

INDIA—CHINA BORDER DISPUTE : THE MAJOR ISSUES

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DEDICATED TO MY PARENTS



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C E R T I F I C A T E

Certified that the dissertation entitled "INDIA-CHINA BORDER DISPUTE : THE MAJOR ISSUES", submitted by Sindhu Kumar Jha in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) of this University, is his original work and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation. This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this university or of any other university.

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION : THE BRITISH IMPERIAL LEGACY

The British first came to the Indian subcontinent at the beginning of the seventeenth century as merchants. They did not seek territories but wanted trade. For over a century, they managed to limit their Indian possessions to the minimum area which they felt was necessary as a base for their commercial operations. Subsequently they overcome almost all the Indian provinces one by one.

Once in possession of one Indian province, the British were faced with the problem of the security of that province's frontiers with districts not under their control. Frontier crises led to transfrontier campaigns and the extension of the frontier. A Lamb says "The expansion process of the British continued until the sphere of British rule had reached what might be termed the natural frontier regions of the Southern zone viz the North-East Frontier and Mainland South East Asia, the Himalayan barrier and the Hill tracts of the North West Frontier"¹. It was only at this stage that the British could begin the task of creating stable boundaries for their Indian territories.

By the end of the Sixteenth century, Russia, having reasserted itself after centuries of attack by Mongols and Turks of Central Asian origin, began to spread over Urals. By the middle of the seventeenth century, Russia had extended its influence right across Siberia to the shores of the Pacific, thus outflanking the entire north of Chinese Central Asia.

The History of the frontier zones on the flanks of the Indian subcontinent was different. There were problems in the north-western area

1. A. Lamb - "The Indo-Tibetan Border" Australian Journal of Politics & History, May 1960, P.123.

which were not to be found in the North-Eastern. Even so, the principles of colonial boundary evolution which were applied in these two regions were basically similar. As the colonial empires approached each other, there developed a period of tension between them which was followed by a period of negotiation and boundary settlement.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the major problem of imperial frontier policy in Asia concerned the meeting points of the three great empires of Russia, Britain & France. The result was the creation of an elaborate boundary system separating the three colonial spheres. Work continued on the system right upto the second world war. However, the period of imperial frontier evolution came to an end with the outbreak of the First World War. During the early years of the twentieth century frontier policy was much influenced by the fact that the three main imperial powers were becoming allied to each other in the context of European diplomacy.

The boundary system was based on some principles in which recognition of the desirability of avoiding direct contact between the administered territories of the various colonial empires was emphasised. If possible these should be no common boundary between empires, rather there should be interposed a buffer territory. The Buffer served as an elastic substance placed between the unyielding fabric of colonial sovereignties. They could bend and bounce in a way that the defined boundaries of colonies could not.

By 1907, the four major powers in territorial contact with China viz Britain, Russia, France and Japan were all so tied to each other by a complex of treaties that no one power could move without giving the other compensation elsewhere. For example, the British could not extend their influence into Tibet without offering Russia advantages elsewhere which they were extremely reluctant to do.

A great deal of the boundary between China and the European empires, especially the British in Asia was not only created but also delimited or demarcated in the colonial era. One major boundary line which was not so well defined in the great days of the imperial frontier systems was that running through the long mountain frontier tract between British India and Chinese Central Asia. According to Archibald Rose, "Largely because of the conflicting roles which China played in the game of British imperial strategy— as a power to be wooed, as a potential zone of buffer states and as a possible field for colonial expansion much of the frontier zone was not traversed by clearly demarcated boundary alignments".² As a matter of fact from the Pamirs to the Nepalese border in the Himalayas, no firm border line had been settled. Farther east, a short stretch of boundary between Sikkim and Tibet had been delimited in the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1890, though efforts to secure joint demarcation with the Tibetans had failed. Farther east again, between Bhutan and Burma, lay the Assam Himalayan hill tracts where Anglo-Tibetan agreement in 1914 produced the delimited Mac Mahon Line boundary which China did not ratify.

 2. Archibald Rose - 'Chinese Frontiers of India', Geographical Journal (London) p. 92 March 1912.

One can say that the boundaries of the newly independent states of Asia are the boundaries which were inherited from the colonial regimes to which they have succeeded. These boundaries, the product of the evolution of the imperial frontier systems, and based on the strategic political and economic necessities of colonial policy, had to serve as the cell walls of national identities. The rulers of newly independent states could not be blamed for unsatisfactory boundaries which were not of their making. They had to deal with the problems that such boundaries posed.

According to the historical as well as empirical evidences, the British Indian Government - brought about the political union of diverse and hitherto separate regions within the Indian empire. It did so by a twofold process. First, the Hindu heartland was occupied and second the centres of Hindu civilisation (and, in the north west, former Hindu regions which had come under Islamic domination) were surrounded by a frontier belt stretching from the Arabian Sea to the hills of northern Burma.

The expansion of British power towards Burma resulted in the annexation of the hill tracts of Assam, where lived tribes belonging to the sphere of mainland south-east Asia rather than the Indian subcontinent. The peoples of the Assam Himalayas (like the Abors, Mishmis and Apa Tanis), the peoples of hills along the Southern edge of the Brahmaputra Valley (like the Khasis), and the peoples of the Burmese frontier tracts (like the Nagas and Mizos) none of these could be described as Indian if that term were to be defined on the basis of culture. British rule, moreover,

served to widen the gulf between this category of tribesmen and the settled populations of the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian plains. Many of the hillmen of the North east frontier came under the influence of European and American Christian Missionaries. They acquired a sense of their own cultural and national identity and came to see British rule as a protection for that identity.

In fact the independent Indian state, however, was influenced by precisely those considerations of frontier policy which had brought the British into the tribal hills in the first place. Frontier policy dictated that Indian control should be retained over frontier tracts and the aspirations of the hill tribes against India had to be opposed, by force if persuasion failed.

British frontier policy failed to produce a comprehensive definition of external boundaries along the Karakoram and Himalayan ranges. An extremely short stretch of boundary between Tibet and the British protectorate of Sikkim was delimited in the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, but the Tibetans managed to frustrate attempts at joint Anglo-Chinese demarcation. A much longer section of boundary called the famous 'Mac Mahon Line', from Bhutan to Burma along the crest of the Assam Himalayas, was defined in the secret exchange of notes between the British and the Tibetan in March 1914 during the course of the Simla Conference. The validity of the transaction, however, was certainly open to question. The Chinese had consistently, in both Kuomintang and Maoist regimes, refused to be bound by it. They

denied that Tibet ever possessed the requisite treaty making powers.

The boundary between Ladakh in north east Kashmir and Chinese territory in Sinkiang and Tibet called western sector (better known as Aksaichin) was the product of British policy towards the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It possessed a common frontier with Tibet by virtue of Gulali Singh's conquest of Kadakh in 1834 which evolved a common frontier with Chinese Turkestan (Sinkiang) during the latter part of the 19th century.

As a matter of fact the British saw the Sinkiang- Kashmir border as part of their defensive system against Russian influence. As it appeared more or less likely that the Russians would take over Sinkiang, so the British veered between advanced and moderate boundary alignments. The 1899 proposals were typical of the moderate line. By 1947, the British had not made up their minds which line to select, though they had kept their freedom of choice by either omitting external boundaries from their maps or indicating rather advanced ones. In the 1950s, the Indian republic published maps showing a Sinkiang - Kashmir, boundary which was, in effect, a compromise between the British extremes. It included in India more territory than the 1899 line but it adumbrated a rather smaller India than that suggested by the majority of British maps indicating boundary lines in this region.

The Aksai Chin plateau is a kind of non-man's land where Sinkiang, Tibet and Indian - held Kashmir meet. South of the Aksai Chin area, along

the upper reaches of the river Indus, the Kashmir - Tibet border reaches a region with a few, though small, centres of settled population. It is here that a traditional boundary of sorts has evolved over the centuries. It was the subject of agreement between Ladakh and Tibet in 1684 and 1842. No full demarcation ever took place (though some boundary points were established), and no maps resulted. The alignment, however, was in the British period subject only to a very few minor disputes i.e. Kashmiri encroachment on territory which the Tibetans regarded as theirs. It is a fact that in 1841, the founder of the Jammu and Kashmir state tried to annex the greater part of western Tibet.. Military defeat did not terminate all Kashmiri ambitions in this quarter. From the 1860s, official British maps show a boundary between Kashmir and Tibet South of the Aksai Chin region which remained unmodified upto 1947. This alignment places within India some small areas which the Chinese claim should be within Tibet. It is, interesting however, that the Indian claim which was published in the 1950s placed within India some small tracts which the British, to judge by their maps, accepted as being Tibetan. As G.N. Rao opines " It would seem that the Indian republic once it had established itself as the protector of Kashmir against Pakistan, also found itself supporting Kashmiri claims to Tibetan territory which the British had never countenanced.. The Chinese, likewise, once in control of Tibet appear to have inherited some old claims".³ In fact the area involved in the discrepancies, between the Chinese claim and the accepted British line is about the same as that between the British and Indian lines.

3. G.N. Rao - India China Border : A Reappraisal (Bombay 1968) pp.96-97.

So far as Mac Mahon Line is concerned, until 1910 the government of British India considered that its international boundary eastwards of Bhutan ran along the foot of the Himalayan range on the northern side of the Brahmaputra Valley. This boundary, known as the outer line was laid down on the ground for some of its length by British officials in the 1870s. For a few miles east of Bhutan, it marched with what was regarded as the Tibetan district of Tawang. Further east, it separated British territory from the hill tracts occupied by tribes over which neither India nor Tibet exercised sovereignty. Where the Brahmaputra makes its great bend through the Himalayan range to become, upstream, the Tsangpo (the main river of central Tibet), the outer line ended. Eastwards from it there was no established boundary at all. By 1910, the Tibetans had also established a boundary of sorts along the Assam Himalayas. In Tawang, this boundary extended down through the mountains to the edge of the Assam plains. Elsewhere it ran more or less along the crest of the range, with Tibetan influence of one kind or another extending southwards for some distance down the Subansiri, the Siang (as the Brahmaputra is known in the upper part of its passage through the Himalayas) and the Lohit rivers. According to Dorothy Woodman, "In no case, except that of Tawang, could the Tibetans be said to have extended their influence, let alone their boundary, right down to the British outer line, and a buffer tract of extremely difficult mountain country inhabited by warlike tribes, separated India from Tibet".⁴

In 1910, China undertook the military occupation of Lhasa. This

4. Dorothy Woodman - *Himalayan Frontier* (London, 1969) pp.123-24.

was the product of the final stage of Manchu policy in central Asia, when an attempt was made to include Tibet within the Chinese provincial structure. Once in Tibet in force, the Chinese began to penetrate into the upper regions of the Assam hills. The British reaction was immediate. By 1914, it had been decided to move the outer line northwards, so that the southern slopes of the Assam Himalayas were included within the theoretical limits of British India. The collapse of Chinese power in Tibet in 1912, following the outbreak of the Chinese Revolution of 1911, provided the opportunity for this advance of the boundary. During the Simla Conference (October 1913 to July 1914), when British, Chinese and Tibetan delegates assembled to discuss the future status of Tibet in the light of the consequences of the Chinese Revolution, the British negotiated with the Tibetans a new border in Assam viz the Mac Mahon Line. It was confirmed by an exchange of secret British and Tibetan notes, and was delimited on a map not published until 1961.

In general, the Mac Mahon Line boundary marked a reasonable limit to Tibetan Sovereignty. Only in Tawang was a Tibetan area of any size transferred to the Indian empire. Even in this case, the British by 1947 had made no serious attempt to extend their administration to the northward part of Tawang where Tibetan government continued its traditional pattern until 1951. Elsewhere along the Himalayan crest, small pockets of territory were placed in the British sphere to which the Tibetans had some claims. If there had to be a defined boundary between Indian and Tibet then except perhaps in the case of Tawang, it could hardly follow an alignment more satisfactory than that of the Mac Mahon Line. The

objection to the Mac Mahon Line, which both the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communists raised, derives not so much from its geographical location as from its treaty basis.

It's a historical fact that the Manchu dynasty of China in the eighteenth century, as part of its boundary policy, established a protectorate over Tibet. It claimed that it alone could represent Tibet in relations with foreign powers. Although, by the end of the nineteenth century the effective power of China in Tibet was at its lowest ebb. It's also a fact that in Anglo-Chinese treaty relations, more precisely, in 1912, the Chinese were forced to withdraw from central Tibet. At that time Tibetans were wishing to declare their independence and throwing the Chinese yoke.

