

**CONTESTED BORDERS AND SOVEREIGNTY: INDIAN  
NARRATIVES ON THE INDIA-CHINA BORDER**

*Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
for award of the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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Date: 20 July 2018

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled “**CONTESTED BORDERS AND SOVEREIGNTY: INDIAN NARRATIVES ON THE INDIA -CHINA BORDER**”, submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own original work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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*“For the love of my grandfather’s poems and the river Brahmaputra that flows unapologetically enticing me with the beauty of a journey and the infinite possibilities to overcome boundaries”*

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AAPSU: All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union

ADF: Arunachal Dragon Force

AFSPA: Armed Forces (Special Powers) Acts

AIADMK: All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam

BJP: Bharatiya Janata Party

BPM: Border Personnel Meeting

BRO: Border Roads Organisation

DONER: Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region

GoI: Government of India

JeM: Jaish-e-Mohammed

LAC: Line of Actual Control

LoC: Line of Control

MEA: Ministry of External Affairs

MHA: Ministry of Home Affairs

NEFA: North-East Frontier Agency

NSCN: The Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland

NSCN-IM: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak Muivah

Pok: Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

PLA: People's Liberation Army

PRC: People's Republic of China

UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea



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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The term border refers to an international line or a region demarcating both sides of a political boundary. Borders perform a significant role in defining the territorial and political limits of a state. They determine the scope and the extent of a state's jurisdiction over a stretch of territory and, therefore, the limits of sovereignty which can be defined as, 'the institutionalisation of public authority within mutually exclusive jurisdictional domains' (Ruggie 1993:172). Borders sanction the authority of the state over a bounded unit to exercise its political legitimacy (Mostov 2008). Passi (2011) highlights that, in order to understand the role of borders, adequate focus should be placed on the need to understand the diverse bordering practices. These practices may include socialisation politics, governance, economics and cultural processes. These practices play a significant role in determining the limits and scope of sovereignty of a state. These practices are often used as mechanism to promote political control and secure the boundaries of the nation-state which in turn impacts and influences the notion of sovereignty. In other words, the concepts of territory, control and sovereignty are shaped by various socialising mechanisms and institutional practices. The understanding of territorial sovereignty is based on the diffusion of certain political and social practices that defines the limits and extent of sovereignty. Biersteker and Weber (1996) argue that sovereignty is not based on a timeless principle, but rather constitutes a production of a normative conception. It is often linked with the notions of territory, population, authority and recognition. Most importantly, all these factors are intricately embedded in particular historical contexts, place and time.

This study looks into different narratives along a contested border, and throws light on how these narratives reflect people's understanding of border and sovereignty. The idea of this study is to explore how people living in disputed territories perceive of borders and political authority over a period of time. Therefore, this study looks into the diverse Indian narratives living along the McMahon Line<sup>1</sup> and explores how the population in the region have perceived the Indian state in the framework of India-

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<sup>1</sup> The exact location of McMahon line has never been clear. Even during the war of 1962, the precise location and extent of the McMahon line was never exactly known (Arpi 2015).

China territorial dispute; especially in reference to the 1962 India-China war. It throws light on the dynamics of the India-China territorial conflict have impacted the notions of border and sovereignty along these disputed territories. Understanding people's notion of sovereignty along the disputed McMahon line would bring forth reflections on how contested spaces along the borders have allowed people to make a range of claims with regard to the notion of citizenship, bordering practices and sovereignty. Ramford (2011:67) states that the process of bordering is a societal phenomenon and therefore it is important to take into consideration the individual experience of making a border. This throws light on the question of how people conceive of political authority and politics over contested spaces, since borders are enacted, performed and materialised in a variety of ways that may have implications on the community living along the space and the state as well (Johnson and Reece 2011: 63-64). This research analyses diverse narratives around the India-China dispute along the McMahon line in Tawang and West Kameng Districts of Arunachal Pradesh in India, which it is hoped would enable us to understand how the Indian state and local stakeholders of the region have inscribed different meanings to the notion of borders and sovereignty.

### ***Background***

The legacy of the India-China border dispute along the McMahon line, which passes across Arunachal Pradesh can be traced back to the time of colonial rule when the British realised the importance of Tawang<sup>2</sup>(now located in Arunachal Pradesh), as an important trading centre. It was in context of the Simla Convention in 1914, presided by the representatives of Britain, Tibet and British India and also Republic of China<sup>3</sup>, that the McMahon line was accepted as a boundary between India and Tibet. However, the McMahon line was disapproved by China as it did not accept Tibet as a *de-facto* independent state, that could conclude treaties on an equal footing as the other sovereign states in the international system. In fact, the issue of Tibet has been a major constraining factor in India-China relations. For instance, India's decision to grant asylum to Dalai Lama and a large number of his followers in April 1959 has been a major irritant in the relation between India and China (Guihong 2005; Singh 2008). China argues that Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile is a source

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<sup>2</sup> Tawang is located in the North-Western part of Arunachal Pradesh and it is one of the sixteen administrative districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

<sup>3</sup> The Simla Conference was renounced by Republic of China as it did not recognise Tibet as a sovereign state that could conclude treaties.

of threat to Chinese sovereignty. India on the other hand argues that giving asylum to Dalai Lama has been on humanitarian grounds and it is based on the fact that he is a revered religious leader of many Buddhist all over the world.

One of the most significant events in context of India-China boundary relations is the India-China 1962 war. In 1962 the Chinese crossed the McMahon line and India was engaged in a war with China that began with a series of intrusions around the Ladakh region from 20 October 1962 onwards and lasted till 20 November when China declared a ceasefire unilaterally. The status of McMahon line remains disputed after the 1962 war, making border dispute between India and China an outstanding factor in bilateral relations. India claims around 38,000sq km of the Chinese occupied territory in area of Aksai Chin, on the western front, while Chinese claims pertains to 90,000sq km in Arunachal Pradesh, on the eastern sector (MEA 2011). As Chokkar, (2008:88) states;

the Sino-India border is not defined clearly either historically or geographically and the complexity of this issue started to take shape when both the Republic of India and People's Republic of China had to face a common challenge which was to turn their frontiers into boundaries. This process led to constant struggle between both the states, with disputes and unsettled negotiations

### **Definition, Rationale and Scope of the Study**

This research has employed certain definitions for the purpose of analytical clarity.

**Borders and Border Dispute:** The term 'border' refers to an international line or a region demarcating both sides of a political boundary. A line when jointly marked out on the ground is referred to as 'demarcation' and a line when agreed in diplomatic negotiations is referred to as 'delimitation' states (Maxwell 1999:905). Border dispute can be defined as an aggressive or non-violent conflict that exists between two principal national antagonists over the question of demarcation of their shared boundary.

**Sovereignty:** In the framework of this study sovereignty implies the exclusive political authority of the state over a bounded political unit

Hinsley (1967:242) defines sovereignty as 'the idea that there is a final and absolute authority in the political community and no final and absolute authority exist elsewhere'.

This research also explores the relationship between the political authority and legitimacy. It looks into how the notion of legitimacy strengthens the sovereignty of the state in spaces that are contested. Legitimacy plays an important role in giving recognition to the political authority of the state. It determines whether the people recognise the presence of the state or not. Legitimacy can be defined as the Hurd (1999:387) states

Normative belief whether an actor or an institution ought to be obeyed or not. It is a subjective quality, relational between actor and institution, and defined by the actor's perception of the institution. The actor's perception may come from the substance of the rule or from the procedure or source by which it was constituted.

