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Bureaucratic-organizational Politics and Information Processing in a Developing State

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This article argues that the bureaucratic-organizational paradigms can be usefully applied to the understanding of information processing in the decisionmaking context of developing states. Using the Sino-Indian border dispute of 1959–1962 as a case study, the author shows that various dimensions of inter-organizational relations, intra-group dynamics and the small group-organization nexus explain the emergent preference, within the decisionmaking group, for a specific interpretation of situations and the degree of openness to dissonant information regarding those situations. The article concludes by drawing some general conclusions with regard to bureaucratic-organizational politics in general and in a Third World context in particular.

Among the cases of decisionmakers' neglect to pay attention to early warning and the consequent military surprise, the 1962 Chinese invasion of India is one of the most outstanding in current history. Strangely enough, while other cases, such as Pearl Harbor, or Barbarossa, or the Chinese intervention in Korea were heavily scrutinized in the literature, this case has attracted relatively little systematic attention and analysis.

Moreover, few systematic approaches to the analysis of foreign policy behavior gained more attention in the last decade than the bureaucratic and organizational politics paradigms (Allison, 1969, 1971; Allison and Halperin, 1972; Halperin, 1974). Yet questions have been raised as to their applicability to developing countries (Migdal, 1974: 515–516; Caldwell, 1977: 94; Hill, 1978: 2–3; Smith, 1980: 31–32). At the same time little attention has been paid to the fact that the proponents of these paradigms have neglected to consider that one of the main 'battlefields' for competing views, perceptions and interests is the small group setting (Kellerman, 1983), where the participating bureaucratic and organizational actors actually play out their roles.

In this study I pursue the combined goals of explaining India's surprise at China's invasion in October 1962, elaborating on the process of group dynamics and its consequences for the outcomes of the 'hauling and pulling' which characterize bureaucratic and organization politics, and demonstrating the relevance and utility of

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the bureaucratic and organizational politics paradigms for understanding the behavior of a significant group of Third World countries, of which India is a typical case.

It would be inaccurate to lump Third World states together in a single category in which inclusion is defined by the absence of:

1. 'Interlocking fiefdoms within their bureaucracies which are autonomous and coherent enough to have sustained systematic and substantial effects on foreign policy.'
2. 'Regularized kinds of patterns and routines.'
3. 'Stability of structure or form in their organizational routines or bargaining processes' (Migdal, 1974: 515, 516, 519).

While many underdeveloped countries may indeed fit this category, there is a distinct class of states in the Third World which *do* have coherent bureaucracies acting in regularized patterns and routines. Consider, for instance, the cases of Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Pakistan, Argentina or Brazil. While each of these states may display marked differences from each other, they nevertheless share the common structural properties characteristic of well developed bureaucratic systems. As a Third World state sharing these characteristics, India is not therefore an atypical case, and much may be learned about bureaucratic-organizational politics and information processing in this class of developing states by considering the Indian case. Whether the existence of bureaucracies characterized by stability of structure and form emerged due to the colonial power's policies (e.g. India, Pakistan), maturity as an independent state (e.g. Argentina), or as the consequence of domestic stability and economic growth and development (e.g. Indonesia) is not important for our concerns. What is important is the fact that the bureaucratic structure in these states is similar to, though not exactly the same, as in the Western developed countries. We should also remember that the number of Third World countries which belong to this class is growing. The conclusions of this study, while drawn from the Indian case, may then be seen as providing the basis for some generalizations regarding the relevance of the bureaucratic and organizational politics approaches for understanding the decisionmaking context in the Third World.

The Theoretical Analysis

Information Processing Behavior

Information processing in its most comprehensive sense refers to the decisionmaker's searching out, accumulating, and interpreting information in order to cope with ignorance and uncertainty about the environment, thus providing a basis for better informed decisionmaking. Decisionmaking and information processing in foreign policy are usually not the affairs of one person only. These activities are sometimes undertaken by professional organizations, but often within the framework of a small group composed of Cabinet members, their advisers, and others. The question of import here is how the interaction among individuals in the uppermost group and the interaction between that group and other information processing organizations and individuals affect: (1) the search, selection and evaluation of information, (2) the degree of openness to dissonant information, and (3) processes of adaptation to the new incoming information.

These questions have particular significance for the quality of information processing in the context of foreign policymaking because of the complexity, uncertainty (George,

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1980: 26–28), and high stakes involved. In this context, opportunities and needs are created for manipulating information in the interest of reducing complexity, uncertainty and risk of failure, and in order to win or maintain the support of others deemed necessary for coping with the stress induced by these attributes of the foreign policy arena.

Every organization or group embodies a more or less coherent set of values, beliefs, behavioral ethos and myth which it develops in light of the functional demands and past experience it has. The older the group or organization, the more obvious and extensive these are. Together these form the decisionmaking culture of the group or organization, and provides the frame of reference that organizes and channels the cognitive process of each member of these institutions as an individual, creates the particular subculture of the group or organization which gives it a separate identity, serves as a source of the inventory of routine behaviors, and determines its relations with the broader social environment (Thompson and McEwen, 1969; Simon, 1976).

While this culture gives the individual a benchmark and sense of direction for coping with and understanding his complex environment, being a member of a *small group* contributes to shaping an individual's preferences for certain definitions of the situation. This stems from a set of calculations which have to do with the comparative cost-benefit effects of the information and its resultant consequences for the current definition of the situation on his position in the group, his acceptance by the group, the allocation of material and symbolic resources within the group, and intragroup cohesion and conflict.

Both sets of considerations are a source of parochialism and potential embarrassment for the group or organization. Members cannot afford to admit that their actions are motivated by bureaucratic routine and parochial thinking, that is, by their own narrow interests, partly because they are not conscious of if (Katz and Kahn, 1966: 66), but also out of fear that such an admission might leave the group or organization faced with a loss of authority or even possible dissolution. There are also moral reasons for refusing to admit bureaucratic parochialism. The purpose of a social organization is to serve the society that formed it and not its own or its members' parochial interest. When neither the organization nor individual members will admit to themselves the motives that determine their behavior, adjustment and adaptation cannot, of course, take place.

Information processing calculations concerned with intragroup relations are related to the basic attributes of any group or organization. First, the structure and stratification of the group or organization is based on a functional division of labor, which is also an expression of the formal distribution of power, and on the informal status stemming from factors such as the nature of interpersonal relations with the powerful individuals in the group. Relative position within the stratified structure determines the leeway each member of the group has to deviate from shared perceptions and attitudes (Hollander, 1965). On the other hand, higher status in the group encourages acceptance of the conventional wisdom, both because status enhances self-confidence and cognitive conservatism, and because other group members tend to be apprehensive of contradicting the status holder. Thus status has a 'dialectic' effect with regard to the effects of dissonant information and revision of the common wisdom by the status holder.

Second, the individual who is a member of a small decisionmaking group, such as the Cabinet, is usually at the same time a senior member or even chief of one or more organizations (holding a ministerial portfolio, a senior army man, etc.). This raises the question of the distinction between the peer group (the group to which the individual formally belongs at a given moment) and the reference group (that group to which the individual looks as a source of norms, judgment, evaluation, rules and basic

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conceptions). As such, the reference group determines the judgment rules and criteria which the individual uses and regards as right and proper for the evaluation of incoming information, rules and criteria which determine the degree of acceptance which any particular interpretation will enjoy (Kelley, 1965).

There is no problem as long as the peer and reference groups are congruent, either in terms of membership or in terms of having the same values, beliefs, and judgmental criteria. The difficulty arises when there is no such congruence, as when the reference group employs different criteria for judgment and evaluation than the peer group, resulting at times in different interpretations of the same information. And at times the peer group may dictate conformism to its beliefs despite the differing perspectives brought to the group by members from their respective reference groups. The policymaker may not always be happy with the conformism imposed on him, and might feel guilty for not representing properly the views and values he was supposed to uphold. To prevent such a situation from arising, he may take one of two courses of action: either to try and reach a tacit or explicit advance agreement with the group about a perceptual compromise which is normatively acceptable; or if he does not succeed in this, he might attempt to search for information and interpretations of that information which will support the peer group evaluation he has adopted. Thus, he can rationalize that his conformism was, in fact, a move towards overcoming parochialism, which again reduces the discomfort he may feel in recognizing the parochialism of the bureaucratic context.

Small Group Dynamics

As a result of the above, two types of situations are possible. In one, incoming information is perceived as lacking significance for the topics with which the particular member of the group is dealing. In these cases he will tend to accept the interpretation offered by the rest of the group or dictated by the chief policymaker. The other situation emerges when information is perceived to be relevant to issues preoccupying the policymaker in question. This latter situation may produce conflicting interpretations due to the different realms of interest.