It was not only in Anglo-Chinese treaties that the Chinese position in Tibet was confirmed. In 1904 Lord Curzon was inconvenienced that Russian influence over the Dalai Lama was increasing and ought to be diminished. A British expedition under colonel Francis younghusband was sent to Lhasa. The resultant Anglo-Tibetan treaty in effect placed Tibet to some degree under British protection. The Russian protested. The British thereupon very diplomatically affirmed their limited interest in Tibet. In 1907, at the Anglo-Russian convention, the two imperial powers agreed to have no political relations with Tibet except through the Chinese. The British home government reluctant to turn Tibet into a protectorate, preferred it to remain in some way under Chinese control rather than to become

independent and thus free to enter into relations with the Russians. From that time until 1947, the British remained committed to the position that Tibet was in some way Chinese. The Indian republic inherited this particular legacy. In 1954, they recognised Tibet as being that 'Tibet Region of China'.⁵

After 1917, with the fall of the Tsarist regime in Russia, the British were freed from the restrictions of the 1907 convention. They had no hesitation in carrying on diplomatic relations with Lhasa without first consulting the Chinese. Tibet was seen as a region with some vague connection with China but with freedom to conduct its own internal and external policy. One manifestation of this freedom, the British felt, was the Mac Mahon Line agreement of March 1914. The Chinese did not agree, denying that Tibet had any treaty-making powers whatsoever. The Mac Mahon Line, however suitable as a boundary, was not based on any valid treaty and China refused to accept it. The Chinese might perhaps renegotiate the Mac Mahon Line with independent India. But they never accepted the validity of the Anglo-Tibetan notes of 1914 or any of the other agreements to emerge from the Simla Conference of 1913-14.

Dawa Norbu opines, "The British Raj used to have two layers of defence along the 5000-mile long northern frontier: the outer rampart (Tibet) and the inner rampart (the Himalayan states)"⁶. Given this policy

5. A. Lamb - Asian Frontiers, London - 1968, p. 127.

6. Dawa Norbu - Chinese Strategic thinking on Tibet Strategic Analysis, IDSA, July - 1988 p. 391.

the British based their strategic interests.

The unsatisfactory nature of the treaty basis of the Mac Mahon Line never caused the British much anxiety. China was weak, the victim of civil war and foreign attack. The Mac Mahon Line worked well enough in practice. The British, therefore, made no attempt to create a treaty basis for this boundary such as could meet the challenge of a powerful China. They left a defect frontier system for which the independent Indian government had to pay the price.

The Sikkim - Tibet boundary was defined in the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1890 as following a specified watershed. It is pertinent to mention that the dispute which arose in the sixties and seventies of the present century concerned an area of a few acres at the most. The Chinese did not dispute the validity of the 1890 agreement but they regarded it as a product of the era of 'unequal treaties'. What they claimed was that the Indian had built military structures just on the Chinese side of the watershed at certain passes leading from Sikkim to the Chumbi Valley at Tibet. Whether India had in fact, done what China alleged was by no means clear. Moreover this dispute seemed to be psychological. For China used it to put diplomatic pressure on India. Every Indian knows that China vehemently protested the merger of Sikkim into Indian union.

Sikkim had not been a buffer since the 1880s precisely because Indian influence extended right - through it to its northern border. When the British first came into contact with the Himalayas, Sikkim was in far

closer relations with Tibet than either Nepal or Bhutan was at that time. It is factually correct that Sikkim was under the rule of Tibetan family and was a feudal dependency of the Dalai Lama's government at Lhasa. The British certainly considered this to be a fact.

During the period of Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814-16, the British Indian government - tried to use the Sikkimese ruling family as a channel of communication between Calcutta and the Chinese authorities in Lhasa, to whom it was considered expedient to explain British policy. Because of the connection with the north, the rate of British advance into Sikkimese territory during the 19th century was considerably slowed down.

In 1835, the British acquired Darjeeling and much of the Sikkimese foothill tracts, but the Anglo-Sikkimese war of 1860-61 did not result in British annexation right up to the Himalayan crests. Though the entire state was by treaty defined as being under British protection. No British Resident was at that time established at the Sikkimese capital. Even the traditional pattern of Tibeto - Sikkimese relations remained untouched.

However, in 1886 the British found that they could not much longer delay a more permanent interference in the internal affairs of Sikkim. In that year, the Indian government proposed to send a diplomatic mission to Tibet by way of Sikkim. The mission was given Chinese passport still it was opposed by the Tibetans. "With the consent of the Sikkimese ruler, they set up military posts on Sikkimese territory astride the main road leading from India to Lhasa".⁷

7. Sir Basil Gould - *Tibet and her neighbours*. International Affairs, (London) 26, 1950 p.180.

In 1888, the British expelled the Tibetans after they had failed to get the Chinese to persuade their subjects to withdraw. Two years later, in 1890, the British negotiated a treaty with the Chinese which confirmed British paramountcy in the state and defined verbally the Sikkim-Tibet border. At the same time, a British official was permanently stationed at Gangtok, the Sikkimese capital. This influence however survived the transfer of power in 1947 and was reaffirmed in the agreement between India and Sikkim of 1950. India was confirmed in its responsibility for Sikkimese defence and foreign relations. In 1975 Sikkim became 22nd state of India.

In fact, the Sikkim-Tibet border is the only stretch of the long Sino-Indian boundary which was defined by a treaty signed by the Chinese by 1890.

However, the Tibetans greatly resented the definition of their border by negotiations in which they had not participated. According to Dorothy Woodman, "When, in 1894, an attempt was made to demarcate on the ground the 1890 line by a joint Anglo-Chinese Commission, the Tibetans reacted by secretly removing boundary markers. The result would seem to be that, by 1912, when the Chinese lost control of the Tibetan districts in territorial contact with Sikkim demarcation of the 1890 boundary had not been achieved".⁸

The Chinese communists did not contest the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1890. Though they described it as an unequal treaty but accepted

8. Dorothy Woodman - Himalayan Frontiers (London - 1969) p.120.

the boundary line. They looked on Sikkim as having been detached from the Chinese world through imperialist pressure. But no Chinese government since 1890 raised formal claims to sovereignty over Sikkim. In this context it is interesting to note that the Tibetans had raised such claims.

The Sino-Indian argument over the Sikkim border which broke out in 1963 did not derive from a Chinese assertion of past Tibetan claims to Sikkimese sovereignty. On the contrary, it was the result of a Chinese argument to the effect that the Indians had failed to respect the Sikkim - Tibet border as it was defined by the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1890.

Moreover, the main significance of this particular problem was to be found less in boundary alignment than in the fact of the direct contact of intensively administered Chinese and Indian districts. Had Sikkim managed to retain in the British period the buffer properties of Nepal and Bhutan, then problems of this kind would not have arisen. The circumstances led to British intervention in Sikkim in 1890 and was directly related to nineteenth century British commercial aspirations, Anglo-Russian rivalry in Asia and so on. Though such factors no longer had much relevance for India and China but their consequences still affected contemporary frontier policy.

No doubt the present Chinese government was well aware of the significance of the Himalayan states as buffers between itself and the Indian republic. For this reason alone, it would seem unlikely that the Chinese would attempt direct intervention in the Himalayan states as a counter to Indian measures.

A. Lamb writes, "China wanted to create an even more effective buffer, a confederation of Himalayan states that might eventually be expanded to embrace not only Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan but also Ladakh, the tribal areas of the NEFA in the Assam Himalayas and even Nagaland. Good geopolitical arguments could be adduced in support - of such a confederation but the practical problems involved in its creation would seem to be insuperable, atleast through peaceful methods".⁹

However, the evidence that the Chinese had really given serious thought to a project of this kind was far from satisfactory. In fact, the British alone possessed the power and the freedom to manipulate to have turned the whole Himalayan range into a continuous buffer between the Indian subcontinent and Chinese central Asia.

Dawa Norbu rightly argues "The concept of a buffer state is not culture bound in the sense confined to the era of 'imperialism', it is dictated by geopolitics and the near symmetry of great powers which seek to create structures of peace in mutual interest. This is the basic strategic conflict between India and China. The Indian elite now feels that the necessary buffer ought to be Tibet, and China behaves both in word and in deed, that the new buffer line should be the Cis-Himalayan region. The Chinese drive to make a new buffer zone in the Cis-Himalayan region where Chinese influence predominates that of India, seriously undermines the gentlemen's agreement reached between Nehru and Chou En-lai in the 1950s that the two sides would respect the Himalayas as their respective spheres of influence".¹⁰

9. A. Lamb - Op-Cit. p.144.

10. Dawa Norbu - Op-Cit. p.392.

However, had the British forced the Dogras to relinquish Ladakh and restored it to the dynasty which had ruled it until Gulab Singh's conquest in the 1830s, had they left the Guruthas after the war of 1814-16 in control of Kumaon and Garhwal, had they been able in the latter part of the 19th century to limit the expansion of their influence into Sikkim, and had they not felt called upon in 1914 to advance their border in Assam from the edge of the Brahmaputra Valley to the crests of the Assam Himalayas—then indeed the concept of a powerful buffer might have emerged in the post-colonial era. With so many regions of established direct Sino-Indian territorial contact, the prospect of such a buffer could be no more than an imaginary exercise.

CHAPTER -II
The Mc Mahon Line

The India-China border in the north-east, often called the Mc Mahon Line, was given formal approval at a tripartite conference held in Simla from October 1913 to July 1914. The Simla conference held eight formal sessions. The first two took place at Simla on 13 October and 18 November (1913) respectively. The next three at Delhi on 12 January, 17 February and 11 March (1914), and the last three again at Simla, on 7 and 22 April (re-convened on 27 April) and 3 July. Thus the conference met both at Simla and in Delhi. It was attended by the plenipotentiaries of the governments of British India, Tibet and China. All of them had equal status. Sir Henry Arther Mac Mahon, Lonchen Shatra and Ivan Chen were the British Indian, Tibetan and Chinese representative at the conference respectively. The negotiations pertaining to the boundary settlement between India and Tibet took place in Delhi between 17 January and 25 March (1914). An exchange of notes between the Tibetan and Indian representatives in March 1914 confirmed the boundary between India and Tibet east of Bhutan. "It was actually delineated on two large-scale maps after full discussion, and these maps were signed and sealed by the Indian and Tibetan plenipotentiaries."¹

The boundary as delineated on the maps was later confirmed by a formal exchange of notes, and the map itself was attached to the draft convention. This was challenged by the Chinese representatives at that time.

As for the Tibetan plenipotentiaries, they were not displeased

1. Parshotam Mehra - Mc Mahon Line and After p. 276, macmillan 1974.

at all with the delineation of the boundary. As a matter of fact, what J.P. Mitter has written, "Lonchen Shatra, the Tibetan representative at the conference, stated clearly in the letters exchanged that the government in Lhasa had ordered him to agree to the boundary as drawn on the map".²

The natural traditional, administrative, and ethnic boundary between India and Tibet was merely confirmed by the Mac Mahon Line. For the most part, it ran along the crest of the high Himalayan range which formed the natural border between the Tibetan tableland to the north and the sub-mountainous region to the south.

The proceedings of the Simla conference began with the Chinese and Tibetan representatives inviting Sir Henry Mac Mahon to preside. After an address of welcome to his colleagues and their staff by Mac Mahon, copies of their respective plenipotentiary powers were interchanged and found to be in order. Thereafter, Lonchen Shatra laid on the table the claims of his government. Parshotam Mehra writes "Lonchen stressed how the relations of China and Tibet were like those of a disciple and teacher and how these relations had been snapped by the recent excesses of the Chinese, and claiming for Tibet a frontier which included within Tibetan territory the district of Kokonor and the March country as far east as Tachienlu".³ Lonchen told that Tibet and China had never been under each other and would never associate with each other in future.

2. J.P. Mitter - Truth about Mc Mahon Line, (Calcutta) 1963, p.168.

3. P. Mehra - Op-Cit, p.189.

It was decided that Tibet was an independent state and the Dalai Lama was the ruler of Tibet in all temporal as well as in spiritual affairs. "Tibet repudiated the Anglo-Chinese convention concluded at Peking on the 27th April 1906. She did not send a representative for this convention, nor did she affix her seal on it".⁴

Lonchen also demanded compensation for all the forcible exactions of money or other property taken from the Tibetan government. When China's turn came, Lonchen put her claims even higher than those of Tibet. He said that Tibet formed 'an integral part of the territory of the Republic of China' and had the right of appointing a Resident at Lhasa with an escort of 26,00 Chinese soldiers. He maintained that China had the right to guide Tibet in her foreign and military affairs. So far as the frontier between Chinese proper and Tibet was concerned, he submitted a map which pushed the frontier as far west as Giamda within 60 miles of Lhasa.