The role of legitimacy becomes crucial in the disputed territories where two or more competing powers may be contesting for the same territory. This study makes an attempt to explore the perceptions of the local communities along the Tawang and West Kameng region to understand how they perceived the presence of the Chinese troops during the 1962 war and the Indian state during and after the 1962.

This study would throw light on the role of various socialising mechanisms employed by the state over its bordering practices to establish sovereignty, defined in terms of political authority. Socialising mechanism like institutions and institutional innovations plays a significant role in shaping the perceptions about political authority. The role of international borders has been perceived differently by the people of the region. For instance, until the Chinese aggression of 1962 the penetration of the Indian state in these regions was very scarce, guided by the policy of non-intervention in the region.

This study intends to contribute towards the existing literature on border studies and the conception of sovereignty. It would reflect upon how different meanings and functions are inscribed to borders and sovereignty with changing course of time. The way meanings are inscribed is often based on the changing needs, which may be economic, military or political needs of the concerned states.

The scope of this research limits itself only to the territorial border disputes between India and China along McMahon line. For this purpose, this study focuses on a few villages along the McMahon line in Tawang and West Kameng district of Arunachal

Pradesh. The rationale for selecting these districts and the locations within these districts has been elaborated in the section on fieldwork.

In terms of border studies, this study would enable us to identify the factors (e.g. diplomatic engagements, military precautions, upgradation of technology) that may be useful in introducing changes in context of borders disputes. It would throw light on the political, military and economic dimension of a border dispute and identify the crucial factors that contribute towards shaping narratives on the border disputes.

It would also enable us to discern changes (if any) in the nature of India-China border dispute. It would throw light on the border dynamics between two non-western states and their dilemmas. Besides, it would also throw light on various strategies that have been implemented by the Union of India to bring its frontier region under its political control. More importantly, the narratives based on the study of the two districts in Arunachal Pradesh would enable an understanding of the manner in which people define border disputes, territoriality and sovereignty.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the idea of political authority for people living along Arunachal Pradesh especially in Tawang?
2. What role does legitimacy play in ensuring the hold of the state or shape the state building project in the frontier region?
3. How do the local people in the border regions perceive the McMahon line and its function?
4. What kind of strategies do states adopt to garner allegiance of the people or establish political authority without resistance along a contested territory?
5. Does the notion of sovereignty differ in the periphery, especially after considering the role of geographical factors as a constraining factor in the region?

### **Hypotheses**

1. The understanding of sovereignty changes as the locus shifts away from the centre/seat of power to the periphery.

2. Legitimacy of the State institutions in the frontier regions strengthens sovereignty and political authority.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs qualitative exploratory research methodology. It is largely based on field survey, and also draws substantive insights from other primary and secondary resources. Apart from a vast pool of secondary resources like books, white papers and journals, this research relies on primary data collected during fieldwork; and also from government sources such as the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

The perceptions of the local people collected through fieldwork constitute a major component of this study. A qualitative content analysis of the narratives constitutes a most crucial aspect of this research. A thematic analysis of the narratives<sup>4</sup> constitutes the chief method in analysing the data from the field.

It is crucial to explore the perspective of the locals due to the following reasons. Firstly, the role of the locals in border management practices and border security becomes crucial due to their familiarity with the topography and culture of the region. For instance, as claimed by a few respondents, during the 1962 war, when the Chinese troops could not find their way through the snow covered mountains and hills, they resorted to the help of local cattle grazers and other locals of the region to find their way into the Indian territory.<sup>5</sup> However, the absence of the state institutions and Indian military in the region was a factor that created confusions within the local community to make a distinction between the aggressor and the defender as they were unsure about the presence and identity of the troops who were marching into the villages during the India-China war in 1962. However, such instances were not widespread but indeed existed during a few occasions during 1962 as claimed by people.

Secondly, the people in the region are major stakeholders in the territorial dispute between India and China, especially after 1962 war; they are primary impacted by the movement of military convoys and military mobilisation in the region on a daily basis.

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<sup>4</sup> A thematic analysis of data is qualitative method of data analysis. It assists in identifying the repeated patterns or meanings in a given set of data. It a method of identifying common themes and meanings in a given data set that may keep repeating.

<sup>5</sup> These views have been shared by the locals during the course of field work in Tawang.



Therefore, the presence of the military in the region, news on border skirmishes along the India-China border and the security of the frontiers has been an integral part of their lived reality. In fact, some of the respondents have been a participant in the India-China border meetings and have shared their opinion on the same which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

Thirdly, the perspective of the people would throw light on how they perceive the Indian state before and after the 1962 war. It would also reflect upon the perspective of people on China and how they perceive China. Most importantly, the response of the people would reflect their views on the Indian state and how they view the initiatives of the Indian government in bringing the frontier region within the standardised nationalist discourse.

An in-depth field work with individual interviews and focussed group discussions constituted the principal mode of data collection for this study. In addition, the respondents were asked to fill questionnaires' which comprised of both the objective and subjective responses (see annexure 11 for the questions on personal interviews). The responses of the people were recorded or noted as per the consent of the respondents. Therefore, consent and privacy of the respondents constituted a major aspect of the field work. The privacy of several respondents has been respected by maintaining anonymity of their identities, as stated by them wherever applicable while discussing their views in the course of this study. Every, respondent was given a choice to fill the consent form and express their concerns about the research or clarify any queries about the interviews. Precaution was taken to inform the respondents on the objective, theme and purpose of the study for which their views were sought.

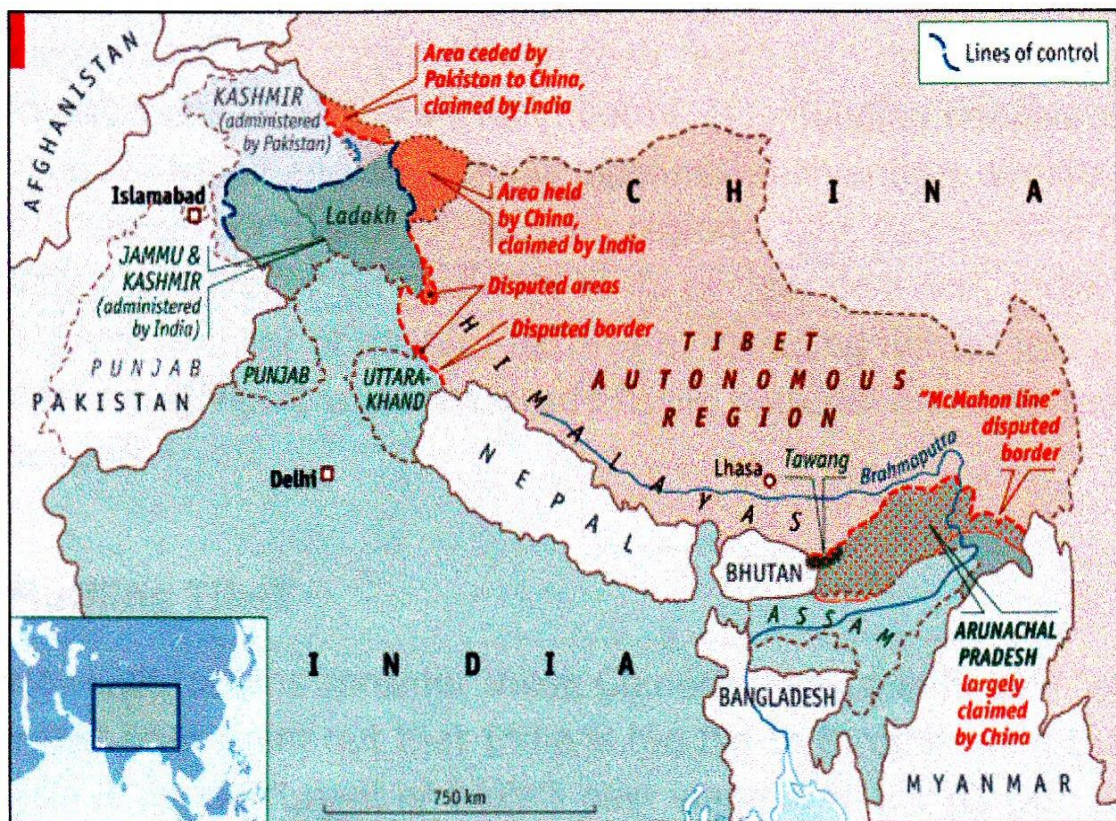
Apart from the factors mentioned above, language barrier was another challenge, specifically in the context of the fieldwork. Therefore, in order to overcome the language barrier, extensive help was taken from local people and friends who acted as a communication bridge during various interviews. However, most people could understand Hindi and responded in Hindi during the interviews and group discussions.