When there is a clash between conflicting perceptions in the group, and if the different perceptions lead to *similar* operative conclusions, it is likely that the group will continue to maintain these conflicting perceptions without the need arising for a perceptual consensus. The *operative consensus*, which is the important one to the group, is achieved despite the dissimilarity of the particular situation evaluations of different group members.

On the other hand, when conflict between perceptions leads to *differing* operative conclusions, any one of the following may happen. The chief policymaker, if he has the power, may decide on the basis of his own preference. Alternatively, a majority may form in favor of one of the interpretations, and which *imposes* the decision on the minority. The decision is then accepted and internalized by the deviating member because his loyalty to the group legitimizes the acceptance of majority rule (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955: 629–630), and the recognition of the necessity to make sacrifices (such as conformity) is an important part of the group ethos (Schwarz, 1980: 158). But a third possibility also emerges when there is no way to decide between conflicting perceptions, and this stems from the balance of power within the decisionmaking group. The need to reach a decision demands some mutually-accepted perceptual basis for its formation. Consequently a compromise over the definition of the situation is imperative. Such a compromise will contain elements of the various competing interpretations.

Finally, a fourth probable outcome might involve *self-imposed* compliance, which is

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related to the widely-observed phenomenon of conformism encouraged by group dynamics. Compliance may take different forms depending on the motives behind it. A group member may comply with what seems to be the dominant perception in the group in order to win reward or avoid sanctions by the group leader or other members. In other cases the motive could be that the act of conforming gives the individual the satisfaction of identification with an admirable person—such as a charismatic leader. Another motive for conformism is present when dominant belief and perceptions in the group are in line with the individual's own value system, or when he regards conformism as a value in itself, preferring harmony and consensus to conflict. Conformism may thus stem from one or more of these motives (Kelman, 1958). However, pressure towards conformity does not necessarily imply uniformity of opinions on all policy positions (George, 1980: 92).

Another pattern of self-imposed compliance is the 'minority effect'. In this case the shift in position of the group is in the direction of the positions held by the minority (Nemmeth, 1982). This was found to be the case in situations when the minority managed to resist and hold out long enough against the pressures toward conformity, and proved consistent in its views and displayed confidence in them.

Additional consequences of having information processing performed in a small group setting are the 'risky shift' and 'polarization' phenomena. Small groups are sometimes inclined to take more risk than individuals under the same circumstances (Dion *et al.*, 1978). This could involve underestimating warning information and overestimating decisionmakers' coping and risk management capabilities.

A related phenomenon is that of polarization. It has been suggested that intragroup interaction enhances tendencies initially existing among the individuals of which the group is composed (Myers and Lamm, 1976). The significance of such accentuation in terms of beliefs, attitudes and action orientations is that a higher threshold of resistance to the penetration of dissonant information and a higher level of cognitive conservatism is maintained. Thus the search for information will be selectively directed toward confirming already existing interpretations and diverted away from disconfirming them.

Frequent interaction of group members, and the drive for conformity such interaction brings about, increase cognitive similarity among the members over time, which in turn gives rise to further interaction and thus creates a closed circle of interaction. The extreme situation of group conformity stemming from concurrence seeking is what Irving Janis termed 'groupthink', in which all the group members think like one (Janis, 1972; Von Bergen and Kirk, 1978; Moorhead, 1982).

The occurrence of groupthink depends on three factors. In the first place, a highly cohesive group or the desire for cohesion and personal acceptance and approval by group members is necessary (Steiner, 1982). Second, the group must be insulated from outside influences, which can often work to downgrade the value and credibility of information coming from outside sources as misleading and unreliable. Third, leadership practices must be assertive, which sometimes takes the form of encouraging dissonant views to be voiced only to be shot down.

Groupthink's main symptoms are over-optimism, collective attempts at rationalization, stereotypic thinking, intolerance to deviant opinions, and a shared sense of group consensus and the protection of the group from dissonant information (Janis, 1972: 197–206). The negative implications of these symptoms, both in terms of the accuracy of the perceptual framework adopted by the group, and of the possibility of its adjustment to reality, are self-evident.

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Finally, it should be noted that the type of policymakers with whom we are concerned in this study take pride in their appointments in an organization or group, and develop a sense of elitism which give special meaning and content to their role. They tend to see the future of the nation being in the hands of their decisionmaking group, and they identify the overall performance of the state with that of their particular group or themselves. This is why the individual's level of aspiration in relation to his group, or that of the group *in toto*, is of importance. The level of aspiration is defined as the level of *quality* of performance expected of the group or organization in the future (Zander, 1971: 180). This is measured in terms of the perceived success of the group's decisions and actions. The more an individual identifies himself with the group or organization, the more the level of aspiration will increase in importance. Organizational success thus becomes more closely connected with the individual's positive self-perception, and pressure is formed to assess retrospectively past actions in positive terms—even when it is questionable whether they were really successful. As a result, the impact of negative feedback, which is meant to allow the recognition of past mistakes and correct present perceptions and future expectations, is reduced.

The lack of feedback encourages a process of 'mutual back-slapping', which creates over-confidence and raises the threshold for the penetration of dissonant information which might disturb it. What we have in fact is a polarization effect (Myers and Lamm, 1976). Moreover, the more exaggerated the positive perception of the past performance, the more optimism as to the group's ability to succeed in the future is exaggerated. This (often baseless) optimism encourages the dismissal of warning information indicating potential danger, threats and difficulties for particular policies, often with disastrous consequences.

Factional Politics

A distinctive type of small group is the faction. The phenomenon is unique enough to call for special theoretical attention. It is also so common in the bureaucratic and political structures of developing societies that it deserves mentioning in the context of this study's concerns.

A faction is a temporary alignment of individuals which constitutes a fragment of a larger entity, group or organization, whose members think and act collectively. This coalition serves the participants' instrumental interests and/or values and beliefs. Unlike the organization, it usually does not have a formally structured hierarchy and set of rules; these are often fuzzy and tacit in the faction, although they may become formalized over time.

Four factors affect the emergence of factions. First, when members in the decision-making group conform (for one reason or another) to a shared set of basic beliefs and values, they create a common frame of reference for viewing and interpreting information inputs and appropriate responses to them. Second, one or more of this emerging faction's members must provide strong leadership which binds together differing personal interests by providing payoffs, such as material resources, power, prestige, positions and so on, to all faction members. Third, there must be continuity in membership and interaction, which contributes to cohesion in the relationship between the members and the core leadership, on the one hand, and among the members themselves, on the other. Finally, members' perceptions of a real or imagined threat to their position or power must be met successfully by recourse to collective power resources of the faction and its leader. This conviction provides a sense of security to the members and thus enhances loyalties to the faction, which in turn dampens intrafactional rivalries

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(Lasswell, 1931; Nicholas, 1965; 1966; Rastogi, 1975: 3–15; Belloni and Beller, 1976; Pye, 1981: 6–21). What factions are and why they exist affects decisively what factions do.

A faction, then, is less structured than an organization, but more uniform and cohesive than the original group, and thus has more unity of interests and action and a pervasive influence in group affairs. Factional interests overshadow the particular interests of the various organizations which are represented by faction members. While this may seem a blessing because it diminishes parochial organizational interests, this is not necessarily the case, since what replaces organizational parochialism is factional parochialism. Furthermore, the nature of factions reduces debates and discussions within the small group.

The constriction of debate and discussion within the group is due to the unique character of the factional situation. First, part of the individual views which might have been expressed tend to be swallowed in the collective views of the faction. Second, because the faction operates as a collective, it has recourse to power resources enabling it to impose its views on group members without the give and take that goes on in a group, where power is distributed more evenly. Third, because many group members are able to share the task of searching out and communicating information in support of factional positions, the likelihood that supportive information will submerge dissonant information is enhanced (Stasser *et al.*, 1980: 436). Thus, factions enhance conformism in evaluation of information, introduce a higher level of instrumentality in interpreting it, and accentuate conservatism in the approach to dissonant information. The probability of groupthink in a faction is therefore more prevalent than in a group or organization.

The power a faction wields can be counterbalanced only by a rival faction. The emergence of a rival faction depends primarily on the availability of leadership resources, the absence of which precludes the emergence of an effective faction. Without a rival, the arena will be dominated by a powerful faction whose conceptions go unchallenged by a potent competitor.