There was no meeting point between the above mentioned claims and counterclaims. On November 18, when the conference met again Mc Mahon explained that it would be futile to discuss other points of difference between the Chinese and the Tibetans until the question of boundary between the two countries was settled. This was agreed to by the two other plenipotentiaries.

In support of the boundary claimed by Tibet, Lonchen Shatra then produced a whole library of evidence i.e. a large number of original archives from Lhasa, tomes of delicate manuscripts bound in richly

4. Preman Ady - Tibet on the Imperial Chess Board, (New Delhi), Academic Publishers 1984, p. 96.



embroidered covers. Parshotam Mehra writes "Lonchen confronted his opponent also with the official history of Tibet, compiled by the 5th Dalai Lama and known as the 'Golden Tree of the Index of the sole ornament of the world', a work of great scope and colossal dimensions".⁵

However, Ivan Chen ignored all historical records and treaties and emphasised only the great military successes achieved by the Chinese in time of Chao Erh - Feng in the beginning of the present century. "Ivan Chen however, proposed that in the interest of expeditious settlement it would be better if both sides, instead of examining every bit of evidence piecemeal, presented consolidated statements of their territorial claims. This was agreed to. The detailed and consolidated statements were then prepared-the Tibetan of prodigious length, the Chinese, comparatively short and without sufficient documentary backing and presented to the next session of the conference on January 12, 1914."⁶

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The differences between the two sides, however, remained as "irreconcilable as before and a breakdown seemed inevitable. Under the circumstances both Ivan Chen and Lonchen Shatra requested Mc Mahon to suggest some definite solution of the frontier problem which they would refer to their government without delay Parshotam Mehra is of the view that "Mc Mahon who had anticipated the impasse, had already worked out in consultation with London a solution which was likely to afford satisfaction to the contending parties and at the same time accord with British

5. Parshotam Mehra - Op-Cit, p.189.

6. Sudhakar Bhat - Indian and China, popular Book Services, (New Delhi), 1967, p.145.

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Indian interests".⁷ This solution envisaged the division of Tibet into two zones to be called the inner and the outer Tibet (as viewed from China) on the lines of inner and outer Mongolia created by the Russians. Outer Tibet was to be the wide area, to the east of the historic Yangtse frontier, over which the Tibetan government had for amnu centuries exercised complete jurisdiction. Inner Tibet was to be the broad, pripheral area of Tibet, extending in the worth to the Altya Tagh range and in the east to the old provincial borders of Kansu and Szechuan in which the population was mainly Tibetan by race and relgion. Mc Mahon spelt out this solution in the form of a draft convention and the outlines of outer and inner Tibet were shown on the accompanying map.

P.C. Chakravarti argues that " Ivan chen haggled for a modification of the Tibetan-China boundary and of the phraseology of the draft convention. Some of his suggestions were conceded, but not all- particularly the extravagant territorial demands to which Lonchen Shatra would under no conditions agree..... On April 29, however, the Chinese government disavowed the action of their plenipotentiary and declined to recognise the settlement".⁸ Although Ivan Chen's signature was repudicated by the Chinese government, its objections in memoranda dated April 25, May 1 and June 13, 1914, pertained solely to the boundary between inner and outer Tibet, and not between inner Tibet and China.

Although the Chinese government dishonoured their plenipotentiary's signature and declined to ratify the convention, it has had important

7. Parshotam Mehra - Op-Cit, p.200.

8. P.C. Chakravarti - The Evolution of India's Northern Borders; Asia Publishing House, 1971, pp.59-60.

results which persist until today. For this reason, it is also necessary to set out its provisions in some detail. Following were the terms:⁹

1. Tibet was divided into two zones, marked roughly by the line of the upper Yangtse and corresponding to the Sino-Tibetan frontier when the Manchus first invaded Tibet in 1720. The eastern zone, closer to China was called Inner Tibet, the western zone with Lhasa as the capital, Outer Tibet.
2. Chinese suzerainty over the whole of Tibet was recognised, but with strong reservations. China engaged not to convert Tibet into a Chinese province, not to include Tibetans in a Chinese parliament, and not to send troops into Outer Tibet (except a small escort of 300 to the Resident in Lhasa).
3. Outer Tibet was to be fully autonomous under the Dalai Lama's government. The Dalai Lama's government was further to retain existing rights, particularly ecclesiastical rights in Inner Tibet.
4. The frontiers were closely defined (a) between Inner and Outer Tibet; (b) between Tibet and India along a line negotiated by Sir Henry Mc Mahon, and subsequently (like the Durand Line negotiated by Sir Mortimer Durand on the North-West Frontier) known as the Mc Mahon Line. This line roughly followed the Himalayan crest from the North-East corner of Bhutan across the

9. H.C. Heda - India- China Border Problem, Bureau of Parliamentary Research - 1960 p.20.

Brahmaputra near the big loop to a pass called Insurazi on the Northern corner of Burma.

As stated, the Chinese repudiated the convention their ground being that they could not accept the proposed Sino-Tibetan boundaries. In this connection an important point made by an authoritative source¹⁰ is that the Indo-Tibetan frontier (the Mc Mahon Line) was never mentioned at the time by China.

The Chinese government, however, raised objections but informed the British that their reservations were only in regard to the boundary between Inner and Outer Tibet. On 29 April the Chinese government derecognised the settlement. But the British were prepared for such a contingency. On June 25 they informed the Chinese government that unless the convention was signed before the end of this month, British government would hold themselves free to sign it separately with Tibet and China would loose all privileges and advantages which the tripartite convention secured to them.

However, when the Chinese came forward with fresh proposals, the Tibetan government categorically refused to consider them. In that situation Sir Henry Mc Mahon and Lonchen Shatra proceeded to the conclusion of a bilateral treaty between their two countries on July 4, 1914.¹¹

10. P.C. Chakravarti - Op-Cit, p.60.

11. Parshotam Mehra - Op-Cit, p.240.

In other words, the recognition of Chinese Suzerainty over Tibet by Tibetan and British governments and the right conceded to China to appoint an Amban to Lhasa among other things were withdrawn. Alastair Lamb writes "Tibet was released from the obligation to recognise Chinese Suzerainty and British committed herself to the position that she would not recognise Chinese Suzerainty over Tibet unless the Chinese government fulfilled their side of the bargain by signing the convention".¹²

The Chinese in explaining the reasons for their non-adherence to the convention referred only to their objection to the provisions regarding the Sino-Tibetan frontier. On July 6, 1914 the Chinese government told the British Minister in Peking to find a method of settlement completely satisfactory to all parties. In reply, the British government informed the Chinese government on August 8 that the agreement reached at Simla represented the settled views.

The Simla convention, which was originally designed to be an tripartite convention, thus became an Anglo-Tibetan convention. It became the basis of relations between Britain and Tibet from 1914 to the date when Britain formally withdrew from India viz 1947.

Simultaneously with the tripartite negotiations described above two other sets of bipartite negotiations were conducted between Britain and Tibet. The first related the definition of a boundary alignment between India and Tibet to the north of Assam and the second to a new trade agreement between the two countries. In fact, the British government gathered

12. *Alastair Lamb - The China - India Border, London and New York, 1964, p. 51.*

a number of material, geographical and ethnic evidences just before the conference was held and on that basis the alignment of the frontier from east of Bhutan to the Isu-Razipass (at the trijunction of India, Tibet and Burma) was delineated. The broad principle followed in the delineation were the principle of water-shed generally followed in demarcating frontiers in inaccessible mountaineous regions. From the Indian side, Charles Bell was entrusted with the task of discussing the boundary with Lonchen Shatra. The records available with the government of India show that from January 15 to January 31, 1914 they considered the proposed alignment with meticulous care in a spirit of give and take.

The results of the discussion were summarized by Bell in a letter to Lonchen Shatra dated February 6, 1914, in which both the points of agreement and reservation were clearly indicated. Thereafter, some of these points of reservation were referred to the Tibetan government. About six weeks later, on March 21, 1914 Bell informed Mc Mahon that the Tibetan government definitely agreed to the boundary alignment. This was followed by an exchange of notes between the British and the Tibetan plenipotentiaries on March 24, and 25. Sir Henry Mc Mahon wrote to Lonchen Shatra. "In February last you accepted the Indo-Tibetan frontier from the Isu Razi pass to the Bhutan frontier as given in the map (two sheets) of which two copies are herewith attached, subject to the confirmation of your government and the following conditions : (a) The Tibetan ownership in private estates on the British side of the frontier will not be disturbed. (b) If the sacred places of Tso Karpo and Tsari Sarpa fall within a day's march of

the British side of the frontier, they will be included in Tibetan territory and the frontier modified accordingly. I understand that your government have now agreed to this frontier subject to the above two conditions. I shall be glad to learn definitely from you that this is the case".¹³

However, Mc Mahon expressed the hope that a final settlement of the Indo-Tibetan frontier would be of great advantage to both governments. In his reply Lonchen wrote, "As it was feared that there might be friction in future, unless the boundary between Tibet and India is clearly defined, I submitted the map, which you sent to me in February last, to the Tibetan government in Lhasa, and I accordingly agreed to the boundary as marked in red in the two copies of the maps signed by you I have signed and sealed the two copies of the maps. I have kept one copy here and return herewith the other".¹⁴

Lonchen's reply was dated 25 March, 1914 and bore his seal. This mutually agreed Indo-Tibetan boundary has since then been known as the Mc Mahon Line. The Line was later incorporated in the map attached to the proposed tripartite draft convention. It showed the external boundaries of Tibet and submitted to the seventh meeting of the Simla Conference on April 22, 1914.

Although the Chinese plenipotentiary persisted in his demand for the rectification of the eastern (Sino-Tibetan) boundary, neither he nor his government raised a single word of objection regarding the line

13. P.C. Chakarvarti - OP-Cit, pp.63-64.

14. Parshotam Mehra - OP-Cit, p. 231.

delineating the southern section of the boundary. In other words, the Chinese government in 1914 acquiesced in the agreed Indo-Tibetan boundary. Their objection to Mc Mahon Line was a comparatively recent development, as a matter of fact as late as 1959.

One of the arguments which Communist China put forward in 1959 to derecognise the Mc Mahon Line was that it was determined by a secret agreement between the British and the Tibetan representatives 'behind the lack of the Chinese representatives'¹⁵ and was, therefore unknown to him and his government. It was true that the British did not seek the participation of the Chinese in discussing or negotiating the Indo-Tibetan border agreement. But the reasons for this omission are not far to seek.

Past experience had shown that Anglo-Chinese agreements bearing on Tibet were meaningless because the Tibetans did not recognise them and without their recognition they could not be made effective. Secondly, the treaties which Tibet signed with foreign powers such as those of 1684, 1842 and 1852 with Ladakh and Kashmir, that of 1856 with Nepal and that of 1904 with Britain were scrupulously observed by the Tibetans.

It was, thus, clear that if an effective Indo-Tibetan boundary agreement was to be arranged it was with Tibet that the British must negotiate, not with China. Thirdly, since 1912 Tibet had thrown off the last vestige of Chinese authority and asserted her independence. Although the British continued to work for a restoration of Chinese Suzerainty,

 15. *Sir Olaf Caroe - The India-China Frontiers, Geographical Journal, Vol.130, 1964, p.180.*

they knew and recognised this fact of Tibet being an independent polity before and during the Simla Conference.

Karunakar Gupta writes, " During the prolonged negotiations at the Conference, whenever the status of Tibet came up for discussion with Ivan Chen, the Chinese plenipotentiary, was reminded that the Chinese administrative control in Tibet had ceased to exist, and that until the seal of the Tibetan plenipotentiary had actually been affixed to an agreement such as under consideration, the status of Tibet was that of an independent nation recognising no allegiance to China".¹⁶ Infact Lonchen Shatra's participation in the conference on a footing of equality with the British and the Chinese representative involved a recognition by the other two participants of Tibet's independent status and treaty making competence.

It may, however, well be presumed that Lonchen Shatra would have refused to discuss the question of Tibet's frontiers with India in the company of the Chinese plenipotentiary. Above all, the question of the Indo-Tibetan boundary was not within the terms of reference of the conference. The British knew that it was a matter to be settled between Tibet and India and not one for tripartite negotiations.