The details of the field locations and the rationale for choosing these places have been discussed in the next section.

### ***Field Work***

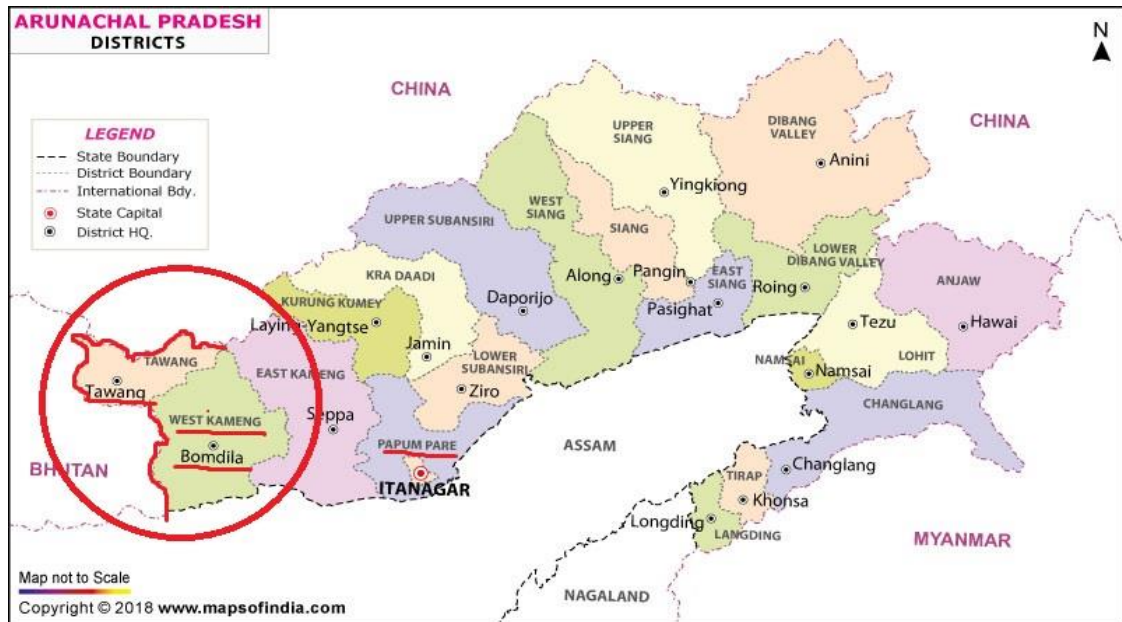
This study is majorly based on narrative analysis collected through fieldwork in Arunachal Pradesh. The fieldwork was conducted in the districts of Tawang and West Kameng. Tawang, Bomdila, Dhirang and Bumla were the major sites of field work in these districts. Rupa and Jang were also covered during the field visits. The field work was conducted in 2017 beginning at the month of March over a period of few months till December during different times, with visits to different places in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. The significance of the places rests on their historical importance in the context of the India-China border dispute and especially in the context of the 1962 India-China war.

**Figure 1.1:** The image below shows the contested boundaries between India and China in the western and the eastern sector.



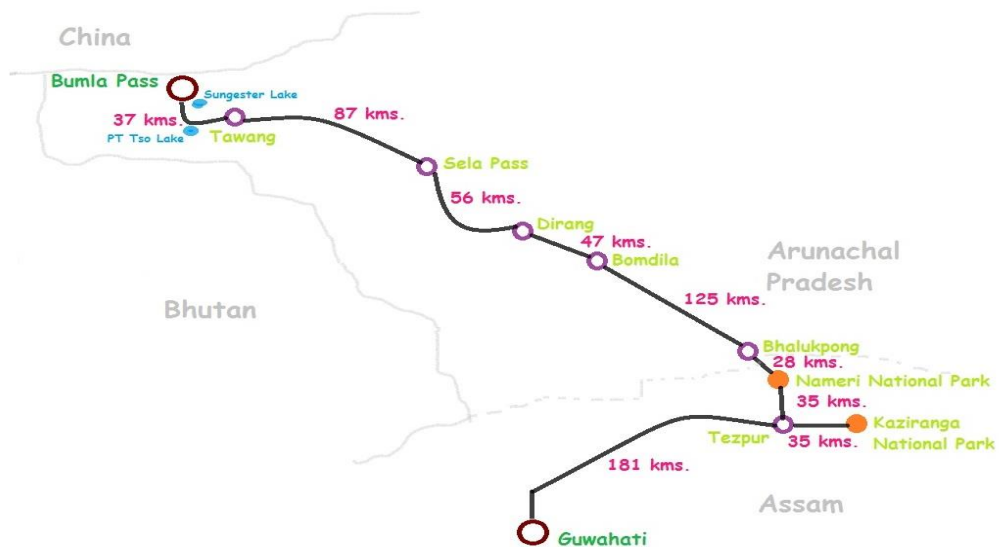
Source: Google images (1).

**Figure 1.2: Tawang district and the West Kameng district in Arunachal Pradesh where the field work had been conducted.**



Source: Google images (2)

**Figure 1.3: Route to Bumla in Tawang district in Arunachal Pradesh from Tezpur in Assam.**



Source: Google images (3).

Bumla is located along the disputed India-China border in the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh. It is located at a height of 15,200 feet or 4,633 meters. It is located around 42 kilometres away from Tawang. Bumla is one of the designated places where the Border Personnel Meetings (BPM) takes place between India and China which are ceremonial meetings in order to maintain peace and tranquillity along the border areas. The flag meetings constitute an important aspect of BPM's, in which both the military and a few local residents of the town also participate. As shared by some local respondents in the region, Bumla meetings are an occasion in which the people get an opportunity to have a glimpse of the Chinese military that comes from the other side of the Bumla border.

The BPMs are occasions when India and China sends out invitations to each other on important national events<sup>6</sup>. Apart from its importance in holding the BPM's meetings, Bumla hoists the rock of peace. The rock of peace is a heap of stones which is situated at the India-China border junction at Bumla. It stands as a symbol of friendship between the two countries.<sup>7</sup> Bumla was also an important place during the 1962 war as it was one of the routes through which the Chinese soldiers entered India. The importance of Bumla lies in the fact that after the 1962 war, it remains as the effective international border posts between India and China. The historical significance of the region is augmented by the fact that it is the same path through which the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama came over to India from Tibet to take refuge in India. This became a serious issue constraining India-China relations in the subsequent years.

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<sup>6</sup> The details on the Bumla flag meetings have been collected during the course of field work in Bumla and Tawang. It comprises of views of both the military and the local people.