The Case Study

The Issue

One of the most prominent characteristics of the 1959–62 phase of the Sino-Indian conflict, and one that was particularly reflected in the events that took place between 8 September and 20 October 1962, was the inadequate processing of information by Indian decisionmakers.[1] This is evident from their total surprise at the Chinese invasion of 20 October. Since the early stages of the Sino-Indian border conflict's development, Indian leaders had an unswerving faith in a low probability of war. Jawaharlal Nehru reflected this faith when he stated in Parliament, 'I do not expect, and I do not want the House to imagine, that something very serious is going to happen on our frontiers. I do not at all expect that to happen' (PMIP, Part I: 112). Later, however, he declared pathetically, 'We were living in an artificial atmosphere of our own creation', thereby recognizing the Indian leadership's failure to see what should have been obvious. Indeed, a confidential armed services report by Lieutenant General Henderson-Brooks, which examined the background to the October defeat, maintained that 'There is no doubt that a major overhauling of the intelligence system is required' (cited by Nayar, 1969: 226) as it had failed to appropriately handle available information.

It is clear that Indian decisionmakers did not lack relevant information indicating China's intense hostility toward India's 1961–62 military actions in the border regions.

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A letter presented to the Indian embassy in China on 10 October 1962 contained the following warning:

> The Chinese Government warns the Indian Government: If the Indian side does not immediately stop its armed attacks and withdraw from the Che Dong area but keeps on creating new incidents of bloodshed the Chinese side will surely act resolutely in self-defense and the Indian Government must bear full responsibility for all the consequences (W.P., vol. 7: 105).

In addition, articles in the Chinese press (e.g., *Peking Review* and the *Renmin Ribao*) became increasingly bellicose.[2]

In May 1962 the Intelligence Bureau concluded, on the basis of a document circulated by the Chinese consulate in Calcutta that had come into its possession, that there was a possibility of a military attack in the fall (Mullik, 1971: 330). China's military preparations were openly demonstrated; nor was any effort made to intercept Indian reconnaissance planes overflying Chinese military positions in Tibet (Dalvi, 1969: 153–154). Senior Indian officers in both the Western and Eastern sectors warned Delhi that a continuation of its 'Forward Policy' on the northern border would risk a military confrontation detrimental to India (Dalvi, 1969: 193; Maxwell, 1972: 271–272).

As early as May 1962, China began to use the same terminology it had used before its entry into the Korean War (Whiting, 1972: 58).[3] On 28 September, a mass gathering for the funeral of five Chinese soldiers killed in a border skirmish was broadcast on the All-China radio. A resolution adopted at that assemblage contributed to preparing the Chinese public for the possibility of large-scale warfare with India (Whiting, 1975: 105). Still, the Indian government paid no attention.

Following the crossing of the Thagla ridge in the eastern sector by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) on 8 September 1962, Defense Minister V. K. Krishna Menon, the central decisionmaker during Nehru's absence overseas, convened *daily* meetings at the Defense Ministry. Representatives of the military, the Intelligence Bureau and the Ministry of External Affairs conducted an intensive search for up-to-date information. Until that time, such meetings were not customary. Surprisingly, however, the option of taking military action against the Chinese was chosen almost immediately, without other alternatives being seriously considered or examined, as the director of the Intelligence Bureau, B. N. Mullik, recalled in his memoirs (Mullik, 1971: 341).

Moreover, when it became clear (on 10 October) to one of the main figures in the affair, Lieutenant General B. M. Kaul, Commander of the 4th Corps, that the 'Leghorn' operation, designed to force the Chinese to surrender the small pocket in the Eastern sector seized by them in early September, was impractical, he presented Delhi with alternatives. Nehru agreed to leave it to Kaul to decide on the exact date for carrying out 'Leghorn', but no permission was given for Kaul to retreat to more defensible positions should the need arise. He was directed by Nehru (who was due to leave for Ceylon the next day) not to retreat under any circumstances; and in the worst case he was to continue to hold a line of posts that was illogical from a strategic point of view (Kaul, 1967: 388; Dalvi, 1969: 285).

Two points here are noteworthy. First, despite Kaul's strong conviction, he did not take a firm stand on his suggestion to retreat as he should have, for reasons that will be made clear shortly. Second, the atmosphere at the meetings was one of resistance to the adoption of any new policy. And though other alternatives were formally discussed, reasons for adhering to the existing policy were sought—and found (Kaul, 1967:

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385–386; Mullik, 1971: 363). This self-deception on the part of the policymakers gave them a false sense of security in that they believed they had seriously considered—and disposed of—other alternatives.

The relative strength of the Indian and Chinese armies, the intentions of Beijing's leadership, and the alternatives for action that were at India's disposal all seemed to suggest the existence of information pointing to the need for a new evaluation of the situation, but no such reassessment was made. Indian decisionmakers preferred adherence to their outdated perceptions and evaluations over a painful and realistic reevaluation of the situation (Dalvi, 1969: 192–193; Mullik, 1971: 348–349; Maxwell, 1972: 271–272, 329–336; Subrahmanyam, 1976). One of the main sources of that grim state of affairs lies in the bureaucratic-organizational realm, as we shall see.

Civil–Military Relations

Analyzing the patterns of the relationships and interactions of leading personalities involved in the Indian China policy on the organizational and personal levels requires that we consider them in terms of their roles as politicians, bureaucrats, or military personnel, with a distinction being made within the last category between headquarters personnel and field commanders (see Appendix).

One of the major facts which emerges is the mutual distrust and even contempt between top civilians (politicians and bureaucrats) on the one hand, and the military, on the other. Where Nehru is concerned, it is difficult to speak of any contempt given his unique status in Indian politics. But there is no doubt that amongst the military leaders there was a certain degree of mistrust even towards him, or at least a feeling that he did not fully understand the needs of the armed forces and tended to identify with the civilian position on defense and strategy. This feeling was probably more pervasive after 1957 when Krishna Menon, an intimate of Nehru's, was appointed Minister of Defense.

Menon had a very inflated sense of his own intellectual superiority, and saw himself as no less capable of running the army than any general (Rosenthal, 1957; George, 1964: 233). He treated officers as though they were office boys, often with condescension and crudeness (see, for example, Kaul, 1967: 207). Only a very few dared to respond to his insults and sharp tongue. Moreover, to control the army and further his own personal ambitions, he sought to reduce the influence of General K. S. Thimayya, who was then Chief of Army Staff (C.O.A.S.). Menon did not hesitate to sow the seeds of friction in the ranks and the high command by publicly humiliating officers he disliked and did not want to promote. Nor did he hesitate to play junior officers against their seniors, and often ignored recommendations of the three services chiefs in the area of promotions and even military matters.

The most striking example of this was in May 1959 when B. M. Kaul was made a Lieutenant-General and appointed Army Quartermaster-General against Thimayya's recommendation. Kaul's post was a stepping-stone to the highest position in the Indian army and guaranteed him a voice on the Appointments Committee. Kaul was a distant relation of Nehru, a Kashmiri Brahmin, graduate of Sandhurst, energetic, intelligent, impressive in appearance, and in the past had displayed physical bravery that had brought him into the limelight (Kaul, 1967: 160–169). But he had a rather limited experience in commanding troops in battle. On the other hand, he excelled in his own public relations, and in the formative years of the State had become quite close to Nehru. Kaul's qualities convinced Nehru that he was a brilliant army man while blinding him to Kaul's faults. It was no wonder then that Menon supported this appointment despite the strong objection of the high command; the combination of Kaul's being Nehru's

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protege, his administrative abilities and, not least, his disfavor with the high command, provided Menon with the best reasons for appointing Kaul to the third ranking position in the Army.

It was against the background of these relationship patterns that a severe crisis of confidence emerged between the chiefs of the three services and the minister. The military chiefs, headed by the most senior and prestigious among them, General Thimayya, decided to force Nehru to take sides, and on 31 August 1959 General Thimayya submitted his resignation. This came at a very inconvenient time for Nehru as the opposition was attacking Menon for not doing enough for the defense of India. Nehru pressured Thimayya into taking back his letter of resignation. When the news leaked out to the press the following day, there was a public uproar, but Nehru handled it coolly. He indirectly blamed Thimayya for the affair while praising Menon, but had at the same time committed himself publicly to keep his eye personally on the Ministry of Defense (*Times of India*, 3 September 1959). This affair increased Nehru's tendency to perceive military officers as hostile to his policies and to depend more and more on Menon and his group of proteges. And it suggested to the military that it did not pay to raise professional objections to the civilian handling of military matters (Maxwell, 1972: 201).

These trends continued when, with the end of Thimayya's term of office early in 1961, Lieutenant-General P. N. Thapar was appointed as C.O.A.S. against Thimayya's recommendation that his successor be Lt.-General S. P. Thorat. General Thapar was appointed thanks to the support of Menon and Kaul, which, of course, indebted him to them. He immediately responded by appointing Lieutenant-General Kaul to the post of Chief of General Staff (C.G.S.), despite his lack of qualifications for the job. These appointments aroused much resentment in military circles and in Parliament, which was muffled only thanks to Nehru's strong personal support of them.[4] Kaul and Menon now had a C.O.A.S. after their own hearts.