It was, nevertheless, not the intention of the British to keep back from the Chinese the alignment of the Indo-Tibetan frontier, once it was agreed upon by the two appropriate governments. On February 17, 1914 Mc Mahon tabled a statement with an explanatory map describing

16. Karunakar Gupta - *The Mc Mahon Line : The British Legacy, China Quarterly* (London) Vol.47, July-September, 1971, p.93.

the boundaries of Tibet. In this context P. Mehra quotes Mc Mahon in that he said " well authenticated records, both Chinese and Tibetan including the China - Tibet treaty of 822 A.D. and the Chinese maps of the Tang dynasty, indicate historic Tibetan frontiers such as shown by the red line on the skeleton map which I now lay upon the table"¹⁷. This same map was incorporated and attached to the draft of the Simla convention and was signed by the Chinese plenipotentiary.

In the Simla convention map Tibet's outer frontier was shown by the red line and division of Inner and Outer Tibets was shown by the blue line. The red line (this was the Mc Mahon Line) was continued to show the frontier of Tibet in the direction of north eastern India. Any one who looks at this map carefully would see that this red line was actually revised, conceding some small territory to China and agreeing that it was not part of Inner Tibet. At both ends of the revised line the signatures of the three plenipotentiaries are given. Ivan Chen is written at either end so that Ivan Chen not only signed the map but signed also the alterations on the map.

In view of the above facts, it was difficult to accept the naive and baseless assertion made by Communist China and his western supporters that the agreed Indo-Tibetan frontier was not known to the Chinese plenipotentiary at Simla or to the Chinese government then or in the following months and years. The Chinese did not raise any objections about the southern sector of Tibet's frontier because they did not feel concerned

17. Parshotam Mehra - *Op-Cit*, p.208.

about it. It did not touch any of the territories which China was claiming from Tibet.

The draft Simla convention and the map accompanying it continued to be scrutiny and discussion since the last week of April, 1914. In the following months the Chinese came forward with fresh proposals for frontier rectification but these proposals referred only to the Sino-Tibetan frontier not to the Indo-Tibetan frontier.

P.C. Chakravarti opines, "On June 13, 1914, the Chinese submitted a memorandum along with an explanatory map. In this map the red (Mc Mahon) Line remains unaltered, the yellow line represents the boundary as suggested in the memorandum".¹⁸ The fact that even in this map drawn up by the Chinese themselves the red line remained unaltered demonstrates that they saw nothing wrong about it and accepted it without any reservation.

The other set of exclusively Indo-Tibetan negotiations, conducted during the Simla Conference, concerned Indo-Tibetan trade. While these negotiations were proceeding, China was never consulted either by Britain or Tibet nor was she made a party when they were finalised in the form of a new trade agreement. M.F. Willoughby writes, "The new trade regulations of 1914 superseded the earlier ones of 1893 and 1908, to which China was a party, and led to a considerable increase of Indo-British commercial activity and influence beyond the Himalayas".¹⁹ They also proved beyond

18. P.C. Chakravarti - OP-Cit, p.67.

19. M.F. Willoughby - The Relation of Tibet to China, Journal of Royal Central Asian Society, Vol.xi, 1924, Part II p.88.

doubt that in the British estimation, Tibet in 1914 was an entity capable of altering treaty obligations or entering into new treaty obligations without reference to China. Indeed, the Chinese government never questioned the validity of these Trade Regulations. It might be inferred that the Chinese held the same view regarding Tibet's treaty making power. In fact, the Trade Regulations of 1914 continued to be in operation till they were revised by mutual consent by India and China in 1954.

Very often Chinese also argued that their government was forced to attend the Simla Conference. The fact, however, is that the Chinese participated in it wholeheartedly and took an active interest in the proceedings. In any case communist China can not seek support from the actions of previous governments of China when it suits its purpose and disown them when they do not. Such a position would make a mockery of international law.

It may be noted, in conclusion, that the later Chinese stand on the Mc Mahon Line was inspired by other motives than a scientific or legal ascertainment of the boundary between India and Tibet. In the earlier period of cordiality between India and China, Chou En -Lai had accepted and agreed to retain the Mc Mahon Line as the boundary between India and Tibet. The Chinese communist contention that Tibet did not have treaty making powers, being part of China and therefore the Mc Mahon Line is illegal is a retrospective distortion of history. Tibet in 1913-14 when the Simla Conference was held was relatively autonomous with treaty making powers. We can not recreate history in the light of present day realities, viz Chinese takeover of Tibet since 1950.

CHAPTER - III

The Sikkim - Tibet Border

The early nineteenth century witnessed a considerable change in the political scene in India. Having mastered India, Britishers began to penetrate the Himalayas in their urge to establish an overland trade route to Lhasa in Tibet and then towards Peking in China. Sikkim could not become wittingly or unwittingly a party to British strategies and political manipulations. On the other hand, Sikkim's traditional role continued to involve it also in Tibeto-Chinese activities.

The British, however, were attracted towards Sikkim in 1814 during the Sikkim - Nepal war. Then Sikkim had very close ties with Tibet. Britishers tried to cultivate political and military relations with Sikkim on two bases. First, Sikkim was easily accessible through Chumbi Valley of Tibet and second, it would facilitate communication with China through Tibet on account of matrimonial relations and religious affinities with Tibet.

In view of the above reasons East India Company deputed Captain Barre to establish contacts with the ruler of Sikkim.¹ Captain Barre assured the ruler of the state (then the kingdom) to help him to safeguard its territories against Nepalese encroachment which had started from 1780. The ruler of Sikkim agreed with the Britishers on getting such an assurance.

Due to growing cordial relations between the company and Sikkim, the Nepal - Sikkim war came to an end. On account of this a treaty was

1. B.S.K. Grover - *Sikkim and India: storm consolidation*, Jain Brothers, New Delhi 1974, p.15.

signed on December 2, 1815 between East India Company and Nepal², known as the Treaty of Sugauly. It was agreed upon in the treaty that if a dispute arises between Nepal and and Sikkim that would be solved by the British East India Company through their arbitration. In February 1817 another treaty was signed between comapny and the ruler of Sikkim which is known as the treaty of Titalia. It was not only the beginning of British penetration in Sikkim for the trade routes to Tibet but it became an instrument to provide the military force to the company in case of her deployment of troops in the hills and in general to afford the British troops every aids and facilities in his (the ruler) power. Thus most of the power indirectly, according to the treaty, passed into the hands of the company.

Besides, Britishers had established Sikkim as a strong buffer state between Nepal and Bhutan. They also got trade privileges and to trade deeper in the Tibetan frontier.

In the meantime the commandant of the British frontier forces captain G.M.A. Lloyd at Titalia, along with the governor general of India, visited the village of Darjeeling. They studied the site and suggested to the British government that it was a suitable site for stationing the British troops. Thereafter the British government offered Sikkim to pay for this site or to exchange it with some other territory of the company. In the initial stages Sikkim appeared to be reluctant to agree.

2. Ibid pp.15-16.

But incourse of time due to the constant need of British help and protection in putting down hostile elements of the Lepchas and the uncertain attitude of Tibet, the ruler of Sikkim changed his mind. He gave away the Darjeeling area to the Britishers in 1835.

The British East India Company agreed to pay a meagre sum of three thousand rupees per annum as compensation for the Darjeeling area. This subsidy was increased to six thousand rupees annually in 1846.³ In this way the accession of Darjeeling resulted as an important event in the history of company's relations with Sikkim. Thus Darjeeling was converted into an important observation post of the Britishers on Sikkim and the Tibetan frontier areas besides its climatic value to the British troops.

Soon after the take over of Darjeeling, the British started rapid development of the area as a military station. They also encouraged Nepalese to settle in this area inorder to strengthen the British forces and create a class who would support them. During the period 1839-1861 the British Sikkimese relations deteriorated very much. While these differences were going on, Hooker and Champbell visited Sikkim. They were both arrested on their return by the Sikkim borderly force and put in Jail like ordinary criminals and tortured.⁴ The British took a serious view of such events and forced Sikkim to release Hooker and Champbell immediately. Consequently they were released on December 9, 1849.⁵

3. Karan and William - *The Himalayan kingdoms : Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim*, D. Van Nastered Co. p.58.

4. S.R. Shukla - *Sikkim, the story of the Integration*, S. Chand & Co, New Delhi - p.24.

5. *Ibid*, p.28.

The above, events of 1849 resulted in Sikkim losing nearly twelve hundred square kilometers of fertile land as well as an annual subsidy of six thousand rupees also. The relations between the company and the ruler of Sikkim deteriorated further and reached the verge of an armed clash between the two. As a result of this the British launched a massive attack on Sikkim on February 1, 1861. During the fight Namgyal (King) fled to Tibet and the Britishers occupied the Sikkimese territory extending up to the Teesta Valley.⁶ Later on a treaty was concluded between the king of Sikkim and the British on 28th March 1861, known as the treaty of 1861.⁷

The treaty of 1861 held the king of Sikkim responsible for the Britisher's invasion and conquest of Sikkim on very flimsy grounds and cancelled all previous treaties. They demanded compensation of seven thousand rupees for the loss for occupying a part of Sikkim territory. Failing the payment of that in time would result in more chunks of the territory going into the hands of the Britishers. It was an indication that slowly but certainly Britishers were out to take the kingdom away. All restrictions on travellers and monopolies in trade between the British territories and Sikkim were abolished. British subjects had a free access to any part of Sikkim or to go anywhere through Sikkim.

The treaty of 1861 was indeed a very tactful move of the company from a military, political and economic point of view. Sikkim government

6. B.S.K. Grover - *Op-Cit*, p.20.

7. W. Leifer - *Himalayas: Mountains of Destiny*, translated by Lirsula Prideaux, Oxford Book Co. Calcutta, p.50.

was bound to raise no objection if the British government desired to open out roads through Sikkim. The Government of Sikkim would abstain from any act of aggression or hostility against any of the neighbouring states which were allies of the British governor. The British government would sit on judgement in any of the disputes between Sikkim and those of the neighbouring states.

Last but not the least the government of Sikkim had to afford every aid and facility to British troops when employed in the hills. Virtually by this treaty Sikkim became a British protectorate. Infact, the Britishers snatched away all internal and external powers from the ruler of Sikkim.

After the treaty of 1861, the ruler Siddkeong Namgyal was seemingly the most happy person in their British-Sikkim relations. The British government restored the annual grant of six thousand ruppes and also increased it to ruppes nine thousand in 1868. During this period the ruler of Sikkim tried to reorganise the Sikkim army with the help of the British but could not successfully negotiate it. In a way the British never wanted that Sikkim should have a force of its own trained on their lines.

However, the British empire in Asia was paramount and Sikkim was also feeling the bywinds of the British diplomacy. At the same time the British constructed a road from Darjeeling to the Tibetan frontier at Jeelap-La despite opposition from Tibet and China.⁸ The relations of

8. B.S.K. Grover - *Op-Cit*, p.22

the Sikkimese king with the British deteriorated on the issue of the British consent for Nepalese settlements in Darjeeling area.⁹

As pointed out earlier a number of British attempts were made to develop trade relations with Tibet and China. It was not done only from a commercial point of view but also for political and strategic reasons despite opposition from Sikkim, Tibet and China.

In 1886, a mission was sent to Tibet under the leadership of Coleman Macaulay. He was prevented by the Chinese officials from entering into Tibetan territory. Thus the mission failed. As soon as the mission failed the Tibetans sent a small taks force southwards which occupied a strip of Sikkimese territory near Jeelap-La and built an improvised fort at Lungthu nearly 32 kilometers deep looking out at Darjeeling Tibet road".¹⁰

In March 1888, a British expeditionary force was sent against the Tibetans at Lungthu where the Tibetans had established themselves. The campaign finally ended in September of the same year forcing the defeated Tibetans to retreat across Jeelap-La, one of the many passes into the Chumbi Valley.

The Lungthu operation of 1888 necessitated the need to settle the boundaries of Sikkim with Tibet and also with China. Consequently an Anglo-Chinese convention was conducted on March 17, 1890 at Calcutta.¹¹

9. S.R. Shukla - Op-Cit, p.36.

10. V.H. Coelho - Sikkim and Bhutan, ICSSR, New Delhi 1967, p.22.

11. P.R. Rao - India and Sikkim, Sterling publishers, New Delhi, 1972, p.105.

With the agreement reached at this convention, the boundaries of Sikkim and Tibet were defined and the British protectorate over Sikkim was recognised.

The 1890 convention admitted the government of India's control over the external affairs of Sikkim. The border between Sikkim and Tibet was placed at the watershed of the Teesta river.

It was agreed that "the border of Sikkim and Tibet should be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet. The line commenced at mount gipmochi on the Bhutan frontier and followed the above mentioned water parting to the point where it met Nepal territory."¹²

It was admitted that the British government, whose protectorate over the Sikkim state was thereby recognised had direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of that state. It was said that except through and with the permission of the British government, neither the ruler of Sikkim nor any of its officer would have official relations of any kind with any other country.

