace' in Burma [Myanmar]', Laos and Cambodia.
- Nehru was NOT 'fooled' by China. He had a realistic assessment of its limitations.
- Panchsheel invoked in periods of relative peace and tranquility in border areas.
- General point: Need to better understand how China employs 'principles' as part of its negotiating style.