As part of his duties as C.G.S., Kaul was in charge of coordination, planning, operations, training, intelligence and weapons acquisition. Both the Director of Military Intelligence and the Director of Military Operations were under him. This made his job one of the key positions in the Indian army, and him a key figure in the information processing apparatus. Kaul immediately set about appointing those loyal to him to key posts in Army Headquarters. At the same time, Kaul and Menon made it clear that criticism would be severely disciplined. As a result, criticism in top military circles was muted (Maxwell, 1972: 205–206).

This caused a crisis of confidence and growing mistrust between the professional military and the civilians. Officers in senior army posts were replaced either with those whose loyalties were tied to the senior politicians and bureaucrats in the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Prime Minister's Office, or by officers who did not dare to stand up for their convictions. In his time, General Thimayya had had no hesitation about confronting the Minister of Defense and the bureaucrats of the Ministry. When his objections were rejected because of the civilians' lack of understanding of the military situation, he sometimes ignored instructions in cases where he felt they were potentially disastrous.[5] Thus, the difference in the behavior of Army Headquarters during Thimayya's term and afterwards was very noticeable.

This difference has special significance in view of the fact that Nehru tended to accept the evaluations presented to him by the civilian echelons, even concerning differences of opinion pertaining to *strictly military* matters. When in October 1962 Thapar (not too forcefully) tried to convince Nehru that the army could not carry out Operation

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Leghorn (see p. 76), Nehru rejected the claim by arguing that he had information that indicated that the Chinese would not strike back. And the sources of this information were none other than Krishna Menon, the Defense Minister, H. C. Sarin, the Joint Secretary in the Defense Ministry, B. N. Mullik, the Director of the Intelligence Bureau, and the senior officialdom of the MEA (Kaul, 1971: 292; Hoffmann, 1971: 651).

The majority of senior staff officers therefore ceased to take into account the real military situation, and insisted on their own optimistic evaluations, creating a deepening rift between them and senior field officers (Saigal, 1979: 21). The field officers felt that their men were needlessly being turned into cannon fodder because of headquarters' unwillingness to challenge the civilian echelon, while in Thimayya's time they had at least believed that Army Headquarters in New Delhi understood their plight and fought their battles. Some field commanders tried to circumvent this problem by making sensible but tough logistic demands to prevent the implementation of what they viewed as a disastrous policy. This strategy was then adopted by Lt.-General Umrao Singh (Commander, 33rd Corps) to avoid carrying out Operation Leghorn (Dalvi, 1969: 86, 258–259). These demands were, however, rejected by General Thapar and Lt.-General Sen (G.O.C.-in-Chief, Eastern Command), who remembered the fate and humiliation suffered by other officers who had clashed with the civilians. Thapar and Sen were also attentive to the clamor of public criticism, which claimed that the army had lost its fighting spirit after the long period of quiet (Maxwell, 1972: 347).

The field command, then, tried to delay for as long as possible the execution of what seemed like irrational orders. The result was that the civilian echelon in New Delhi was ignorant of the actual situation and the non-application, indeed inapplicability, of its orders and instructions. Moreover, from the time it became clear to Thapar and Sen that there was no chance of changing the strategy dictated by the politicians without posing a direct challenge they were unwilling to entertain, the reservations, detailed estimates and pessimistic evaluations of the field officers were not brought to the knowledge of the civilian ranks. It seems that some of these were not even brought by the commander of the eastern sector to the attention of Headquarters in New Delhi. Against this background, Kaul was understandably surprised when, at the beginning of October 1962, he took command of the 4th Corps and realized that the situation in the area with regard to the positioning of Indian troops was quite different from that which Lt.-General Sen had reported to him only a few days earlier (Kaul, 1967: 370).

This unawareness also explains to some degree Nehru's peculiar declaration of 12 October 1962, which referred to the Indian army's intention of ousting the Chinese from Indian territory, when only one day before that he had allowed Kaul to postpone Operation Leghorn for as long as he felt necessary. Yet it seems that he was also optimistic, in spite of the new information from Kaul which contradicted his prior evaluations, as Nehru had no comprehensive first-hand knowledge of the area and the military limitations involved.

The Ignorance of Intelligence

The communications difficulties between the military and civilian echelon had its sources in historical, ideological and political developments (Khera, 1968: 75). Historically, the British did not allow the Indian intelligentsia to acquire experience in the management of strategic-military and intelligence affairs. Thus, with Britain's departure, the leaders of India were left with the burden of maintaining India's security without the necessary skills and knowledge. Ideologically, there was a Gandhian legacy of deeply-ingrained ethical abhorrence of the military. Politically, Nehru suspected the

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military of opposing the policy of non-alignment, and the possibility of military intervention in politics was not considered too far-fetched (Cohen, 1971a; 1971b).

Because of the contemptuous attitude toward military and intelligence matters, the development of military science in India was much neglected. Until the 1962 crisis, there was not a single civilian institute dealing with or teaching such subjects or able to contribute to a constructive public debate, especially since, for reasons that will be discussed later, neither Parliament nor the Indian press could freely and actively participate in such a discussion.[6] Under such conditions it is no wonder that neither the politicians nor the bureaucrats in the Prime Minister's Office, the MEA or the Defense Ministry saw, or (if they did see) understood, the military significance of the Forward Policy. Because they regarded the Forward Policy as basically a political-diplomatic move, they tended to treat warnings by the military as a sign of its reluctance to make an effort, or as an excuse to evade its duty in following the policy (Maxwell, 1972: 212–213). Thus the army's demand to deploy and concentrate available military forces on the likely three axes of invasion was ignored, and the politicians' demand to distribute the forces along the McMahon Line was given preference so that Nehru would be able to claim in Parliament that the army was positioned all along the McMahon Line. As a result, air force headquarters was also under pressure to exaggerate its ability to provide the necessary logistic aid to the force thus spread out.

It is little wonder then that the definition of the situation presented by the civilian Intelligence Bureau was given priority over that of military intelligence. The Intelligence Bureau was perceived to be the one body whose loyalty could be relied upon, as it was the 'watchdog' of Indian democracy against the danger of a military coup. Understandably, the military intelligence service slowly deteriorated and inter-service intelligence coordinating committees did not function. This created a vicious circle: the more pronounced the tendency to rely on the Intelligence Bureau, the less was the military intelligence needed at all, and resources available to it were therefore reduced and the quality of its manpower declined. This in turn created a plausible reason to trust its estimates even less, and so on. Moreover, the Intelligence Bureau, which was in charge of internal security, probably viewed information arriving through the military intelligence as questionable, and consequently gave military intelligence only passing consideration in final evaluations. And it was, of course, absurd to expect trust to grow between two organizations since one had as part of its function the monitoring of the other in case it should attempt a military coup.

The feelings of distrust were, of course, mutual. Military men looked askance at the Intelligence Bureau, both on account of its provocative actions in border areas, which continued even after the area was put under the army's control, and because of its activities in the spheres of internal security where it conducted investigations against senior officers on charges of disloyalty (Subrahmanyam, 1970: 283).

Thus it happened that the army, which should have provided an alternative to the evaluations of the MEA and the Intelligence Bureau, was intellectually castrated. In fact, the only person in the army after 1961 who could have brought about the changes in the definition of the situation and action orientation, Lieutenant-General Kaul, preferred not to do so out of disregard of what was actually taking place and in order to advance his personal interests (Dalvi, 1969: 245).

None of the difficulties in intelligence reporting was helped by the fact that the Intelligence Bureau was unable to cope adequately with the task of providing accurate evaluations with regard to China. It suffered a severe shortage of analysts trained in Chinese studies, and only in 1958 were preparations begun on a Hindu–Chinese

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dictionary. It is estimated that during this period the number of people who could read and write Chinese in India was no more than half a dozen (Passin, 1961). But these were not the only problems in the sphere of intelligence gathering and processing. Even when available, the raw intelligence was improperly processed. The Joint Intelligence Committee of the armed forces, the Home Ministry, and the MEA, established in 1948 and headed by an MEA official, functioned inadequately (Bandyopadhyaya, 1970: 197–198; Khera, 1968: 215). In both the MEA and the Ministry of Defense the subject of research and interpretation was neglected in favor of collecting material. Only scant attention was given to the establishment of suitable research teams; in the main, evaluations were made by agents whose specialty was the collection of information, but not political evaluations (Bandyopadhyaya, 1970: 200).