<sup>7</sup> As shared by an officer at the location; Bumla, the author was told that the rock of peace is a symbol of peace and friendship between the two countries. Whenever there is an important event or meeting the military commanders from both the countries sign a rock and put it back into the collection of rocks. The act of adding a rock into the already existing heap of stones is a symbolic gesture and indicates status-quo and peace in the region.



**Figure 1.4: The route to Bumla**



Source: Image taken by during field work on the way to Bumla 25.03.2017

**Figure 1.5: On way to Bumla**



Source: Image taken by during field work on the way to Bumla 25.03.2017

**Figure 1.6: The India-China Border at Bumla**



Source: Picture taken during field work in Bumla on 25.03.2017

**Figure 1.7: The Rock of Peace at Bumla**



Source: Picture taken during field work in Bumla on 25.03.2017

Another place where fieldwork was conducted was Tawang. Tawang is the one of the towns that is located closest to the Bumla border in the Tawang district. However, there were other places such as Zemitang; which hold importance in context of the India-China border conflict but could not be visited due to harsh weather and poor road conditions which could be fatal for any traveller, as these roads are narrow and slippery due to snowfall and heavy rainfall and are located thousands of meters above sea level, bordering extremely steep gorges. Therefore, even experienced drivers refused to take chances to visit some of the places.

Therefore, Tawang was chosen as one of the central sites for fieldwork since it was relatively more accessible. Additionally, the historical Tawang monastery and also relevant government institutions like the All India Radio, district library, Nehru Gompa, War memorial and others are located in the region. The other reasons which made Tawang an ideal site for field work for this research are as follows: historically, Tawang has been one of the earliest places, apart from Bomdila where the British Indian administration had sent their expeditions and tried to influence the dynamics of the monastery in order to increase its administrative influence in the region<sup>8</sup> (Shukla 2012: 408-498). Then, this place holds immense relevance because it shares historical connections with the Buddhist monastery in Lasha. Tawang is the seat of second most important Buddhist monastery in Asia after the one at Lasha.

In sum, the choice of Tawang was due to the following considerations:

1. Culturally this place has been to host to Buddhism that flourished across Tibet and India.
2. Geographically, the passes located in these mountains have promoted movements of people from Tibet to North East Frontier Agency (NEFA)<sup>9</sup> and vice versa during ancient and medieval times. However, the gradual change of the India-Tibet frontier into exclusively defined political zones, which a defined border, have restricted the movement of the people from both the regions. Therefore, the narratives of local people along the border region, offered us window to explore the ways in which bordering practices shape the political culture around these spaces over a period of time.

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<sup>8</sup> These expeditions have been discussed and elaborated in the upcoming chapters.

<sup>9</sup> North East Frontier Tract (NEFA), refers to Aunachal Pradessh, before it was granted the status of Union Territory in 1972 and finally statehood in 1987.



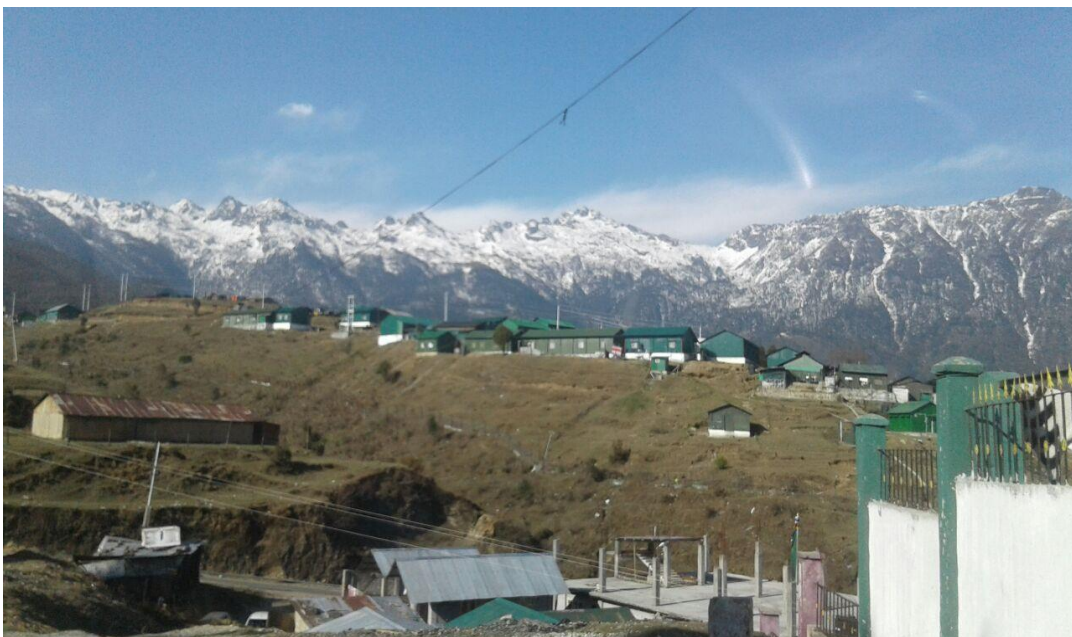
3. The territorial claims of China constitute Tawang. Tawang has been claimed by China as a part of the Southern Tibet during several occasions. It has been one of the major sources of dispute between both the countries. Thus, the views of the local people reflect upon their perception of China as also the Chinese claims to Tawang.

**Figure 1.8: The Tawang Monastery**



Source: The picture was taken during field work in Tawang, in 23.03.2017.

**Figure 1.9: Military camps in Tawang**



Source: The picture was taken during field work in Tawang, in 22.03.2017.



Another location that was chosen was Sela which is situated on the way to Tawang and located at an elevation of 13,700 feet or 4170 meters. The Sela pass has historical importance in context of the India-China war of 1962 and even today this narrow pass, located at such a high elevation holds strategic significance for India. However, no in-depth field work could be conducted at this place due to critical weather conditions and security reasons as most military officers refused to comment on the issues concerning this research. A few military personnel could be asked a few quick questions by ceasing the opportunity during the road block at Sela on the 21 of March 2017. The pass was blocked an accident caused by heavy snowfall which kept the vehicle hanging halfway the edge of the road and the slope of the hill at the Sela pass; causing a brief wait, These were the some of the first glimpses of the difficulties of the terrain and the life and responsibilities of the army officers and the people who had to deal with the terrain and poor infrastructure of the region The impasse at the Sela pass blocked the entire route to Tawang, which is located at a distance of 87 kilometres from the place. The road to Tawang may remain blocked for hours and days unless the weather conditions becomes favourable for movement; which implied the delay and stalemate of all the important and urgent work that could have been done otherwise.

Another field work was carried out at Bomdila, which is located at an elevation of 7,274 feet or 2,217 metres. Bomdila was one of the earliest sites for an administrative set up during the colonial period from where the British India made its administrative inroads into the region. It was considered as the highest administrative unit at one point (Elwin 1959:10). Bomdila is considered to be the point until which the Chinese forces marched during the 1962 war. It also enshrines the important Bomdila monastery. Therefore, considering the historical significance and location of the monastery in the region, a substantial part of fieldwork was carried out in this place.

### ***Sample Composition***

Factors such as age group, gender, socio economic background, literacy and educational qualifications were taken into consideration while conducting the interviews in order the make the sample as representative a possible. The people who were interviewed in these places constituted student leaders, officials in libraries and organisations, common people, monks and authorities from the Bomdila monastery. However, only a few military personnel were willing to share their views on the issue.