Both the British and Chinese governments agreed to respect the border and to prevent acts of aggression from their respective side of the frontier.

The 1890 convention further said that the question of providing

12. V.H. Coelho - Op, Cit, p.26.

increased facilities for trade across the Sikkim - Tibet border would be discussed with a view to a mutually satisfactory arrangement by the High contracting powers. The question of pasturage on the Sikkim side of the border was reserved for further examination and future adjustment.

It was also agreed that the high contracting powers reserved for discussion and arrangement the method in which official communications between the British authorities in India and the authorities in Tibet was to be conducted.

In the convention, it was pointed out that two joint commissioners, within six months from the ratification of the convention, would be appointed one by the British government in India, and other by the Chinese Resident in Tibet.

However, in the 1890 Anglo-Chinese convention, there were many weaknesses. First of all, Tibet neither signed the convention nor approved of it (this point will be elaborated later). The second weakness was the failure of China to realize that it was not in a position to enforce the convention on Tibet.

In spite of the above weaknesses, the convention settled once for all the status of Sikkim, which for all practical purposes became a part and parcel of British India and lost its separate existence and identity. Sikkim no longer had a claim to the Chumbi Valley where her rulers had maintained a summer residence for many years.

After the conclusion of the convention of 1890 the British government suggested to the Chinese government three unsettled matters, relating to pasturage, communications and trade should be settled immediately. Consequently in December 1893, a protocol to the convention of 1890, was concluded which regulated trade, communications and pasturage.¹³ This regulation provided the Britishers freedom of trade along the Tibetan frontier. In other words, the British government established a trade mart at Yatung on the Tibetan side of the border, a mart which was opened in 1894.

To shed some light on Sikkim-Tibet border is in order. As a matter of fact the border dispute between Sikkim and Tibet came to light when J.C. White, the British political officer, for Sikkim, visited Yatung in Tibet in May 1894.¹⁴ He went to attend to the opening of the above mentioned trade mart. White was disappointed both with the location and working of the trade mart at Yatung.

During his stay at Yatung white informed the government of India that certain places in the north-east of Sikkim and within the border as laid down by the convention of 1890 had been occupied by the Tibetan soliders.¹⁵ He wanted that the government of India should authorise him to open the question with the local Chinese officials at Yatung and settle the matter. The Lieutenant governor of Bengal Charles Elliot supported

13. B.S.K. Grover - Op, Cit, p.25.

14. O.P. Singh - Strategic Sikkim, B.R. publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1985, p.40.

15. P.R. Rao - Op, Cit, p.125.

white's proposal and recommended it to the government of India. The government of India declined to accept it with a view to avoiding all controversy with Tibet and to develop trade. Moreover, it regarded the border question as of minor importance. On August 9, 1894 Lord Elgin, the viceroy of India addressed a letter to the Chinese resident at Lhasa in which he suggested that the officials of both the governments should travel together along the border to get acquainted with the actual border line.

On October 4, 1894, the Chinese resident replied to the viceroy pointing out that the Tibetan council had objected to the travel of the Indian officers inside Tibet. But they had agreed to comply with the proposals to send officers to define the border.

However, the government of India did not take exception to the Tibetan objection to the travel of the British officers inside their frontier and considered it sufficient to erect the pillars at the passes which could be approached from Sikkim. But eventually it ended in Fiasco.

At that point of time, the Chinese resident (known as Amban) requested the viceroy that the demarcation might be postponed for five years, as the Lamas of the three great monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Gaden has sent him petitions to retain the ancient border.¹⁶ As regards the destruction of the pillars, he informed the viceroy that the

16. O.P. Singh - Op, Cit, p.49.

Tibetan council was not responsible for it.

In November 1895 Nolan, the immediate superior of white, was deputed to visit Yatung to hold preliminary discussions with the Chinese and Tibetan delegates. Nolan met the Chinese delegate, major Tu and the Tibetan delegate Tenzing Wangpu.¹⁷ The Chinese delegate informed Nolan that his government had requested Dalai Lama to send the Tibetan representatives to participate in the work concerning the demarcation of Sikkim Tibet border. Major Tu also assured Nolan that if the Tibetan representatives failed to appear, the Chinese would be prepared, without waiting for the Tibetans to carry on the work with the officers of the government of India.

The tibetan delegate Tenzing Wangpu, however, told Nolan that Tibet would be reluctant to give any land merely because it lay on the Sikkim side of the line indicated in the convention of 1890. But he added that the matter was one to be treated in the spirit of conciliation. From Wangpu's statement, as B.S. Das writes that "the Tibetans were no longer willing to accept the arrangements made on their behalf by the Chinese".¹⁸ Nolan felt that any discussions with Tibetans regarding their claim to the Sikkim area of Giaogong would reopen the entire Sikkim Tibet border to question. Therefore, he suggested to the government of India that it should demarcate the border alone and drive out the Tibetans from Giaogong.¹⁹ Sir Charles Elliot supported Nolan's proposal and

17. P.R. Rao - Op, Cit, p.130.

18. B.S. Das - The Sikkim Saga, Vikash Publishing, New Delhi, 1983, p.32.

19. P.R. Rao - Op, Cit, p.132.

suggested to annex the Chumbi Valley, if Tibet refused to recognize the newly demarcated border.

The viceroy Lord Elgin was reluctant to adopt the strong line for two reasons. Firstly, that would give an excuse for the Chinese or the Tibetans to reopen discussions on the Sikkim-Tibet border. Secondly, it might result in the total stoppage of trade at Yatung. Moreover, the viceroy believed that the Tibetans had reasonable claims to Giaogang. Similarly, the new Lieutenant Governor of Bengal Alexander Mackenzie felt that the border line was not worth quarrelling about and that the occupation of the Chumbi Valley would not only be "inequitable but also impolitic".²⁰

In view of above considerations, Elgin decided to adopt a pacific policy towards Tibet. He informed the Chinese Amban that the government of India was prepared to examine the Tibetan claims to Giaogong, since it wanted to develop friendly relations and trade with that country. The Amban was asked to send his delegates accompanied by Tibetan representative to meet British officials at any convenient place in Sikkim.

On March 11, 1898 the Chinese Amban wrote a letter to Elgin. He suggested that the Tibetans should be allowed to inspect the frontier as laid down in the convention of 1890 so that they would have no excuse for "holding back or reverting to old arguments".²¹

However, on November 17, 1898, white held discussions at Yatung

20. V.H. Coelho - *Op, Cit*, p.67.

21. P.R. Rao, *Op, Cit*, p.140.

with the Chinese frontier officer Liyu Sen and the Tibetan delegate Tenzing Wangpu to examine the Tibetan claim to Giaogong. The Tibetans produced a tracing showing the frontier as claimed by them and indicated the evidence on which they relied. White asked the Tibetan delegates whether they were prepared to afford better trading facilities if the government of India accepted the Tibetan claims. The Tibetan representatives replied that they were authorised only to settle the boundary as claimed by them and that they had no knowledge or order with regard to trade matters.

The Tibetan delegates, however, agreed to submit any proposal the government of India would like to make, to the Tibetan grand council. On December 8, 1898, the Chinese Amban proposed to Elgin that the delimitation of the border as claimed by the Tibetans should be carried out by the officers representing China, India and Tibet. In return for that he promised to secure the Tibetan consent for the removal of the trade mart from Yatung to Rinchingong.

White saw no advantage in Amban's proposal to shift the trade mart to Rinchingong since that place was situated very near to Yatung. He, therefore, proposed to the government of India that it should accept the Tibetan claims to Giaogong provided the Tibetans agree (1) to shift the Trade mart from Yatung to a new place called Phari, situated on the Tibetan plateau, (2) to place no restrictions on the functioning of the mart and (3) to sign an extradition treaty with the government of India".²²

22. *W. Leifer - Op, Cit, p.130.*

A study of White's proposals show that his attitude towards Tibet stiffened. In 1894 when he visited Yatung he asked the government to demand the shifting of the trade mart from that place to Rinchingong but in 1898 when Tibet was willing to accept that demand, he advised the government to press for Phari. That change in White's stand was due to two developments of far-reaching importance. The first was the growth of nationalism in Tibet and second was the rumours of Russian interest in Tibet.

The Tibetan attempts to assert its independence from China came to light when its representative Tenzing Wangpu made it clear to Nolan and other British officials that Tibet would not give away Gyangong simply because it was required to do so by the convention of 1890.²³

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, Tibetan nationalism was accelerated by two events. The first was the assumption of power by the thirteenth Dalai Lama in 1895 and the second was the defeat of China by Japan in the same year. The Dalai Lama in order to free his country from the Chinese domination and to prevent its absorption by the ever growing British empire, turned to Russia for help. This event alarmed the Britishers very much. This development caused some misgivings in the minds of the British frontier officers. It was because of the fear that Russia might replace China in Tibet that White wanted the government of India to demand the shifting of the trade mart to Phari so that it could make its influence felt more effectively at Lhasa.

23. P.R. Rao - Op. Cit. p.135.

With the coming of Lord Curzon as the viceroy of India in January 1899, the Tibetan policy of the government of India became more vigorous. In due course, Curzon realised that it was impossible for the government of India to secure its demands from Tibet through China. He concluded that the policy of the government of India upto that time had been a mistake since it ignored Tibet and treated China as the defacto Suzerain of Tibet. Therefore, he entered into direct communications with Dalai Lama and ignored the Chinese Amban.

To open direct communication with Tibet, however, was a very difficult task. P.K. Jha writes, "The government of Bengal came to know from Ugyan Kazi that the Tibetans would never agree to open Phari to Indian traders except under compulsion. Curzon made two abortive attempts to communicate Dalai Lama personally. So as next step white suggested to occupy Chumbi Valley or to stop all Tibetan trade with India".²⁴

It was realised that stopping all Tibetan trade meant harship to the British India's traders and also the diversification of trade to Nepal. The policy of isolation pursued by the Tibetans spoke on the imperialistic ego of the British. They were no more ready to tolerate it. Curzon wrote to Lord Hamilton (Secretary of state) about his dilemma. On April 11, 1902, Hamilton after realizing the situation, permitted the expulsion of Tibetans from Giaogong without crossing the border and the Tibetans were expelled accordingly.²⁵

24. P.K. Jha - *History of Sikkim, 1817-1904*, OPS publishers, Calcutta, 1985, p. 27.

25. *Ibid*, p. 30.

Moreover, the news of a reported existence of a secret treaty among Russia, China and Tibet was very perturbing for the Britishers. As noted earlier, Curzon became very restive to take direct action in Tibet without taking China into account because he felt that the Amban was nothing more than a Chinese ambassador in Tibet in reality. So on January 8, 1903 Curzon suggested to Hamilton for negotiating with Tibet alone and if a new treaty was to be concluded the Tibetan representatives should also be signatory to it. The negotiations should cover the questions of Sikkim Tibet border as well as the future relations with Tibet and should culminate in appointing permanent British representative to reside at Lhasa. Curzon proposed that a mission should be despatched to Lhasa with an armed escort and the Tibetan and Chinese governments should be assured that the mission would be exclusively of commercial character without any political design. Colonel Younghusband was placed as the head of the mission.²⁶

The mission crossed Jeelap La pass on December 3, 1903 and after some skirmishes and remarkable casualties on the Tibetan side, it entered Lhasa on August 4, 1904. Consequently a convention between Britain and Tibet known as Lhasa convention was signed on September 7, 1904. By the article one of this convention, the government of Tibet engaged to respect the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1890 and to recognize the border between Sikkim and Tibet as defined in the said convention and to erect border pillars accordingly".²⁷ Thus the authority which the British secured in

26. P.L. Mehra - The Younghusband Expedition, New York and Asia Publishing House - 1968, p.140.

27. P.K. Jha - Op, Cit, P. 40.

Sikkim in 1890 became final with the recognition of it from Tibet. Once the British Suzerainty over Sikkim being finally settled, the affairs of Sikkim became affairs of India.

Even after the Lhasa convention certain controversial points could not be settled. The question of Chinese sovereignty over Sikkim cropped up. For the British government it was not acceptable as they always regarded Sikkim as one of the princely states like the other princely states of India.²⁸ In view of this on April 27, 1906, another convention was concluded between Britain and China to settle the above disputes. Article two of the treaty clearly states, "The government of Great Britain engages not to annex Tibetan territory and not to interfere in the administration of Tibet. The government of China also undertakes not to permit any other foreign states to interfere with the territory or the internal administration of Tibet".²⁹ China confirmed Lhasa convention by signing the Peking convention. After this convention the British Indian government consolidated its position in Sikkim for the remaining period of British rule in India.