Institutional Failure: Defense Ministry and Military

Kaul was the only military man who had free access to Nehru (Khera, 1968: 221–222). Clearly Kaul was in line for the post of Chief of Army Staff some time in the future, and officers anxious about their careers were reluctant to cross him. However, Kaul's ambitions went even further. He saw himself as a potential successor to Nehru and it did indeed seem as if Nehru was grooming him for the job. It was even speculated in many circles that Kaul would be the one to take over Nehru's role (Kaul, 1967: 430; Hangen, 1963: 248).

Kaul saw to it that his place was kept secure by unequivocally supporting Nehru's foreign policy and the China policy with it. Realizing that Nehru was determined not to make concessions, he went out of his way to give him the military legitimacy he needed to justify his ideas, with ringing promises of the army's ability to withstand assault; and, keeping public opinion in mind, he displayed an even greater extremism late in 1960 when he demanded a firmer stand against China, suggesting attacks on Chinese patrols under tactical circumstances convenient to India. Thus, he would win laurels both from the public and the right-wing of the Congress Party and strengthen his image as a daring and brilliant military leader and nationalist. The army for him was nothing but an instrument through which to further his political ambitions. To that end, and although he saw in him a future rival, he was willing to cooperate with Menon, Nehru's closest associate. Thus a love-hate relationship developed between the two (Mankekar, 1968: 33).

In the top echelons of Menon's Ministry of Defense there was not a single man willing to play devil's advocate, to present evaluations essentially different from those suggested by the MEA, which was headed by Nehru. In fact, Menon was also much involved in matters of foreign policy. It could even be said that he was only a part-time Minister of Defense, the remainder of this time being devoted to deputising Nehru on foreign policy matters. Actually, when Menon was appointed Minister of Defense, he remained informally responsible for certain foreign affairs matters, such as oversight of Kashmir, Goa, and UN Affairs (Reid, 1981: 187). He was the man who could most effectively translate Nehru's abstract ideas, which were often clothed in vague language, into operative terms. This, in addition to Nehru's respect for his quick mind, explains the two men's intimacy ever since they had met in Europe in 1935 (Brecher, 1959: 573; Desai, 1974: 220). Menon took extreme care to supply Nehru with information that would support his views, and had demonstrated more than once an almost hysterical apprehension of losing Nehru's affection and esteem (Gopal, 1979: 142, 176; Desai, 1974: 145).

In the Defense Ministry, his authoritativeness and his display of superiority and

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disdain towards his subordinates undercut any attempt to disagree with his views with regard to Sino-Indian relations. Repeated attacks against him in Parliament, and the fact that he ran as a candidate for Parliament in 1962 without any political power base in the Congress Party, forced Menon to take firm public positions on the China policy and often exaggerate India's military deterrent power. His impressive victory in the 1962 elections for the Parliament on this platform of firmness towards China obligated him to continue to hold to this orientation even when receiving information indicating the wisdom of doing otherwise. At the same time, Menon's victory increased Nehru's reliance on him, and Nehru believed that popular support for Menon was evolving. An opportunist officer such as Kaul was aware of these nuances and understood that it would be very difficult to convince Nehru to act against Menon's opinion (Kaul, 1967: 341). It was probably just as apparent to others at all levels that Menon's opinions echoed Nehru's.

In light of Kaul's political ambitions and Menon's commitment to supporting the China policy he had helped create, neither the military nor the Defense Ministry were able to carry out their mandates. Rather than serving as sources of information that would help inform more realistic policymaking, they acted instead as mere institutional mouthpieces for a policy already decided. Their failure was thus institutional in character; they served the parochial interests of specific individuals who aspired to gain or maintain positions of status within a narrow group, and not the public interest of providing complete and accurate information for the purpose of developing more reasonable—and potentially successful—policy choices.

Institutional Failure: The Ministry of External Affairs

It is interesting to note that it was precisely in the MEA, which should have been most able to understand the Chinese point of view, that the pace of erroneous evaluations was dictated. To understand this, it is important to take note of the human factor and structure of that ministry.

The dominant foreign policymaker, Nehru, was intensively involved in many issue areas. He was at once Prime Minister, Minister of External Affairs, head of the Atomic Energy Commission, head of the Planning Commission, leader of the Congress Party and a member of various party bodies formal and informal, a member of Parliament and a sort of Indian ambassador at large who was frequently away from home on missions of mediation and conciliation. In all these matters he tended to attend to the details himself without relying on others, and the bureaucracy willingly accepted that every matter was to be brought to Nehru for final approval. This centralized system of non-delegation of authority was so extreme that Nehru's biographer has suggested that the bureaucracy functioned 'only as rapidly as Nehru [could] handle the vast amount of paper that crosses his desk' (Brecher, 1959: 623). This applied especially in foreign policy since this was the area in which Nehru was rarely challenged and in which he was considered (by himself and others) to be India's foremost expert. The tidal wave of information reaching his desk daily created such a great pressure on him that no single subject could receive his undivided attention and he certainly did not have the strength to re-evaluate issues or give them fresh thought.

This state of affairs meant that the people upon whom Nehru relied and trusted, such as Menon, Mullik, Kaul, and some MEA officials, had a dominant influence on the information and interpretations most easily available to him. Moreover, as he was his own Minister of External Affairs, the access officials of this ministry had to him helped in making their views prevail when competing with others, such as military officers.

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The bureaucracy in the foreign service was composed of four main types: graduates of British India's civil service, who made up the majority; university intellectuals, close in their world view to Nehru; Nehru's relations; and former princes of Indian states. From this group it could not be expected that a cadre of officials would emerge to challenge Nehru's evaluations (Bandyopadhyaya, 1970: 190). To the contrary, the general atmosphere was one of constant competition for Nehru's favor. This harmed the team spirit and led to an exaggerated tendency to satisfy and flatter Nehru at all costs (he himself knew personally only the senior officials and his favorites), to sycophancy and to a subjective *ad hoc* approach to problems (Crocker, 1966: 87). In addition, the fact that the British civil service graduates were the majority in the ministry contributed quite considerably to the fact that British geopolitical and geostrategic concepts, which were now irrelevant, were maintained and continued to serve as a basis for current policy (Vertzberger, 1982: 370–376).

Although it cannot be said that at any point in time there was complete uniformity of views within Nehru's circle in the MEA, it was certainly true over time. Thus, for example, after the escape of the Dalai Lama from Tibet in 1959, some MEA officials argued that Chinese hostility toward India ran deep, while Nehru still thought that the problem was quite temporary (Hoffmann, 1971: 523). In this sense they were at first closer to Home Minister G. B. Pant and Finance Minister Morarji Desai than to Menon and Nehru. Gradually Nehru 'fell into line' following the Kongka Pass incident of October 1959 and the failure of Zhou Enlai's visit in 1960, although Nehru was still more optimistic about the long-term prospects of Sino-Indian relations than these MEA officials. The MEA officials also made sure they supported Nehru's assumption that there was a historical, traditional and legal justification for India's position on the boundaries question (Maxwell, 1972: 119; Gupta, 1974: 35).

Among the main supporters of the thesis that China would not attack India, even at the height of military escalation on both sides that began in July 1962, were Nehru, Menon and MEA senior officials, M. J. Desai, the then Foreign Secretary and N. B. Menon, the director of the China Division of the MEA (Hoffmann, 1971: 418–419, 654, 709). If there were disagreements between them regarding the question of the degree of Chinese hostility and the long-range trends in Sino-Indian relations, these did not find their way into any strategic disagreements. In other words, even when there was no complete conceptual consensus, there was still an operational one. This merely reinforced Nehru's sense of being right about the border situation and his feeling that an 'open debate' was continuing concerning the China policy. Actually the debate dealt only with conclusions that were predetermined, and different participants disagreed only on the most efficient ways to arrive at the predetermined operational decisions made by Nehru.

Institutional Failure: Cabinet and Non-Governmental Bodies

Thus far we have shown how in central organizations concerned with strategic situation evaluations—the army, the Ministry of Defense, and the MEA—there developed a situation of impotence and inability to examine information critically and to make the changes necessitated by new information. We will now try to examine why other bodies and organizations—such as the Cabinet, the Cabinet Committees on Foreign and Defense Affairs, Parliament and the mass media—that could have presented an alternative, or at least have been restraining factors in the commitment of errors, did not function adequately.