The sample composition varied from individual interviews to a group of 4 to 5 people in case of a group discussion. The sample size consists of around 120 interviews inclusive of individual and focussed group discussions. The representative of the interviews consisted of male/females and as discussed people from diverse professions and educational background. Although the sample composition for the personal interviews was heterogeneous, the sample composition of the focussed group discussion was more homogeneous than expected. It predominantly comprised of male members and people with a similar profession. For instance, the focused group discussions among the students were confined to a group of predominantly male students (4 out of 5 students were male). Also, the discussions at the market place in Tawang comprised mostly of male who were businessmen or shop keepers. The discussions in the monastery at Bomdila and Tawang consisted of male monks only. Hence, in terms of gender, the sample is not extremely representative as most people who were interviewed or willing to share their comments in Tawang and Bomdila were the male population. One reason could be presence of more men in the public spaces, which gave access to a population sample which had mostly men and who less unwilling to speak. Also, some women expressed extreme reluctance to speak or share their views on the issues.

The people interviewed were also from diverse age groups. For instance, a couple of respondents were from the older generation who aged above 80 years.<sup>10</sup> The age group varied from 18 years to 80 years.

Likewise the educational qualification of the respondents also varied – there were some who did not receive formal education, while some were highly qualified as having a doctorate degree. For instance, some senior monks in the monastery had a PhD in Buddhist philosophy.

The profession of the various respondents varied as well. Some of them had their business in the main cities and towns in which they lived, for instance a shop, or running a travel agency. Some of them were government employees working at places in diverse institutions such as the All India Radio, District Collectors Office and Schools.

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<sup>10</sup> These people were however not sure about their age.

The dominant group of people who were interviewed were Monpa's. The Monpa community is a major community in the Tawang region. Although there are several tribes and communities in the region of Arunachal Pradesh, this study confines itself to the study of the Monpa community due to two reasons. Firstly, the Monpas are one of the most populous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The population of Tawang comprises of about 97% of Monpa as the total population of the district. West Kameng has 77% of the total population as Monpa's out of the of district's population. The Monpa's are also scattered around Bhutan and Tibet as well. Culturally and ethnically they share certain similarities with people across the borders, which constitute an important subject of inquiry in context of India's proximity to Tibet culturally and politically. Secondly, they are largely located in Tawang and Bomdila, which comprises majority of the respondents during the fieldwork.

### ***Questionnaire Design and its Objective***

As mentioned, the views of the people were collected through interviews and focus group discussions. Some of the major subject of enquiry was people's response on India-China 1962 war, India-China Border i.e. the McMahon Line, the role of Dalai Lama, the Tibetan angle in India-China relations, the role of Monpa community, the role of the Indian state and its institutions.

The questionnaire used for the interviews consisted of both objective and subjective questions and the respondents could choose to answer in any format as they desired. The subjective and the objective questions were equally divided on several sections each focussed on specific topic. The subjective questionnaire comprised of following sections on which the views of the local people were invited and they were:

1. Section A: India China war 1962,
2. Section B: Borders and their role,
3. Section C: Views on Indian government and its institutions,
4. Section D: The views of the Monpa community and the Tibetan Angle in the India-China border conflict.

Similarly, there were 14-15 objective questions to which the people were asked to respond as 'yes' or 'no' and make additional comments if they so desired, under a separate column as 'other comments' (see annexure 10).

The questions for the focussed group discussions were based on the topics mentioned above. The questions discussed during the focussed group were however lesser in numbers and usually two questions would be clubbed into one, after considering time as a constraining factor. These discussions were primarily open-ended which were moderated by the interviewer.

The section on India-China war 1962 was incorporated to understand how people perceive the war of 1962. It was an attempt to explore how the local people of the region identified with India and China. This section focused on the security dimension of the India-China border dispute. It explored people's response on the India's defence capabilities and their confidence in the Indian government to safeguard the frontiers.

The India-China border and the McMahon Line constituted another major segment of field research. The purpose of the section as discussed earlier was to capture the imagination and the perception of the local people on how they perceive the borders and the function of the borders. The views were a guide to understanding the sense of security or insecurity the population at the frontier may experience due to the presence of a hostile neighbour. The objective of this was to explore how people of the region have responded to the border settlement mechanisms instituted by the government of India.

The objective of the section on Indian government and its institutions was an attempt to examine how the people in the frontier have responded to the government administrative initiatives and its institutions. The objective of this section was to explore how the local community perceived the political authority of the Indian state and its legitimacy in the region. Legitimacy in this study refers to the authority of the state based on the consent of the people and a rule that has been considered acceptable by the people. The idea of legitimacy by people is based on the assumption that political rule of the state is not exclusively based on power and coercion. The question on the nature of sovereignty along the contested spaces have been explored the inquiry on political legitimacy of the state in the frontier space. The question of legitimacy was explored by also looking at the role of and presence of the Indian military in the

region. Therefore, the perception of people on the Indian military was a major subject of analysis. The views on the Indian military were given special emphasis considering the significant role of the institution in context of the 1962 war and the India-China territorial dispute in general.

An attempt has been made to explore how identities are shaped in the frontier, i.e. to examine how the people of the frontier relate themselves to the Indian state; whether they identify themselves as Indian or not, and if they do, what are the reasons for doing so? The responses of the people on the role of government in the developmental and economic activities of the region have been looked into substantively. These questions and the responses of the local communities were explored, in order to understand the relationship between the legitimacy and strength of political authority of a state in the contested region.

The next section on the Tibetan angle and the role of Dalai Lama in the India-China border conflict constituted another major segment on which the perspective of the local people was explored. The Tibetan issue has been a major component in the India-China territorial dispute, which was evident in the context of 1962 war. The role of Dalai Lama and his status as the spiritual head of the Buddhist community and his association with India has played a crucial role in shaping the attitude of the Buddhists in Tawang towards the Indian state and China. In light of the above, the objective of this section was to capture the various perspectives of the local people in West Kameng and Tawang region to get an insight on how they identify with the political and religious views of Dalai Lama; and if applicable its implications on India-China border dispute. Also, most importantly the politics of ownership of the Tawang monastery has played an important role in deepening political control of the Indian state in the region.

Similarly the views of the Monpa community were collected to get an insight into their views on the India-China territorial dispute and their concerns on the same. The Monpa's share ties with the Tibetans historically in context of trade, religion, culture and language as well. However, although the Monpa's and the Tibetans share similar religions the language spoken by both the communities are completely different now, as claimed by most respondents. Therefore, considering the historical linkages and

geographical affinity of the region with Tibet the perception of the Monpa community on Tibetan issue and Dalai Lama was explored.

### **Challenges and Limitations**

Like every research work this study is also not bereft of shortcomings. From a theoretical point of view, although this research may have made an attempt to cover the major arguments and perspectives on the concept and evolution of sovereignty, role of borders in international relations and India-China relations, it does not offer an exhaustive survey of the debates on these issues.

Also, since the purpose of this study confines to capturing the narratives of the people on the India-China border, it does not cover an extensive and elaborate account of the official narrative on the India-China border dispute. The study confines itself to the major debates and events in the passage of India-China relations. It focuses only on the relevant discussions on issues specific to the research objective of this research, which may have not been able to capture the complexity of the issues

A major limitation of this research appertains to the fieldwork. Although, the objective of this study has been to capture the narratives of the people as elaborately as possible and make it as representative as possible, it was faced with certain limitations.

For instance, the number of female interviewees was lesser than the male interviewees. The same pattern was observed in the focussed group discussions as well, in which the ratio of women interviewees was lesser than the males. As discussed, the presence of lesser number of women in the public spaces has influenced the sample composition. Also, many of them showed reluctance to share their views.