Since assuming power over mainland China and with the seizure of Tibet in 1950, the Chinese Communists have been waging a sustained politico-military conflict to dominate Asia and achieve world stature. China's attitude towards the Himalayan states, especially Sikkim, was visible within a year after the Chinese People's Republic was established. As a first step in a campaign to recapture the ancient Chinese empire, the

28. Ram Rahul - Himalayan Borderland, Vikash Publication, New Delhi 1970, p. 75.

29. O.P. Singh, Op. Cit., p. 58.

Chinese began their long bloody effort to subdue Tibet in 1950.

The Chinese policy towards Sikkim, however, has been motivated by several urges. Firstly, their concept of celestial empire incorporated Sikkim also. Secondly while the 1959 Tibetan revolt precipitated Peking's decision to press more strongly its border claims against China, China's determination to reach a settlement on its own terms and thus to fulfill its minimum security requirements has been a constant factor underlying its Tibet and Himalayan policy.³⁰ To protect the Tibetan highlands, China believes it must gain enough control of the border states like Sikkim to eliminate all Indian political influence and create Chinese controlled buffer zone. Thirdly, the refusal to recognize Sikkim as a part of India, makes it easier for China to have a strong hand in border talks. Fourthly, Sikkim had been viewed by Peking as an area into which Chinese population could have expanded.

Hence an important plank of China's Himalayan policy had been to work against the Indian ties with Sikkim and other Himalayan states. Their interest was that relentless political propaganda against India within China, in every international forum and on the periphery of India, would not only break India but also paralyse her influence in Sikkim.

From the above mentioned facts and statement it is clear that China ratified the 1890 convention and was satisfied with the Sikkim-Tibet border agreement. As we know, In 1975 when Sikkim's merger into India took place, the Chinese government vehemently protested the issue.

30. B.S.K. Grover - Op, Cit, p.39.

In 1953 when the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru passed through 'Nathu La' during his visit to Sikkim, he was received by the Chinese officials and a tablet with the legend 'Sikkim - Tibet Border' was put up at the place where the 1895 demarcation line was crossed. As late as June 4, 1963, the government of China, in a note to the Government of India accepted the border between Sikkim and Tibet as defined in the 1890 Convention.³¹

It can rightly be said that the 1890 convention, apart from defining the Sikkim-Tibet border, had vested Sikkim's defence and external affairs into the hands of the government of India. Similarly by the peace treaty of 1950 between India, and Sikkim, the former was responsible for the external affairs and defence of the latter.³² But China adopted an ambiguous attitude to this aspect of relationship between Indian and Sikkim.

In the months following Chou En-lai's visit to India in April 1960, the Chinese officials took the position that the border between Sikkim and Tibet did not fall within the scope of India China border dispute.

However, China also underestimated the Socio-political movement of 60's and 70's that took place in Sikkim which eventually paved the way for the final merger of Sikkim in India.

31. P.R. Rao, - *Op, Cit*, p. 163.

32. N. Sen Gupta - *Sikkim : State Government and Politics*, Sterling publishers, 1985, p.123.

CHAPTER -IV
THE AKSAI CHIN

The area north of Ladakh projecting into Tibet is popularly known as Aksai Chin. More precisely this area is lying roughly between the Karakoram range and the KuenLun range and actually consisting of the four areas of Depsang, Soda Plain, Aksai Chin and Lingziting.

T.S. Murty writes, "The work-eastern part of Ladakh cannot really be regarded as having any geographical unity. The altitude involved varies as does the flora. To the east, it is bounded by Tibet and to the west by Sinkiang, so that administratively it can be just as easily a part of Tibet as of Turkistan, once it is treated as not Indian territory. The terrain and the climatic conditions make it logically a part of Ladakh. Whatever similarity there is with Tibet rather than Sinkiang".¹ Before going in the details of the claims and counter claims on the Aksai Chin area, it is pertinent to go into the historicity of this region.

Before nineteenth century Ladakh was not a part of Jammu and Kashmir rather it was an independent kingdom. In seventeenth century Ladakh used to control the whole area of western Tibet including Mansarowar and Kailash.² At the time of the Dogra conquest of Ladakh in 1834, the people who dwelt between the Zoji pass, Lander, Shedula and Polong Darndra were all subjects of Ladakh. After the Dogra war with Tibet a treaty

1. T.S. Murty - *India's Himalayan Frontier, International Studies*, 1969, Vol.10, No.4, p.466.

2. S.P. Sen - *Sino-Indian Border, IHS, Calcutta* - 1971, p.91.

was concluded in 1842. This treaty confirmed the old boundaries of Ladakh.³ When the modern state of Jammu and Kashmir was created by the treaty of Amritsar in 1846, it was decided by the British government to determine the boundaries.

But Alastair Lamb opines, "The border in Ladakh between India and Chinese territory, never adequately defined in the British period. The British approached the borders of Ladakh with both Tibet and Sinkiang through Kashmir"⁴. In fact Lord Hardinge, the British governor general, wanted an easy flow of Tibetan wool. Consequently he wrote to the Wazir of Lhasa for the deputation of a boundary commissioner. At the same time, he also sent a copy of the letter to Sir John, the British agent at Hong Kong, for its transmission to Peking.⁵

The Britishers, however, abandoned their plan of fixing boundary of Ladakh for the time being. C.J. Alder says, "In 1858 an agreement was signed between Basti Ram and Mangual Islac, confirming old boundaries. Again in 1900 when captain R.L.Kennion went to Gartok, he took as basis the old customs and settled the dispute regarding trade and grazing taxes."⁶

Whatever had been the position of the boundary of Ladakh with Tibet, the area within the boundary was in constant

3. *Ibid*, p.92.

4. Alastair Lamb - The Sino-Indian Border in Ladakh, Asian Publication Series, 1973, p.2.

5. S.C. Baipayi - The Northern Frontier of India, Allied Publishers, 1970, p.89.

6. C.J. Alder - British India's Northern Frontiers, London, 1963, p.125.

use. It was used for salt and wood collection. In 1868 Maharaja Ranbir Singh of Kashmir opened the route of the Chang Chenmo Valley. He reduced duty on goods passing through that road.⁷ After the commercial treaty of 1870 this area of Ladakh was in much use till 1886. Carey, a British traveller who visited the area in 1886. wrote that Pangong Lake area within Ladakh, and the entire Aksai Chin area was used for salt collection by Ladakhis. He observed that the Tibetan border began from Lankala pass.⁸ Captain Ramsay, the British joint commissioner at Leh, in his memorandum on Kashmir Boundaries stated that the entire Aksai Chin area belonged to Ladakh.⁹

On the other hand Alastair Lamb has raised his doubts about the Aksaichin area on the basis of the extension of the red line beyond eighty degree longitude.¹⁰ This line was drawn on the Simla Convention map of 1914, only to denote the limit of Tibet and China. It had nothing to do with Aksai Chin. Therefore, the boundaries claimed or shown in the government of independent India's maps are the ancient boundaries, established in history.

In dealing with Aksai Chin, it is necessary to bear in mind the manner in which the border evolved. It had to undergo

7. Zahiruddin Ahmad - Tibet and Ladakh : A History, London - 1963, p.46.

8. S.P. Sen - Op,Cit. p.102.

9. Ibid, p.104.

10. A. Lamb - The China - India Border : The Origin of the Disputed Boundaries, London 1964, pp.75-90.

the fluctuations as a result of Anglo-Russian rivalry. Lamb observed, "throughout the British period as a part of strategic policies, the border was distorted this way and that by shifts and changes in the course of British relations with China and Russia".¹¹ The British government were always willing to confine in Aksaichin, which was ofcourse barren and mountaineous,area.¹² It provided them the best defence against a possible Russian menace.

Most critics accept Indian title to the Chang Chenmo Valley as both valid and proven. But in regard to the Aksai Chin area some of them rely on certain casual opinions expressed by travellers like Hayward and Shaw.¹³ Even the so called Mac Donald proposal of 1899 is considered more authentic than Johnson's official survey of 1865.

Jonh Lal opines, "Johnson's map was the foundation of all the survey of India maps constructed thereafter, but it lacked the detail of regular survey maps."¹⁴ He further, says that Johnson's followers Shaw, Hayward and Forsyth rejected Johnson's boundary and reverted to the Watershed boundary of the Karakoram - Changlang range.¹⁵

11. A. Lamb - *Op,Cit.* p.39.

12. G.N. Rao - The India-China Border : A Reappraisal, Asia Publishing House, 1963, p.30.

13. P.C. Chakravarti - The Evolution of India's Northern Borders, Asia Publishing House, 1973, p.120.

14. John Lal - Aksai Chin and Sino-Indian Conflict, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1989, p.160.

15. *Ibid*, p.161.

As a matter of fact Johnson at the time of his survey of Aksai Chin, was not an employee of the Kashmir government. He was specifically assigned by the survey of India to survey the Aksai Chin area in 1865 and he did it with great ability. G.N. Rao puts "The genuineness of the border marked by Johnson was never doubted, for it fully accorded with the traditional boundary in the Kuen Lun area and the effective border in the Shahidullah area".¹⁶

John Lal is of the view that none of the above mentioned three travellers said a word about whose territory the middle plains (Aksaichin area) were, nor even did Johnson, though he included it in his map of Ladakh.¹⁷ He goes on to say that Aksai Chin area was completely devoid of jurisdictional boundaries and in the previous century it belonged to no one.

Alastair Lamb has assumed that Aksai Chin was a sort of no man's land and that nothing definite was known about its ownership until Johnson and the Kashmir authorities arbitrarily extended the boundary of Kashmir to Shahidullah and the Kuen-Lun.¹⁸ The border - lands of Ladakh to the west east of the Chang-Chenmo Valley is among the world's bleakest stretches, much of it a vast desert of rock and sand with few traces of man or human habitations, as Nehru put it in parliament where no people

16. G.N. Rao - Op,Cit. p.37.

17. John Lal, Op,Cit. p.162.

18. A. Lamb - Op, Cit. p.42.

live and no blade of grass grows".¹⁹

If this above were true and Aksai Chin were really a no man's land the assertion of Kashmir's right through effective occupation would by itself suffice to prove Indian title to the territory.²⁰ However, the assumption is by no means true. For ages past, there had been an active and flourishing trade in the Karakoram route. G.N. Rao writes, "The KuenLun continued to be the boundary in early nineteenth century. Could it be that between 1824 and 1865, the latter year representing the date of Johnson's delineation of the border along the traditional KuenLun, the Chinese had succeeded in extending their boundary further south? There is no evidence of this in any published literature, nor has either Lamb or Chinese produced any such evidence".²¹

Lamb has made a reference to the Kashmiri occupation of the Shahidullah area in the 1860's and sought to create the impression that the KuenLun boundary in the Aksai Chin area was in some way connected with this occupation.²² However this is far from the truth. The two areas, that is, the area between the Karakoram pass and Shahidullah on the one hand and the Aksai Chin area on the other are two distinct areas.²³ This is separated by the Qara Tagh mountains. Neither did the Kashmir authorities

19. P.C. Chakravarti - Op, Cit. p.118.

20. Fisher and Rose - Ladakh and the Sino-Indian Border crisis, Asian Survey, 2, (1962), p.32.

21. G.N. Rao - Op, Cit. p.39.

22. A. Lamb - Op, Cit. p. 92.

23. Parshotam Mehra - Sino-Indian Relations, China's Frontier Gains, Amristsar 1985, p.11.

in the nineteenth century nor does the government of India now claim that Indian title to Aksai Chin is based or connected with this question.²⁴ Till 1890 the Chinese authority was absent in the Aksai Chin area. G.N. Rao says, "The Kashmir government continued to press up to the late 1890's that they be allowed to reoccupy the Shahidullah area. But neither the British nor the Chinese government were anxious to extend their authority to the barren and rugged Aksai Chin area. For several years the area was left entirely unprotected by either side and appeals by the local people to the Chinese authorities only brought the reply that the areas were not Chinese".²⁵

A Lamb says that the Indian authorities opened new trade routes in the region of Chang Chenmo Valley and then crossed to wastes of the Aksai Chin area till they came to upper reaches of the Karakash river in late 1860's. He further says that the newly started trade activity provided a pretext for British officials to see as "red on the map" all the country traversed by the new trade routes upto the now "effective Kashmir -Yakub Beg Boundary Post" near Shahidullah.²⁶ As stated earlier, the Shahidullah - Karakoram area is distinct from the Aksai Chin area and has altogether different background. The fluctuations of the effective border in the Shahidullah area towards Karakoram had no influence, whatsoever on the traditional border in the