In theory, the Cabinet and its committees should have tried and tested Nehru's

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hypotheses on the China issue. Furthermore, in contrast to the organizations we have discussed so far, the Cabinet did have a number of members who disagreed with Nehru, such as Pant, the Home Minister and *de facto* Deputy Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, the Minister of Finance, and S. K. Patil, the Minister of Food and Agriculture. Not only did they object to Nehru's policies, but two of them at least, Desai and Patil, had independent power bases in the party and abhorred the personality and world-view of Menon (Hangen, 1963: 234). In addition, the more senior of the three, Pant, had a formal degree of control over the main intelligence organization, as the Intelligence Bureau was part of the Home Ministry. Pant also enjoyed a strong political status, having an independent power base in Uttar Pradesh, and to a certain extent Nehru was psychologically dependent on him as a result of Nehru's tendency to lean on an older, more experienced man, much as he had with his own father, then Mahatma Gandhi, and then Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (Brecher, 1959: 2).

Although formally a body that could question Nehru's policies and evaluations, the Cabinet was unable to do so both because of its lack of power and its method of functioning. On the administrative-organizational level, despite the fact that formally the system of government was based on Cabinet decisions, Nehru tended to make his decisions after consulting with his close associates, depending on the subject in question, and then bring it for formal ratification to the Cabinet. Consequently, the Cabinet did not meet at regular intervals; Nehru called it according to his needs. This tendency was even more pronounced in the area of foreign and defense policies, where Nehru, as Minister of External Affairs, was directly responsible for decisions and kept information secret from almost everyone. Although on the political side of the China issue Nehru had to lift the veil of secrecy from the exchange between India and China (White Papers) as a result of public pressure, this did not apply in the case of knowledge about India's relative military capabilities, which was withheld from Parliament and the public at large. Nehru and Menon simply had to be taken at their word.

The Cabinet had two committees which purportedly dealt with foreign and defense affairs. These committees were the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Defense Committee. But they, like the Cabinet at large, were not a decisionmaking forum. At most they were used for limited consultations or as a forum for explaining issues, and not for hammering out disagreements, analysis or examination of alternative evaluations. The Prime Minister, with his domineering personality, was not interested in consultations, and the Cabinet members accepted this fact; according to Menon: '. . . somehow or other on account of his [Nehru's] big personality, on account of the fact that people trusted his wisdom or his ultimate judgment, debate in the accepted Western sense did not take place' (Brecher, 1968: 246; Gopal, 1979: 303–304). Disagreements never reached the Cabinet floor, as they were usually settled before the meeting with the minister concerned. Even strong personalities, such as Pant, were unable to challenge Nehru, as the only information given to them by the director of the Intelligence Bureau, Mullik, who enjoyed Pant's confidence (Mullik, 1971: 192–193), or by Menon or Kaul, pointed only to India's ability to achieve its goals, even if it meant using the military, and to China's unwillingness and inability to meet India's challenge (Vertzberger, 1982). The fact that these were the only sources of information in this area, and that they were acceptable even to Pant, served only to further support those inclined toward a hard line.

Other sources of feedback that could have been useful were the two institutions that were the pride of independent India—Parliament and the press.

Among Parliament members, only a handful had the knowledge and experience to

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analyze and investigate adequately the activities of the Indian army (Jones, 1975: 274). But even those few had neither the authority nor the ability, nor the necessary means to do any of that: the major policymakers kept them utterly in the dark. The annual report issued by the Ministry of Defense, for example, which was meant to describe the annual activities of that Ministry, really provided only the most insignificant information, while the parliamentary committee for defense affairs, attached to the Ministry of Defense, had no formal status and hence was 'toothless'. Parliament therefore had no access to the proper information, nor was it able to call on involved officials to testify before it. As for the Indian press, newspaper editors could publish only what was given them by the authorities in the Ministry of Defense. Consequently, most journalists failed to develop the critical stance necessary for reporting on matters of defense and security.[7]

Thus unquestioning attitudes on the China policy prevailed both within and without the decisionmaking system, and a convenient background was created for the continuation of a poorly informed China policy. And whatever criticism was voiced by the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition was so badly misinformed and misdirected that it merely caused a toughening in Nehru's attitude on the China issue.[8] Because extra-bureaucratic actors such as Parliament and the press played only a marginal role in the decisionmaking process, the bureaucratic politics paradigm is all the more relevant to this case.

Group Dynamic and Groupthink

Most of the activity of processing and evaluating incoming data was concentrated in a small group of people surrounding Nehru who enjoyed his personal confidence. As we have seen, the core members of the group included Menon (Minister of Defense), Mullik (Director of the Intelligence Bureau), Dutt (Foreign Secretary), and later his successor, M. J. Desai, J. Mehta (Director of the MEA China section), Gopal (Director of the History Division of the MEA) and Lt.-General Kaul (Chief of the General Staff Branch at Army Headquarters). From time to time, the voice of G. Parthasarathi, the Ambassador to China, was also heard, and, until his death, that of Pant, the Home Minister, as well. In addition, it seemed that Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, must have been at least indirectly involved, although the extent of her involvement is not clear (Hangen, 1963: 159; Mehra, 1968). Menon, realizing her special position, did not miss a single opportunity to flatter her and win her favor. Her attitude on the China issue reflected, to some degree, her attitude to Menon (Hangen, 1963: 159) and, of course, the attitude of her father whom she adored.

Within this group there were nuances in assessing the China question. Some were optimists and others pessimists. The optimists believed that the dispute would finally be resolved in a manner favorable to India and that basically India and China had common interests. Nehru and Menon were the main representatives of this approach. The optimists also showed a great deal more willingness in the early stages of the dispute to make concessions.[9] The pessimists, on the other hand, at the beginning of 1959, already saw the potential for a long and protracted conflict and a divergence of interests between India and China. The main spokesmen for that camp were the two foreign secretaries of the MEA, and Mehta, the Director of the China Section of the MEA.

By late 1959, however, all members of the group agreed that concessions to China should not be made, that an active unyielding policy should be pursued, that for political, military and economic reasons a major confrontation between India and China was unlikely, and that if the Chinese were to provoke a confrontation they would suffer a humiliating defeat. In other words, within this group there was a full

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operational, if not conceptual, consensus. It should also be noted that the importance of Mullik and Kaul in this group rose as of September 1961, when the military aspects of the problem began to look more and more important.

From all that has been said so far, three relevant dimensions of analysis of the perceptual dynamics of those involved in the China issue emerge: the reciprocal relations between Nehru and other participants, defined in terms of how they were chosen to serve in this group and the nature of their personal relations with him; the interactions within the small circle around Nehru; and their attitude to the sources of information and evaluation outside that circle.

The inner circle around Nehru had a number of common traits. Most of the permanent members of this group were intellectuals, very articulate, open-minded, or at least defined by Nehru as such. Most were Hindu, and they all had a British education. Some had long experience in the British Indian civil service. They had years of experience in working with Nehru, and all expressed in one way or another their complete identification with his *Weltanschauung*. Most, if not all, revered him as a man and as a statesman, as the one and only representative of the true India. The group even had a kind of 'whip', who kept members in line whenever necessary. This was, of course, the man closest to Nehru, personally and ideologically—Krishna Menon. None of the members of this group had an independent power base; their power, whether political or bureaucratic, was dependent on Nehru, but this situation gave them more power than their formal role or position ever could. This power derived from the recognition by other organizations and people of their close contact with Nehru.

Thus, Mullik, head of the Intelligence Bureau, could ignore all the instructions and guidelines he received from different ministries or other government branches, in the knowledge that he could always rely on Nehru's support (Maxwell, 1972: 503). Thanks to Nehru, Kaul also became the number one man in the army, and Menon obtained his special status in the Congress Party and in the Cabinet. Similarly, the Foreign Secretary enjoyed a special status compared with other civil service officials of the same rank.

Cordial and proper personal relations existed between the various members of the group, despite their rivalry for Nehru's attention. This further contributed to the group's cohesion. Furthermore, the members kept in constant touch with each other. Menon frequently met with MEA men because of his informal, but strong and active, position and role there. In keeping with his post as Defense Minister, he, of course, frequently met with Kaul and Mullik. Close relations also existed between Kaul and Mullik (Kaul, 1967: 273). At the same time, at least some of the members had hostile rivals within the organization from which they had originated or in organizations outside the group. Thus, for example, hostility existed between Menon and the field officers, as well as other senior officers in the Indian army, and between himself and other members of the Cabinet. Kaul was on terms of enmity with some field personnel and some of the High Command. Mullik was also disliked by the military. Most MEA bureaucrats despised army men. Naturally, the perception of the existence of personal 'enemies' outside the inner circle, waiting for them to trip up, increased the cohesion between members. And finally, in its composition, membership included representatives of all branches of the system: politicians, bureaucrats, and army personnel, as well as of all the institutions relevant to the China issue—the Prime Minister's Office, the MEA and Defense Ministry, the Intelligence Bureau and the military.