There was a reluctance of the people in general to express their views. They were cautious about sharing their views on the Tibetan issue and their opinion on the future of the region. The reluctance could have been due to their unfamiliarity with the interviewer. However, when the interviewees were approached with the help of friends who were local inhabitants, they were more forthcoming.<sup>11</sup> Also, even when willing to give an interview, most of them did not wish to be quoted, especially the

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<sup>11</sup> A great deal of help and assistance was extended by some colleagues in Jawaharlal Nehru University, who belong to Tawang. They helped by building contacts with relevant people and also helped in translation of the interviews given in the local language.

senior monks in the Bomdila and Tawang monastery. Therefore this study has maintained their anonymity.

Language was another factor that induced difficulties in the field work. Although most people understood Hindi and could respond in Hindi, when conversed in the local language were more comfortable to answer. This was particularly applicable to the older generation. The interviewer was dependent on translations by a few local persons for carrying out the interviews and later on some translations. Therefore, as any language loses some of its meanings and essence while translating into another, this research may have lost some of the original meanings of a few interviews in the course of its translation into Hindi and English.

Another factor that acted as a major constraint during the course of the research was the climatic conditions and the connectivity issues in the region. The journey from New Delhi to Bumla was a strenuous journey as there was no direct flight that would link the centre of the state to the eastern-most periphery of the country. The journey was a series of halts and waits, either to take a connecting transport from one place to another or delays due to bad weather conditions, especially after entering Arunachal Pradesh by road. The weather conditions in Tawang and Bumla are often alarming and the military often showed safety concerns while giving a pass for Bumla. The road connectivity towards several other places was not in a good shape and this became a major cause for not able to capture narratives from other places in the Tawang district. Moreover, the hilly terrain made it strenuous to collect data as extensively possible as one is prone to exhaustion and tiredness due to challenging landscape and lack of oxygen in the higher altitudes.

**Figure 1.10: The difficult terrain and harsh weather conditions**



Source: The Image was taken on 25.03.2017 in the district of Tawang

**Figure 1.11: The image depicts the nature of terrain and landscape in the Tawang district and way to Bumla**



Source: Image taken during field trip on 25.03.2017



Also the visit to Bumla, requires a special permission entry from the office of the Deputy Commissioner and the Army office located at Tawang is mandatory. The route to Bumla is filled with check posts and a security check at every check post constitutes a mandatory part of the visit. Apart from security concerns, heavy snowfall, landslides, rainfall and avalanches may be a hurdle in reaching the border post at Bumla. The security of the tourists or any traveller in the region becomes the responsibility of the Indian army; routine halts at every check posts and a clearance signal to move ahead with the journey towards Bumla is a major requirement of the visit to the border.

Most importantly, the major limitation of this study lays in the fact that the fieldwork and most part of this study is confined to only two districts of Arunachal Pradesh which is Tawang and West Kameng. Although, inputs collected comprise responses of people from different tribes and regions, the field work has mostly captured the narratives of people along a small section of the McMahon line. The McMahon Line spans across a much larger area in Arunachal Pradesh from the eastern section of Arunachal Pradesh to the western edge of the state.

Also, the views particularly on the role of the military and how they perceive this institution is confined to this region. The views shared on the presence of the military may not be generalised as the perception of the military may differ especially in the areas where Arms Forces Special (Powers Act) 1958 exists such as Tirap, Changlang and Longding.

Besides, since most people in Tawang and West Kameng district are Buddhist, that may have shaped the responses of the people towards China and India. The Buddhist in the Tawang and West Kameng share a positive view on the Indian state as they feel that the Indian government have been instrumental in protecting their religious freedom and faith, unlike the Chinese government. This may be one of the reasons for the local population to be proud of their association with India. Keeping these limitations and challenges in mind, which may open up the possibility for future research, this thesis has been divided into six chapters including introduction and conclusion.

## **Chapter Layout**

Chapter one, which is the 'Introduction' is a brief introductory section to the overall plan of this study. It elaborates on the aims and objective of the study. It consists of the hypotheses, research questions and elaborates on the research methodology. It highlights the central aspects of the fieldwork in detail, such as choice of location, its significance for this study and the limitations.

Chapter two, titled as 'Role of Borders and the Concept of Sovereignty in International Relations' constitutes review of literature of the major concepts used in the study. It discusses the concept of sovereignty, various approaches towards the concept and the changing context and meaning of the term. The next segment of this chapter highlights the discussion on borders and the role of borders in international relations. It draws reflections from a wide pool of literature on border and international relations.

The third chapter, which is 'Historicising The Contested Borders Between India and China, discusses the major aspects of the India-China relations particularly in relation to border dispute have been discussed in detail. It briefly focuses on the trajectory of India-China relations for a holistic understanding of the nature of India-China border conflict and various contours around the conflict. It begins by highlighting the aspects of the India-China relations since the Nehruvian era, until the contemporary period. Besides, it discusses briefly the major policies of the Indian government and its initiatives in resolving the India-China border conflict. It discusses white papers, important treaties and diplomatic visits that have been exchanged between both the countries in order to resolve the border-dispute.

The second section of this chapter discusses the administrative evolution of Arunachal Pradesh (earlier NEFA) and traces the major administrative changes that have been introduced in the region. It explains and elaborates on the administrative initiatives taken over a period of time in order to enhance the presence of the Indian state in the frontier regions. It tries to look into the administrative processes that may have been instrumental in bringing the frontier into the standardised nationalist discourse.

Chapter four, is on the ‘Diverse Narratives on the McMahon Line: Perspective from the Field’. This chapter primarily presents the perspective of the local people from the field work in Tawang and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh. This chapter has been organised around two major thematic sections. For instance, the security narratives and the developmental narratives of the people constitute a major component of this chapter along with discussions on several issues under these themes. This chapter presents the narratives of the people on the India-China war of 1962, the McMahon Line and its function, the perception of the people about the Indian state, the military and the Tibetan angle to the India-China conflict. The views of the Monpa community have also been discussed in this chapter.

Chapter five, titled as ‘Assessment of People’s Narratives, provides a detailed assessment of the narratives that has been collected from the field research. It constitutes an analysis of the views of the people and how these views have an implication on the India-China border conflict and the political authority of the state which is an essential aspect of sovereignty.

The sixth chapter which is the ‘Conclusion’ offers an overall assessment of research and seeks to understand the discourses on borders and sovereignty, its implications on border conflict management, nation building and national integration and the manner in which policy-makers can utilise the local people while implementing effective border management practices along highly controversial and disputed zones.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **ROLE OF BORDERS AND THE CONCEPT OF SOVEREIGNTY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Sovereignty is one of the fundamental concepts that have defined inter-state relations in the arena of international politics. It has defined the rights of the states in claiming resources and ensuring its exclusive authority over a bounded unit. Consequently, borders define the limits of sovereignty and control. It determines the territorial limits of sovereignty; in other words, it decides the scope of sovereignty. Keeping the India-China border dispute as the background, this study looks at how border disputes determine the scope and limit of sovereignty in the contested regions. The India-China border issue has been one of the most protracted disputes in the world which has led to conflicts between the two countries and, most importantly, it has always acted as a major security concern for the states.

This chapter explores various theoretical debates on ‘borders’ in International Relations. Similarly, it discusses the various theoretical debates appertaining to the literature on sovereignty in International Relations. This thesis draws various insights from existing theoretical perspectives on borders and sovereignty to explore the fundamental research objective of this study, which is to examine the manner in which the concept of sovereignty may vary from the seat of power to the periphery of a nation. It also discusses how state institutions strengthen sovereignty or political authority of the state in the frontier region.