24. Report of Government of India and Peoples Republic of China - Ministry of External Affairs, 1961, p.49.

25. G.N. Rao - Op, Cit. p.35.

26. A. Lamb - Indo -Tibetan Border, Australian Journal of Politics and History, (May 1960), p.28.

Aksaichin area.²⁷

It is evidently proved that Johnson's map, based on his survey of Aksai Chin in 1865, remained unchallenged by authoritative circles. Dr. Henderson who accompanied the Forsyth mission in 1870 considered Aksai Chin as a no man's land but not as Chinese. In a paper read by R.B. Shaw, before the royal geographical society in 1871, it is clearly mentioned that the KuenLun ranges formed the northern and southern ramparts of Sinkiang.²⁸

In 1874, Frederic Drew constructed another map of Kashmir which sheds enough light on Aksai Chin. Lamb considers, Drew's map, as "based on the best surveys".²⁹ Drew also wrote a very informative book entitled "Jammu and Kashmir Territories" in 1875. There is nothing in Drew's book or map which supports the Chinese claim that large areas in north-eastern Ladakh, including the whole of Aksai Chin, had always belonged to them.³⁰

Most subsequent official Indian maps such as those attached to the "Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh, published in 1890, and the "Imperial Gazetteer of India (1887 and 1907 editions) showed Lingzitan plain and Aksai Chin as forming part of the Kashmir territory. Similarly in the first edition of the map of

27. P.C. Chakravarti - Op, Cit. p.124.

28. G.N. Rao - Op, Cit. p.38.

29. A. Lamb - Britain and Chinese Central Asia, London, 1960, p.60.

30. P.C. Chakravarti - Op, Cit. pp.122-123.

Turkistan, Kashmir's border was shown as extending to the KuenLun and including Lingzitang plains and Aksai Chin.³¹

The Chinese, prior to the meeting of Younghusband and the Amban in Yarkand, never regarded the territories beyond KuenLun as a part of their empire. S.P. Sen writes, "The map prepared by Hung Tachen, the Chinese Minister at the court of St. Petersburg in the early 90's represented the real Chinese boundary. In this map no portion of the Yarkand river valley, Karakash river valley or Shahidulla was claimed as Chinese territory".³²

In 1895 or early in 1896, however, the Chinese for the first time raised objection to the British maps showing Aksai Chin within the Kashmir boundary. George Macartney, special Assistant for Chinese affairs to the Resident of Kashmir, had sent a copy of the Johnson Atlas as a present to the Kashgar Taotai. The Taotai showed it to some members of the Russian consulate in Kashgar. The Russians told him that in their opinion in one of the maps a large slice of Aksai Chin, which the Chinese might claim as their own, had been included within the British boundary.³³ Thereafter the Taotai raised this matter with Macartney, claiming Aksai Chin as a part of "Chinese Tibet".

31. S.C. Bajpai - Op, Cit, p.82.

32. S.P. Sen - Op, cit, p.104.

33. Parshotam Mehra - Tibet and Russian Intrigue, Royal Central Asian Journal, 1958, p.32.

Macartney, thereafter, brought it to the notice of the government of India. This led to a prolonged discussion in the Foreign Department of the Government of India, where the Consensus was that Aksai Chin is "a general name for an ill-defined and very elevated table-land at the north-east of Ladakh", and that while the western part of it belonged to Kashmir, the eastern part belonged to China. John Lal has quoted a note of February 8, 1897 by C. Strahan which says, "our maps show two Aksai Chins, one in China and one in Kashmir. There is evidence to prove the existence of the more western one in Kashmir, but none of any value with regard to that to the east, which is within Chinese territory".³⁴

Another Foreign Department note of the time added that, 'There are two distinct localities named Aksai Chin', one was situated north of the Lingzitan plains (Soda plains) and the other to the east of the plains (white desert). 'It is quite possible that the Chinese, are confusing Aksai Chin north of the Lingzitan plains with Aksai Chin which lies to the east of these plains and which has never been included in our territory'.³⁵

It is to be remembered that as a geographical feature the Aksai Chin plains extend eastward far beyond the point where India claims her frontier lies. It is also interesting to note that whereas in 1896 the Chinese claimed the whole of Aksai Chin as a part of Tibet, in the present boundary dispute with India

34. John Lal - Op, Cit, pp.169-170.

35. Ibid, p.169.

they have categorically asserted that this high and barren plateau had always been a part of Sinkiang.

While the Britishers were active in Kashmir, Pamir and Sinkiang, it was equally alive to the Russian threat to Kashmir and inturn to their possessions in India. Because of the fear of Russia, they tried to secure a strategically sound boundary line of Kashmir state. The states of Jammu and Kashmir including Ladakh and the dependency of Hunza had the control over a wide rnage of territories. Especially Ladakh, as Francke also writes, "Under Tshedpal Namgyal (1790-1835) had control over the people who dwelt between the Zoji pass, Landar, Shedula and Polong Darna".³⁶ As stated above, the treaties of 1684, 1842 and 1858 is very important for Indian point of view. However, the Britishers after the treaty of Amritsar in 1846 tried to fix the boundaries of Jammu & Kashmir in the direction of Tibet.

As mentioned earlier in 1864 W.H. Johnson of Trigonometrical survey of India crossed into Khotan and gave very clear report on KuenLun range. The survey of India, on the basis of the work done by their surveyors, and relying on the knowledge of Johnson and T.D. Forsyth produced very informative map.³⁷

In 1872 the Home Government sounded the British minister in Peking on frontier question who informed the British Foreign

36. A.H. Francke - A History of Western Tibet : One of the unknown Empires, London, 1907, p.134.

37. S.C. Bajpayi - Op,Cit. p.121.

Office . "So far as our Indian frontier is concerned, it must be remembered that there will be between Yakoob Beg and Eastern Turkistan, to speak generally the KuenLun mountains and the Himalaya, to say nothing of the large wild country of the Mohamadan cities, just now ruled over by Yakoob Beg, which we loosely style Kashgaria".³⁸

T.E. Gordon, an associate of Forsyth, after his return from the Yarkand Mission in 1874, reported on the politics of Sirikol, Pamir and Wakhan. Forsyth, while making alarmist signals regarding the march of Russia in the directions of India, ascertained the possession of Yakoob Beg : "No claim is ascertained to any tract of country south of the Karakash river and on the Yarkand river they do not come higher up than Kufeelong..."³⁹ Forsyth suggested what should be the boundary of India north of Kashmir - "...for Commerce sake I would put the boundary at Ak-Tagh, and in laying out supplies I practically made that point the limit. The line then would run from the Eastern Corner of the KuenLun down to Karakash river to Suget, across that pass to Ak-Tagh ...hence down to Yarkand river to Kanjut".⁴⁰

While the Forsyth mission was active in Yarkand, the Maharaja of Kashmir strengthened his post at Shahidulla, just below the KuenLun range.

38. *Foreign Secret*, February 1873, Nos. 31-45.

39. *Foreign Secret*, August 1875, Nos. 68-81.

40. *Ibid* - para 41.

When the second Anglo-Afghan conflict was on in 1878, the Chinese had taken possession of Sinkiang from Yakoob Beg. The British were able to instal a political agency at Gilgit in July 1877. The Russians were able to annex Kokand in 1876. The attention of the British government was diverted towards the northern boundaries of Kashmir state. Lord Lytton in his policy statement, pointed out the desirability of some sort of demarcation of the political borders of the undefined area. He suggested that the natural boundary of India was formed by the convergence of the great mountain ranges of the Himalayas and of the Hindu Kush.⁴¹

Ney Elias Proposal 1878 :

While Lytton was preparing for the Anglo-Afghan war and China was occupying Yarkand, the Maharaja of Kashmir was worry about the defenceless position of Ladakh. He made enquiries concerning the position, in view of the troubled state of affairs in Yarkand, from the British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh. Ney Elias suggested the strengthening of the Kashmir garrison of Leh and Iskardu. He communicated to the government his views on the boundaries of Kashmir. The line which he suggested was based on the following considerations, (a) that the line should follow on the whole the natural water parting between the two countries;

41. S.C. Bajpayi - Op, Cit. p.123.

(b) that it should place a natural barrier between the people and the possible enemy; (c) that it should be near the base of supplies; and (d) that it should be easy to demarcate. He suggested that if only the boundary marks were placed, it would, serve the purpose.⁴²

Ramsay Line 1888.

Captain H.L. Ramsay, the British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh, laid stress on the settlement of the boundary between Ladakh and the Chinese Turkistan. He pointed out that "It is our interest that Russia should be kept at as great a distance as possible to the North-West of the Hindukush and Mustagh - Karakoram ranges".⁴³ He recommended that the entire lands west of Shahidulla should be included in the Kashmir borders. To the east of Shahidulla Ramsay advocated that, "For geographical and ethnological reasons, the Karakoram would appear to be the natural boundary, so far as that part of the border is concerned. This amounts to saying that the watershed of the Indus system, and the watershed of the Shyok is on the west of Lingzi Thang and Soda plains, both of which are supposed to belong to Ladakh unless therefore we are prepared to one day find ourselves involved in a dispute regarding this large, though pecuniarily worthless, tract of country, it is advisable that here too the

42. Foreign Secret, February 1880, Nos.2-3.

43. Foreign Secret, April 1888, No.283.

frontier should be defined".⁴⁴

Mac Donald Line 1899 :

In 1898 Lord Salisbury enquired about the boundary line to be secured from China in the direction of Afghanistan, Hunza and Kashmir. G.N. Rao writes " The line which was proposed by the Indian Government to be secured from the Chinese as boundary began at Pamir region, where the Pamir Boundary Commission of 1895 had completed the work. By and large it followed the crest of the main range of mountain".⁴⁵

Sir C. Mac Donald, however, was asked to present the above line to Tsungli Yamen, which he did on 14 March 1899. Yamen promised to reply after enquiries but inspite of several queries by the British officers from Yamen, no reply was received.⁴⁶

In India Elgin was replaced by curzon on 16th January 1899. China stopped interfering with people in the south of the KuenLun mountains due to internal complications and disorders. After the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 the Russian fear was removed. Younghusband had already removed the exclusiveness of Tibet in 1904. Hunza began to cultivate the Raskam lands as usual from 1914.⁴⁷

44. Foreign Secret, F. March 1889, No.116.

45. G.N. Rao - Op, Cit. p.89.

46. Foreign Secret, August 1899, Nos-211,230.

47. C.U. Aitchison - A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads (Calcutta - 1929), Vol-12, p.15.

It appears that in 1927 the British Government once again tried to withdraw Hunza's claims from Raskam and the Pamirs. But the Maharaja of Kashmir asserted that the dominions of Kashmir were bounded to the north by the northern watershed of the KuenLun ranges.⁴⁸ The area remained under the control of Kashmir state when K.P.S. Menon of the Foreign Office going to Hunza in the second half of 1944, on his way to Chunking observed that the extent of Kashmir state was beyond Mintaka pass. He writes, "Hunza, the Mir told me, used to stretch as far as Dafdar beyond the Mintaka pass - the present Wazir's grand-father really built a fort there and until recently Hunza had the right not merely to graze their cattle in the Pamirs but to levy grazing fees from others who did".⁴⁹

Soon after independence in 1947, in the wake of Pakistani aggression in Kashmir, China got an opportunity under communist regime, and occupied the area of Raskam and Taghdumbash Pamirs up to the crest of the Karakoram mountains. This illegal occupation of Hunza lands by the Chinese was confirmed in the Sino-Pakistan boundary agreement of 1963.

The British experiment in the boundary making of India, out of Russian fear, cost India much. The legitimate claims of Kashmir had been ignored. A line based on military strategy was proposed. Though nothing came out of Mac Donald's proposals

48. S.C. Bajpayi - Op,Cit. pp.140-141.

49. K.P.S. Menon - Delhi - Chunking : A Travel Diary, (Bombay,1947)p.29.

of 14th March 1899, Yet the British government gave a positive weapon into the hands of China to play with, at an opportune time.

Mac Donald's proposals, however, gained a strategic boundary for the British empire, but India lost its legitimate claims to approximately 4,800 sq. miles in between Karakoram and the KuenLun ranges. China, prior to instigation of young-husband in 1890, never claimed any territory, below the KuenLun mountains in Sinkiang, nor had they ever raised any issue in regard to the Aksai China area.⁵⁰

The claims of India on Aksai Chin are well founded. The area belonged to Ladakh prior to the Dogra occupation and later it was a part of Jammu and Kashmir state and the British Empire. Francke, Johnson and Ramsay all have justified the Indian claims. The Maharajas of Kashmir never allowed their claims to the area to lapse.