The attributes of this group of individuals combined to create conditions of a biased, one-sided processing of information and the maintenance of irrelevant and outdated perceptions, despite dissonant information. The fact that Nehru was surrounded by a

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group whose members had a similar background and world view, all respecting and admiring him and his views, and who were dependent on him for their power within the general political framework and their own organizations in particular, made the presentation of dissonant information either impossible or not worthwhile. The danger either of being rejected or of being banished from the inner circle took on a high emotional and instrumental meaning, especially since membership in it reinforced the elitism that already existed among some of its members.

Moreover, to its participants, this group of people seemed to have all the necessary ingredients and personnel for efficient evaluations, both intellectually and functionally. It even appeared to 'debate' constructively, but, as we have seen, all this was a thin disguise for a predetermined operational consensus.

On the organizational level, the values of the organization from which most members came were usually identical to those prevailing in the inner circle. In the case of Kaul himself, in conflicts arising between the values of his peer group, the army, and this decisionmaking group, he gave obvious preference to the values and concepts of the latter, for reasons stated above, related to utilitarian considerations: his belief that in the long run his place was with this group and that his real likely power lay in being a member of it. So the role he played in this group and perceived himself as playing in the future superseded his professional role obligations as C.G.S. and later Commander of the 4th Corps.

In a society where factional politics are an inherent part of the political culture, what emerged then was in fact a tightly-knit faction, which had most of the structural characteristics of a typical Indian political faction (Hoffmann, 1981: 233). The Nehru faction was bound together mainly by the personal tie between its leader and inner-core follower; it differentiated itself by drawing clear ideological boundaries between it and the other participants in the decisionmaking process; and the relationship between the members and Nehru were of *guru-chela* (teacher-disciple) type. They depended on him, drew power from his power, and emotional support from being associated with the great man (Dutt, 1977: 302).

In the context of such a relationship, identifying with and supporting the leader's attitudes and conceptions is the only logical pattern—and groupthink is almost inevitable. In this situation alternative perceptions and attitudes could be effectively introduced only by external rival factions which are as cohesive and as powerful, but such a rival faction never emerged. What faced the Nehru faction was a loose coalition of divided politicians and some army officers. There was no leader who could bind it together nor an overall strongly shared framework of beliefs, and the power structure was clearly in favor of the Nehru faction with no chance of tilting it in their favor. Thus the outcomes were a foregone conclusion: a dominance of Nehru's faction and no effective articulation of dissonant conceptions.

Organizational and Individual Levels of Aspirations

An additional factor that determined the fixation of the images and process of non-adaptation was connected to the level of aspiration of some of the members of the group. The MEA people, including Nehru, identified deeply with the MEA from which they had come, both because of its special status and because of the sense of mission and elitism it gave its members (Kaul, 1979: 85). An admission that their organization, the MEA, had been wrong all along on such a major issue as Indian policy towards China meant a serious blow to one's self-perception. The need to prove methodically, all through the period in question, that the policy pursued had been the right one, and that

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the level of aspirations had been realized, made it necessary to ignore any information that contradicted this. This is also true of Mullik and the Intelligence Bureau he headed, which supplied the information to support this policy, and of Menon and the Ministry of Defense.

The identification of the success of the organization with that of the individual at its head is especially relevant in the Indian context because in Indian culture, and in the Indian social framework, there is a deep identification between leader and organization, so that in a sense the organization becomes an expression of the leader and not vice versa. Thus it happened that with the infiltration of the Chinese beyond the Thagla ridge, 'The Thagla incursion was gradually allowed to become the battle for the survival of those responsible for India's China policy' (Dalvi, 1969: 184).

Members of the group fed each other with assessments and optimistic estimations as to to the quality of their organization's activity; and the outcome was that the atmosphere was one of self-fulfilling discussions and mutual back-slapping that raised the threshold for penetration of dissonant information, perpetuating the group members' self-confidence, and sense of invulnerability. This led to baseless optimism and a willingness to take risks that were expressed in the adoption of the Forward Policy, while placing exaggerated and unrealistic confidence in the ability of the concerned organizations to execute a policy containing such a high element of risk with success.

Another aspect that should be stressed is that the China issue really came to be perceived as a struggle between two subcultures in the Indian political system. The one was represented by Nehru and his faction, and the other by the army officers and politicians who rejected his views. Nehru and his supporters considered theirs universal, idealistic, and open-minded, and the second as narrow, materialistic, and, of course, anachronistic and erroneous. Anyone who presented information or evaluations which conflicted with the existing ones was naturally perceived to belong to the rival camp and, in Nehru's eyes, immediately suspected of distorting information in an attempt to achieve narrow goals such as increased defense expenditure or, even worse, abandoning non-alignment. This in turn was perceived to constitute a threat to the personal status of those identified with the opposite world view, with all the resulting implications.

As a result, in Nehru's circle, polarization, risky shift and groupthink, along with their consequent negative ramifications, including over-optimism, under-estimation of the opponent, and a sense of self-righteousness, were almost unavoidable. Multidimensional conformism led to a deep-seated perceptual conservatism, and under the conditions described it formed a sense of security—even in the face of possible failure—due to the umbrella protection afforded by those with the political responsibility—Nehru and Menon. On the other hand, support of the military, and non-conformism, did not generate such protection. Thus, conformism became, for members of the group, a no-risk gamble worth taking.

Conclusions

In this study we have analyzed the complex net of inter-personal, inter- and intra-organizational relationships, and discussed the evolving patterns and their significance for the biased processing of information and cognitive conservativeness that characterized India's China policy leading up to the 1962 Chinese invasion. Thus, it attempts to explain how it happened that in a country proud of its truly democratic institutions, and led by a man deeply committed to democratic values, a real debate and

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discussion of alternative definitions of the situation and remedies did not take place, leading to the shocked surprise of India's leadership at the news of the Chinese invasion on 20 October 1962.

Although the bureaucratic and organizational politics paradigms explain a good deal of information processing behavior which took place, the study does not, however, claim exclusiveness for this variable-set, nor does it intend to reduce explanation of such a complex case to a single variable-set. A fuller explanation will have to take into account Nehru's personality, which was paramount in the Indian decisionmaking context, as well as other variable-sets such as cultural variables. But these are beyond the scope and goals of this study and are treated by the author elsewhere (Vertzberger, 1984).

On a broader plane, there are also some conclusions regarding bureaucratic and organizational politics in general, and bureaucratic politics in a Third World context in particular that may be drawn. In the first place, the bureaucratic and organizational politics paradigms are applicable in explaining foreign policy behavior in a certain class of Third World countries, as argued in the introduction, and as the analysis of India's behavior indicates. Moreover, it could be inferred that once the elements of bureaucratic politics are introduced into non-Western societies, their influence upon policy outcomes will be accentuated by some of the particular qualities of such societies. Some of these qualities include: (1) the fact that the political sphere is not sharply distinguished from social and personal relations; (2) the prevalence of cliques; and (3) absence of consensus as to legitimate ends and means of political action (Pye, 1961). These offer a wider latitude for expressing and defending successfully organizational and bureaucratic turf because the actors involved are less inhibited by restricting norms. In certain cases there is little or no distinction between the interest of the state and those of a particular organization, such as when the army controls the state. In these instances, the body in question is perfectly situated to act as a protective association for its collective interests and the interests of individual members.

Second, due to the above-mentioned characteristic of the political process in non-Western societies, and the less complex nature of the organizational network than in Western societies, it could be stipulated that the bureaucratic-organizational paradigms, when applicable to a Third World context, will be dominated by the bureaucratic with special emphasis on small group dynamics and factional politics.

Third, it is a common fallacy to take the simplistic position that the only possible outcome of a decisionmaking process dominated by bureaucratic politics is compromise between competing alternatives (e.g., Migdal, 1974). In fact, while the name of the game is indeed bargaining (Allison, 1969: 708), the outcome is not necessarily compromise, and will depend on the nature of the bureaucratic milieu. It is possible to foresee situations in which bureaucratic politics lead to a stalemated decision process and the outcome is that no decision is made. Alternatively, it is also possible, as the case of India demonstrates, that one of the competing options, with minor modifications, will gain the upper hand. In other cases we may even expect minority effects.

Once acceptance for a certain option is assured or seems certain, the logic of bureaucratic politics may dictate even to its non-supporters a change of their attitudes. The cautious pragmatic actor draws the proper conclusions with regard to what acceptance of the winning option signifies for the balance of power between the players. Organizations and individuals will then go out of their way to demonstrate support for the winning option in a specific subgame. The actors participate simultaneously in other subgames, as well, and thus such behavior is necessary and useful in order to defend their

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stakes in the other subgames where the bargaining still goes on and coalitions with or support of other actors may be necessary.