This chapter has been divided into three sections. The first section discusses the theoretical debates on borders in International Relations. The second section deals with the concept of sovereignty. The third section gives a brief background to the theoretical perspective on India-China border dispute.

#### **Borders in International Relations**

Borders are an important subject matter in International Relations. Border studies, which is also called limology, has become a part of several other disciplines such as political geography, sociology, anthropology and political sociology (Kolossoff 2005: 606). These disciplines have highlighted various aspects of borders. For instance, geography deals with the notion of delimitation of boundaries and borders. Political

Geography, which developed in mid-1970s is the study of borders in conjunction with other social sciences such as Political Science and International Relations. It is associated with the study of borders and their influence on the stability of international system and the influence of boundaries in international relations; issues of war, peace and conflict comprise an essential part of this approach. The literature on border studies has been shaped by the market, role of state and culture. These factors together have provided a very crucial explanatory lens to the subject (Jailly 2005:634). Kolossov (2005: 606), observes that the literature on border studies has been approached through the following perspectives – the traditional approaches which constitutes historical mapping, creating typologies, political and functional methods, the global paradigm and postmodern approach has added new dimensions to the study on borders, which have been briefly discussed in the following sections in this chapter.

Assche et.al (2008: 116), observes that borders are the spatial boundaries of a nation state. Boundaries are the lines which divides the entities. Boundaries can be of three types, which are; spatial boundaries, conceptual and social. Social boundaries make differentiation between social groups. The spatial boundaries make spatial differences and the conceptual boundaries makes differences between concepts. Although, in this study the terms border and boundary have been inter-changeably used in several arguments, the usage of these terms refers to the line connoting physical demarcations between territorial states. On the other hand, Sali (2008:16), defines boundaries as demarcations through political agreements that represent the limits of the state.

The term frontier could refer to a moving zone of transition, as in the American imagery or the borderland as it has been used in context of the French imagery, states Anderson in Jailly (2005:635). Sali (2008:16), defines frontier has been described as a politico –geographical area which is situated at the periphery of the nation or beyond the integrated regions of the political units.

Salter (2012:735), argues that borders are created by the assertion of the sovereign states and as one moves from one sovereign territorial state to another one moves through various population classifications. The current borders of the many states in the Asia are marked by two features, one the diversity of the places and secondly, the

arbitrariness of colonial legacy, since it drawn through various physical features such as mountains, a river etc. argues Saddiki (2016:111).

Sali (2008:16), also makes a differentiation between the concepts of delimitation and demarcation. Delimitation has been described as an important stage in the evolution of the boundaries which is represented by marking the limits of the boundary. The term demarcation refers to the act of legitimately marking the boundary by the parties involved.

There are several approaches that have impacted border studies, and the way borders are perceived based on its role, function and significance within a particular social, cultural and political context (Agnew 2008; Passi 2011; Scott 2015). Within the realm of International Relations, Moraczewska (2010: 329) makes the following observations on borders studies: firstly, the role of borders in international relations has been impacted and shaped by the existing transnational processes, the advent of globalisation, the process of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. Secondly, the function of the border may change due to various factors. These factors could include the association of the state with a new institution or an organisation. Since these institutions may impact upon how the state may respond to some of its economic and political functions, the change in the function of the border may change the function of sovereignty as well. Thirdly, the perception of border is different in different paradigms in International Relations. The different theoretical prism in International Relations discusses or analyses different aspects of the border.

Kolossov (2005: 612) puts forward how the realist, liberal and the global paradigm approach on border studies analyse borders in the international system. The realist identifies state as the major actor in the international system (Waltz 1979). As far as its approach on borders is concerned, it identifies borders as the strict line that divides nation-states. The borders determine the limits of sovereignty of a nation-state. Borders are also an important factor that shapes the security of a nation. Therefore, borders according to the realists are physical lines that demarcate the territorial limits of state and the limits of political authority of a state. The realist paradigm of looking at the borders has been one of the dominant approaches in analysing the role of borders in International Relations. Moraczewska (2010: 333), put forwards that the role of the borders as per the realist framework have been categorised as dis-

integrative functions. This is primarily due the realist perception of the borders as the dividing line that separates states or bounded political communities. The importance of the borders lies in the fact that it guards the state against threats. The action at the border is based on infrastructure building and militarisation of the border in case of any threat.

The liberal approach in International Relations perceives borders as windows of opportunity. These windows of opportunities may connect neighbours and enable interactions (Burchill 2001). These interactions may be based on trade and economic cooperation. The liberal approach in International Relations also acknowledges the role of other political actors such as institutions, apart from the state that may influence events in the international system. Roos and Laube (2015: 341) argue that the liberal framework on borders has been analysed through the notions on liberal cosmopolitanism, which stresses on opportunities for all, freedom of movement and hospitality for all. However, even though the liberal framework argues for a set of normative policies, which stresses on equal opportunities for all and open borders, the discourse of securitisation and immigration policies reveal that the states in most cases prefer the select closure of their borders.

Kolossov (2005: 612) also brings forth the global paradigm approach while discussing borders. The global paradigm network stresses on the role of global networks that influence both state and non-state actors. In this approach arguably, the global networks have taken over the traditional boundaries. It has been taken over by cultural economic boundaries which determine the interactions across the borders. Here, market borders will play a crucial role over the state borders. Moraczewska (2010: 333) considers an integrative role of the borders in context of global paradigm approach on borders wherein the role of borders is confined to a virtual line on the maps only and hence the importance of the borders, is seen as minimal. As these borders do not play a crucial role in determining the trans-national flows of goods, the infrastructure at the borders will not be of any importance due to the transnational flow of goods and a market that will be heterogeneous.

Agnew (2008: 177) states that borders for a long time have been perceived as 'boundary lines between self-evident states whose existence was presumed to reflect physical features or international treaties'. However, the literature on border studies

have undergone changes which analyses the role of social construction in the creation of borders. Borders are not taken as granted but rather analysed through the prism of various factors that operates to shape national identity, determine prospects of trade and flow of good or war and conflict. Moreover, the surge in border studies has been a result of counter-narratives of the globalisation discourse in the decade of 1980's and 1990's. Although, factors such as use of technology, trade and movement of people across continents have made the world more interconnected, the role of borders, although not visible, plays a crucial role in world politics (Scott 2015: 27).

Border studies constitute a crucial segment in international politics, as borders determine political and economic relations with other nation states. It may impact the degree of cooperation and conflict with states. The literature on border studies in International Relations is mostly concentrated on examining the relationship between borders and the probability of wars. Fundamental matters of conflict and war in international politics have been examined through the exploration between nature of borders and certain identified background conditions such as opportunity of interaction and threat perception, which is based on the assumption that these factors when considered in relation to each other determine the dynamics of border disputes. Salter (2011: 73) states:

border is one of the primary institution of the contemporary state, the construction of a geopolitical world of multiple states and the primary ethico-political division between the possibility of politics inside the state and the necessity of anarchy outside the state

The role of borders has been highlighted in determining the nature of inter-state relations, of either conflict or co-operation, which is based on the role of spatial context of international relations. Spatial context refers to the role of location and distance that determines the nature of inter-state relations in the international system. For instance, Starr and Thomas (2005: 123-224) identify the many factors that may impact the prospects of border conflict and degree of co-operation across the borders. They have highlighted the role of geographical space in determining the prospects of conflict and cooperation. Geographical space has been referred to as general geographical distance between the concerned states. The distance between states has been a crucial factor that shapes the relationship between states. It is an important factor that may shape the prospects of cooperation and conflict in a region. The presence of total number of bordering states is another factor which would determine



the relation between the states. For instance, Starr and Thomas (2005: 123-225) make a distinction between homeland borders and colonial borders and assert that probability of war is greater where there are more colonial borders rather than homeland borders. Homeland borders leads to less wars as it is primarily surrounded by a large number of weak neighbours which decreases the homeland state's perception of threat and uncertainty.