P.C. Chakravarti writes, "According to the Indian view, Lanak La at the head of the Chang-Chenmo Valley and the KuenLun range have always been the two traditional land-marks along Ladakh's north-eastern frontier. China, however, does not recognise these two distinctive geographical features as making the boundary between India and China and has claimed and forcibly

50. S.C. Bajpayi - Op,Cit. - p.143.

occupied extensive areas to the west and south of them as traditional Chinese territory. A number of casual references to Lanak La in the accounts left behind by some western travellers, like Carey, Hamilton, Wellby, Deasy, Rawling, Hedin etc, seem, however to confirm the Indian rather than the Chinese view".⁵¹

Subsequent to the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907, the British policy towards borders varied according to the fears from Russia. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Russian fear subsided for a while, only to reoccur in 1927. Two decades preceding their departure from India in 1947, the British Government was more concerned with the internal freedom movement than with the far flung borders.⁵²

51. P.C. Chakravarti - Op,Cit. p.125.

52. Alastair Lamb in his advocacy of China's claims has ignored the fact that India was in existence even prior to the British occupation, though it was divided into several small states, with their well known boundaries.

Alastair Lamb - Op,Cit. pp.59-114.

CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION : HISTORICAL LEGACY AND CONTEMPORARY
POLITICS

As far as McMahon Line is concerned, this boundary demarcation was done by the two parties viz India and Tibet in 1914 at Simla. This line was not just arbitrarily drawn by a British bureaucrat but was based on earlier history, tradition and general acceptance by the people of the north-eastern region. China claimed that she had never signed the Simla agreement and had never accepted the McMahon Line. It is hardly worthwhile to go into the question of Chinese participation in the Simla Conference. China did participate and the Chinese delegate did initial the draft. His withdrawal at a later stage was not because of disagreement with the Indo-Tibetan boundary line but with the Sino-Tibetan boundary line or the boundary line between Inner and Outer Tibet. Tibet had attended the Conference on a footing of equality with China and had concluded a boundary agreement with the government of India. The Simla Conference held eight formal sessions. The first two took place at Simla on 13 October and 18 November (1913) respectively. The next three at Delhi on 12 January, 17, February and 11 March (1914), and the last three again at Simla, on 7 and 22 April (reconvened on 27 April) and 3 July. Hence the venue of Conference was both at Simla and in Delhi. It was attended by the plenipotentiaries of the governments of British India, Tibet and China. Sir Henry McMahon, Lonchen Shatra and Ivan Chen were the British Indian, Tibetan and Chinese representatives at the Conference respectively. An exchange of notes between

the Tibetan and Indian representatives in March 1914 confirmed the boundary between India and Tibet east of Bhutan. The boundary as delineated on the maps was later confirmed by a formal exchange of notes, and the map itself was attached to the draft convention.

The problem here is that China considered the 1914, Indo-Tibetan treaty was illegal because Tibet did not have treaty making power. Indian position is that at the time India signed the treaty with Tibet on the border question, Tibet had treaty making powers because Tibet engaged on international treaties viz 1904 Anglo-Tibetan Treaty called Lhasa Convention. At that time Tibet was functioning independently of China. After the revolution of 1911 when the new republican government of China tried to assert its authority over Tibet, both the Tibetan and the British governments reacted sharply. In a Memorandum dated 17 August 1912 the British government made it clear that it would not tolerate any attempts by the Chinese government to change the political status of Tibet from what had been stipulated in the treaty of 1904. China accepted the 17 August 1912 Memorandum as a basis for negotiations and entered the Simla Conference. The negotiations at the Conference were for a time bogged down in a controversy regarding the precise alignments to be adopted for Inner and Outer Tibet, but the terms finally initiated on 27 April 1914 practically confirmed the position stated in the 17 August Memorandum so far as Tibet's political status was concerned. The

Chinese later contended that this agreement was concluded behind the back of the Chinese representative and that they were not bound by it. This latter part of the contention seemed to be an unnecessary argument on their part, for in the circumstances in which the Simla Conference was held, Chinese approval or adhesion to an agreement entered into between India and Tibet was entirely redundant. At no time before 1951 had Tibet relinquished her right to have independent dealings with other powers or of entering into treaty relations with them. India's recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet dates from 1954. Since then talks between India and China is going on.

The Sikkim - Tibet border was demarcated in 1890 treaty between India and China, although Tibet objected to it. Therefore, there is not much of legal problem. But now China refuses to recognize the merger of Sikkim with India in 1974. This is strange because when the above treaty was signed between India and China, China implicitly recognised that Sikkim was part of India. Now China is implicitly saying that Sikkim is separate from India. This suggest how two antagonistic nations can play political games. It is similar to India's stand on McMahon Line now in the sense just as China implies that Sikkim is apart from India. India too argues that in 1913-14 Tibet was independent with regard to the argument on McMahon Line.

Unlike the above two (The McMahon Line and the Sikkim Tibet Border) in which there are international treaties on specific boundaries, in the case of Aksai Chin there is no as such written understanding between India and China. Therefore, it is a matter of great controversy between the two. The Indian Government has cited two treaties in support of its claims to Aksai Chin. The first treaty was signed as early as 1684 between Ladakh and Tibet which confirmed the traditional Ladakh-Tibet border. China has challenged the existence of any such treaty. Since the boundary of Ladakh was so well known even in the 17th century, the parties to the agreement considered unnecessary to define it with any greater precision. Another treaty referred by India is the treaty of 1842 signed, after the Dogra conquest of Ladakh and the Dogra war with Tibet, between the representatives of the Maharaja of Kashmir, the Dalai Lama of Tibet, and the Chinese Emperor. These treaties were further confirmed by an agreement concluded in 1858 between Kashmir and Tibet. No doubt, India's claims are based on history, tradition and treaties. Till almost the close of the 19th Century China did not raise any complaint regarding the boundary either in the Sinkiang sector or in the western Tibetan sector. It was the Anglo-Russian rivalry which brought China into the picture. Significantly when in 1896 China, at Russian instigation, protested against British maps she claimed Aksai Chin as a part of Tibet but in the present dispute with India she claimed it as a part of Sinkiang. The details of successive

British boundary - making proposals have already been discussed in the fourth chapter. We may only note here that it was the fear of Russian expansion in the Pamir region which motivated some of the British proposals, and in disregard of the rights of the Kashmir state, Britain even invited China to claim the area between the KuenLun and the Karakoram which China repeatedly refused till the end of the 19th Century. The British surveyor W.H. Johnson proposed that the Indo-Tibetan border in the western sector should follow the KuenLun watershed. This line crossed the Laktsang range which divides the Aksai Chin from the Lingzithang plains, bringing the Aksai Chin within British Indian territory. This was only one of the several boundary lines considered by the British from the middle of the 19th century, but it was entered on the survey map of 1866 and continued to be intermittently shown on survey maps as the dividing boundary until it was questioned by John Ardagh. It was proposed that the boundary should take in tribes and areas beyond the watershed. Ardagh argued that control of the glacis beyond was essential to secure defence. However the discussion on an appropriate boundary line remained internal to the British. It was not till 1898-99 that the first formal approach was made to China for the establishment of a joint commission to define the boundary. This proposal was based on what has come to be known as the Mac Donald - Macartney Line which differed from the Johnson Line in that it took the watershed to lie along the Laktsang range and not along the KuenLun mountains.

It left the Aksai Chin to China but included Lingzithang in India. Although the proposal was rejected by China but some authors like Lamb, Maxwell and even John Lall used this proposal in their argument in supporting the Chinese territorial claim many years later. In fact till 1949 China remained totally unconcerned and did not make any territorial claim on Aksai Chin.

There is, however, some confusion regarding the delimitation of the boundary in this section. The interpretation offered is not that which has been accepted by the government of India during the talks with China in past. So interpreted, the delineation of the Mac Donald Macartney Line does not differ to any significant degree from the Chinese claim lines of 1956 and 1960. However, the Chinese did not respond as the British had hoped. The boundary issue in this region was left undecided. This was the British imperial legacy inherited by India as a successor state. It was only after the occupation of Sinkiang at the end of 1949 and of Tibet in 1951 that Aksai Chin as the connecting area between the two assumed a new importance. Even then China did not put forward any open claim until the completion in 1957 of the road she had secretly started constructing in Aksai Chin in 1956. It was only then that China made an official claim to Aksai Chin (Chinese claims that it was not party to the 1684 and 1842 treaties and Aksai Chin was a part of Sinkiang are thoroughly incorrect and historically invalid) and offered to recognize the McMahon Line

in the east in return for India's acceptance of the Chinese claims in the west.

It is also pertinent here to review the efforts made both by India and China to improve their bilateral relations and resolve the border dispute since 1962 war. Although both China and India withdrew their Ambassadors after the border war but some sort of diplomatic connections were maintained. In 1976 the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi tried to resolve the border crisis through reestablishing Ambassadorial level relations with China. Despite the exchange of ambassadors nothing concrete could be achieved. In 1979 the Janata government sent its foreign ministers A.B. Vajpeyi to Beijing to discuss the normalization of relations and the border question. In the meantime China attacked Vietnam during his visit to teach a lesson to the Vietnamese just as they had taught India a 'lesson' in 1962. Perhaps China could feel that Janata regime was unstable. The issue was to lie dormant until the second coming of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1980. On the border issue both Mrs. Gandhi and the Chinese premier Hua Guo Feng talked to each other in Belgrade in May 1980. But the issue again got confused after some time when Chinese foreign minister Huang Hua, who had been scheduled to visit India later in 1980, delayed his visit because of Indian recognition of the Vietnamese supported Heng Samrin regime in Kampuchea.

However, in June 1981 Huang Hua came to India with his proposal of 'package deal' which was unacceptable to India. The fact is that since 1981 to 1990 July eight rounds of border talks and one round of the Joint working group's (which was the result of prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in December 1988) meeting led nothing in concrete. During the first round of talks, that held in December 1981, the Chinese suggested that the border issue be frozen and progress be made on other matters such as scientific and cultural exchanges. The first round ended without achieving much beyond agreeing to meet again. By the second round, as Sumit Ganguly computes, which was held in New Delhi, Chinese ardor had cooled considerably and little transpired then or in the third round.¹

It seems that during the fourth, fifth and sixth rounds of talks generated some sort of understanding issues other than border. But again in 1986 relations with China came to virtual stand still. There were allegations of Chinese involvement in Pakistan's nuclear program and threat to India.

Just before the start of seventh round of border talks (July '86) the Chinese intruded in an area known as Sumdurong Chu in Arunachal Pradesh. Despite this episode, the seventh round held. "The package proposal was simply not mentioned and little

1. Sumit Ganguly - *The Sino-Indian Border Talks, 1981-1989*, Asian survey, Vol XXIX, No.11, Dec.1989, p.1127.

substantive agreement was reached".²

However the seventh and eight rounds of talks also resulted nothing except clearing the way for Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing in December 1988. This visit was given wide coverage in Indian media. Although the formation of Joint working group was much highlighted but the fact is that since its inception only one meeting was held so far; next is yet to be decided.

The first JWG four day meeting ended on July 3, 1989. One positive development of the meeting was that both India and China decided not to resurrect the past. In concrete terms, New Delhi and Beijing decided to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas. This first meeting also discussed the new confidence building arrangements and an early settlement of the border dispute. So far as Tibet is concerned, India had always maintained that while Dalai Lama was respected as a spiritual leader, Tibet was an autonomous region of China. China has appreciated India's stand on Tibet and last year's Tiananmen Square massacre.

In march this year Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen visited new Delhi. It was expected that during his visit the next round of JWG meeting's date would be fixed. But only

2. *Sumit Ganguly - Op, Cit. p.1130.*

the border's questions, that too in general terms, were touched upon.

However, Today's Chinese mood, somewhat conciliatory, may have much to do with the economic and political problems facing the Chinese.

When the Mechanism of JWG for dealing exclusively with the border problems with the foreign secretaries as its Co-Chairmen was announced at the end of the Rajiv Gandhi's visit, it gave rise to expectations that both New Delhi and Beijing were very eager to tackle the issue in a brisk and business like manner. But the way in which JWG's first meeting could be convened only seven months later suggests otherwise. Now the second JWG meeting seems uncertain with previous little being given out about the progress achieved in the Beijing JWG meeting, the international relations experts are understandably sceptical of any headway being made.

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