Finally, an interesting perceptual aspect, and at the same time a neglected one in the bureaucratic paradigm literature, is that once a certain group perceives another group as a coherent group with particular well-defined interests, as the civilians considered the military in the case analyzed, we have, in fact, the making of a bureaufactional-type behavior[10] on both sides, as part of an almost reactive-defensive basis. The question of whether such coherent groups actually exist or are the creatures of imagination may then become an academic question.

Notes

1. A detailed description of the development of the conflict between the two countries can be found in Fisher *et al.* (1963), Van Eckelen (1964), Rowland (1967), Woodman (1970), Chakravarti (1961, 1971), Hoffmann (1971), Maxwell (1972), Whiting (1975), Jetly (1979), Gurtov and Hwang (1980). For analyses of territorial dispute in the various sectors of the border, see Rubin (1960), Lamb (1964, 1973), Sharma (1965, 1971), Singh (1967). Of particular importance is the report by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (1961) *Report of the Officials of the Government of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question.*
2. See, for example, *Peking Review*, 28 September 1962, pp. 13–14. On 14 October, the *Renmin Ribao* printed an editorial entitled, 'Mr. Nehru It Is High Time For You To Pull Back From The Brink Of The Precipice.' This editorial was published again on 19 October, a day before the Chinese attack, in *Peking Review*. It should be noted that until then Chinese editorials used the term 'Frontier Guards', whereas in this editorial the terms 'Comrades, commanders, and fighters of the PLA' were used.
3. Whiting (1972: 58–59) claims that on the operational level also the Chinese behaved as they had in Korea, in that a week passed between one tactical maneuver and the next, while between strategic moves there was an interval of one month. For example, on 13 September, the Chinese proposed the renewal of negotiations, on 20 September they initiated a large-scale border clash, and on 20 October war erupted. This was intended to allow the opponent time to consider and respond to Chinese signals.
4. In a letter to one of the newspapers published by a group of officers, it was alleged that Menon was attempting to surround himself with officers personally loyal to him. The letter was signed: 'Demoralized Army Officers' (Maxwell, 1972: 197). It should be remembered, however, that Menon was appointed to his position to prevent the politicization of the Indian army, so that while his policy did weaken India militarily, it served Nehru's political objectives well. However, in his speech in Parliament, Nehru assured the public that the procedure for appointing senior officers operated optimally and he wished he could say the same about the civil service.
5. Thus, when in May 1960 a memorandum was distributed at Nehru's suggestion by S. Dutt, the Foreign Secretary, demanding that the Army adopt an active patrol policy and set up positions in the disputed area of the western sector, in other words, launch what later became known as the Forward Policy, Army Headquarters ignored it and the instructions going out to the Western Command indicated only a maintenance of the *status quo*. And indeed, the Forward Policy was put into effect only after the change in staff of the Army command later in 1961. It may be that the civilian echelons were unaware of its instructions not being carried out in the field out of ignorance, or turned a blind eye to it because Nehru and his associates were wary of Thimayya's reaction and preferred to wait until his term in office was over.
6. The one academic institute which at the time dealt extensively with foreign policy issues was the Indian Council of World Affairs. Led by H. N. Kunzru, it had very little, if any, influence on and access to decisionmaking and decisionmakers in this field. Its scholars had no more information about military affairs than was made available to other segments of the public. Only after the 1962 war was an Institute for Strategic Studies and Analyses established which has since published a journal of problems of defense and strategy.
7. Thus, for example, in one of India's leading newspapers, a military assessment was published in which India's firepower was described as greater than that of the Chinese along the entire border; the Indian army's logistic situation was estimated to be equal to that of the Chinese, and generally it was thought that Chinese troops in the Himalaya area would not be able to challenge the Indian forces (*Times of India*, 5 May 1961).
8. Some evidence of the effect that proper information might have had on the opposition's stand can be found in the words of A. B. Vajpayee, who was in his time one of the chief spokesmen of the Parliamentary

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opposition, as a Member of Parliament for the Jana Sangh, and one of the most extreme hawks on the China question. In an interview in October 1977, he said: 'Sometimes one wonders whether the Forward Policy of Nehru was correct when we were not ready or able to push out the aggressor' (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7 October 1977: 32).

9. Menon objected violently to Gopal's historical approach and once told him to go to hell with his historical evidence (Hoffmann, 1971: 784). The optimistic camp included a number of diplomats not counted among Nehru's intimate circle, such as R. K. Nehru, India's Ambassador to China in the mid-1950s; K. P. S. Menon, India's Ambassador to the USSR (Menon, 1963: 320), and T. N. Kaul, one of India's representatives to the 1954 talks. These men saw themselves as the architects of friendship with China.
10. The term was suggested by one of the reviewers.

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Appendix: Map of Players

Personality	*Role*	*Relevant organization*	*Nature of role*
Politicians			
1. J. Nehru	Prime Minister, Minister of External Affairs	PM's office, MEA, cabinet committees on defense and foreign policy, Parliament, Congress Party, Planning Commission	Senior political decisionmaker and information processor
2. V. K. K. Menon	Defense Minister	Defense Ministry, cabinet committees on defense and foreign policy, Parliament	Senior political decisionmaker, supplier and processor of information
3. G. B. Pant (died in 1961)	Home Minister	Home Ministry, cabinet committees on defense and foreign policy, Intelligence Bureau, Parliament	Senior political decisionmaker, decision-ratifier, information processor
4. M. Desai	Finance Minister	Finance Ministry, cabinet committees on defense and foreign policy, Parliament	Senior political decisionmaker, decision-ratifier information processor
5. L. B. Shastri	Home Minister (after Pant's death in 1961)	Home Ministry, cabinet committees on defense and foreign policy, Intelligence Bureau, Parliament	Senior political decisionmaker, decision-ratifier, information processor
6. J. Ram	Railways Minister	Parliament, Cabinet	Medium political decision-ratifier
7. S. K. Patil	Food and Agriculture Minister	Parliament, Cabinet	Medium political decision-ratifier
8. I. Gandhi	President of Congress Party		Medium political advisor
9. A. K. Sen	Law Minister	Parliament, cabinet committees on defense and foreign policy	Medium political decision-ratifier
10. T. T. Krishnamachari	Minister without portfolio	Parliament, cabinet committee on foreign policy	Medium political decision-ratifier
11. S. Subbarayn	Transportation Minister	Parliament, cabinet committee on foreign policy	Medium political decision-ratifier
Bureaucrats			
12. B. N. Mullik	Director of Intelligence Bureau	Home Ministry	Senior bureaucratic advisor executor, decisionmaker, supplier and processor of information and processor of information

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13. S. Dutt	Foreign Secretary	MEA	Senior bureaucratic advisor, executor, decisionmaker on minor matters, information processor processor
14. M. J. Desai	Foreign Secretary	MEA	Senior bureaucratic, advisor executor, information processor
15. S. Gopal	Director of the Historical Division	MEA	Middle bureaucratic advisors, suppliers and processors of information
16. J. S. Mehta	Director of China Section (Later Northern Division)	MEA	
17. S. Sinha	Director of China Division	MEA	
18. N. B. Menon	Director of China Division	MEA	
19. G. Parthasarthi	India's ambassador to China	MEA	
20. S. S. Khera	Cabinet Secretary	Prime Minister's Office	Senior bureaucratic advisor, information processor
21. H. C. Sarin	Joint Secretary in the	Defense Ministry	Middle bureaucratic executor, advisor
Military			
22. B. M. Kaul (Lt.-General)	1. C.G.S. 2. G.O.C. IV Corps	Army Headquarters Defense Ministry	Senior military (Headquarters) advisors, executors, suppliers and processors of information
23 K. S. Thimayya (General)	C.O.A.S.	Army Headquarters, Defense Ministry	
24. P. N. Thapar (General)	C.O.A.S.	Army Headquarters, Defense Ministry	
25. L. P. Sen (Lt.-General)	G.O.C.-in-Chief, Eastern Command	Army Headquarters, Defense Ministry	Middle military (Headquarters) advisors, executors, suppliers and processors of information
26. D. Singh (Lt.-General)	G.O.C.-in-Chief, Western Command	Army Headquarters, Defense Ministry	
27. U. Singh (Lt.-General)	G.O.C. XXXIII Corps	Army	Middle military (field) executor, supplier of information
28. N. Prasad (Major General)	G.O.C. IV Division	Army	Junior military (field) executor, supplier of information

Note: The terms *senior*, *middle* and *junior* are used in a comparative sense to describe the status of the person involved within the group to which he belonged.

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