However, history and past experiences does play an important role in shaping the inter-state relationship. For instance, Bhutan and China shares immediate borders with India, but the presence of Bhutan as a neighbour has not been worrisome for India except over the growing presence of China in Bhutan. The experiences of 1962 war, the Tibetan angle to India-China relations and China-Pakistan nexus have made the nature of interaction between the China and India more strenuous. Moreover, China's capacity in terms of military and economic strength has been of concern to India. Therefore, the distance between states may not be a sufficient condition to decide the prospects of trade and conflict. However, the number the states bordering a state may play a crucial role in determining the inter-state dynamics of cooperation and conflict which would be based on various factors such as history, military strength, its alliances with other powers and the nature of its political rule.

Deutsch (1952 and 1961), in his social communication model of integration in areas of Western Europe, has explored the degree of permeability and control over borders in the integration of Western European Countries. This study highlights the role of highly permeable and non-permeable borders. The permeability and on-permeability of borders refer to the degree of openness and closeness of a border. Deutsch (1952, 1961) states that variations in the nature of borders produce behaviours those are qualitatively different from each other. Factors such as the 'ease of interaction' and 'salience of border areas' produce behaviours between countries, which may range from a high degree of cooperation to high levels of conflict. The opportunity of interaction is explained in terms of ease of interactions. States that share borders will have greater ease of interaction with one another and hence more opportunity.

This brings our focus on the question of natural borders and its role in averting conflict. It is assumed that borders wars are unlikely to occur when a country's border coincide with natural frontiers. However, Caselli and *et al.* (2014) argue that it is the

presence of natural resources that determine the probability of wars over boundary demarcation. It is the role of resource availability and geographical location that determines inter-state boundary dispute. The probability of war is more when the resource-endowed country is closer to the border as opposed to the asymmetrical distribution of resources over the countries. Also, coming back to the question of natural frontiers and its relationship with inter-state wars, empirical evidence suggests loopholes in such arguments. Throughout history, there have been several instances of border wars and conflict even when the natural frontiers of a country coincided with its political borders. For instance, India-China border dispute demonstrates that natural frontiers may not be a sufficient condition to avoid war. The presence of natural frontiers such as mountains, rivers, rifts and watersheds are not enough to avert the possibility of wars between states. The presence of great Himalayan mountain ranges across the India-China border was perceived as a natural frontier between the two countries. It was believed that the Himalayas across the North of India acted as the natural boundaries between India and China. It was believed that the Himalayas would avert any kind of territorial incursions by the Chinese over the Indian territory. However, the idea of the Himalayas as a natural frontier for India received a setback with the Chinese attack of 1962 into the Indian territory. Moreover, as the realists would argue, states have a tendency to acquire and maximise its power. The offensive realists would argue that maximisation of power is the one of the major objectives of the state (Mearsheimer 2001). The maximisation of power may be realised through expansion of territories, which may be beyond natural frontiers. History has several instances, when nations have expanded beyond its natural boundaries. The history of colonisation, the world wars and the advent of great powers suggest that nations have a tendency to expand their territories, colonies or even create their sphere of influence which may extend beyond natural borders. A major factor, which determines state's propensity to expand its borders beyond its natural frontiers is factor of its power and capability. The economic and military capability of a state determines the prospects of territorial expansion of a country. As Kolossov (2005: 607) points out, the history of humanity has been based on wars and the boundary change has been one of the least objectives of the wars that have been fought during different times in history. Also, over a period of time, with the consolidation of inter-state system, territorial boundaries have become inviolable.

States maintain a firm stand on its border disputes and reflect their unwillingness to compromise or accommodate its stand, as it has been the case with many border and territorial disputes around the world. Mandel (1980: 429) states that the unwillingness of nation-states to change their status-quo on border dispute germinate from the desire of the state to maintain its political–military sphere of influence at any cost. Such a stand is based on the assumption that a firm stand on the border dispute reflects reputation or influence, especially the ‘reputation to resolve. At an empirical level, the dynamics of border dispute may involve several factors, such as the historical legacy of the dispute, the role of other powers, capability of the state and the nature of conflict that may have existed between the disputing countries. For instance, the India-Pakistan border dispute has been shaped by the historical legacy of partition in 1947, the India-Pakistan wars, the involvement of the major powers like the United States and China and many other factors. Similarly, the Israel–Palestine conflict has a historical background, majorly shaped by the role of powerful states and the wars which an outcome of the territorial dispute between the countries.

Border studies in International Relations have moved beyond the confined analysis of borders and its relation to probability of war. For instance, Salter (2011) takes a critical view of the border by moving beyond the Westphalian understanding of the border as a mere physical demarcation on ground, which segregates territories into exclusive zones and analyses the role of borders through the concept of bordering practices as ‘performativity’<sup>12</sup>. The notion of performativity includes three aspects and they are as follows: the first aspect of performativity has been described as the role of borders in the context of its description and defence functions. The second aspect highlighted, has been the practical role played by the borders, which refers to the filtering process sustained through the admission and expulsion of entities. Lastly, ‘popular performances’ refers to the overtly public and political contestation over the meaning of the border. All these factors together define how the notion of borders can be explained through performativity. Salter (2012:734), states that borders are performative since borders have to be created, delimited, given meaning.

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<sup>12</sup> Friedman (2002:4) explains that performativity as a concept has been used in the speech theory used by J. L. Austin’s for his work on ‘How to do things with words’ in 1955, which was later employed by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* in 1990 and *Bodies that Matter* in 1993. The idea of performativity states that identities are created through speech acts and repeated performance of certain acts. Speech and non-verbal actions play a crucial role maintaining identities

Scott (2015: 27) critically analyses the concept of borders and argues that borders are an outcome of processes, symbols and institutions. He argues that borders are not a given fact but have emerged through a process of bordering. Bordering practices include social and political processes. The creation of borders includes the everyday participation of the communities, the political ideology, the institutions and agency. Most importantly, Scott (2015) employs the term 'border politics' to characterise the strategic use of borders which involves the use of power relations in employing the use of borders and as well as the making of the borders in a specific way. Borders, according to Agnew (1994, 2008) are the creations of human interaction and creations, often a complex one. They do not represent just the physical reality on the ground which may be constituted for various social, economic or political factors. Instead, it has been shaped by processes that were historical and still continues to be shaped by processes of the current world. Processes such as transnational flow of goods impact the way we perceive borders and its functions are performed. The relationship between social mechanisms, institutions and political authority becomes crucial in understanding the various functions performed by borders at different place and time.

The perception of looking at borders needs serious exploration as borders (a line on the ground separating two political entities) do not represent any meaning in itself. Jones (2011) explores the role of the local agents in inscribing meaning to borders. It explores how the local agents participate in border making by subverting, ignoring the sovereign authority or by transgressing the borders. Therefore, such a body of work has been an attempt to study borders and its implications on the communities from a bottom up perspective; to explore how the people at the contested frontiers may add meaning to the borders either by transgressing, obeying or by disobeying the sovereign imposition of the state in these regions.

Although, borders may act as a factor that divides territories into exclusive territorial zones which is governed by exclusive political authorities, as explained in the earlier sections, especially with reference to the liberal approach on borders; it is not just the 'limiting role' of the border, but also borders as 'windows of opportunity' that forms a crucial theoretical framework to analyse the role of borders. For instance, Agnew (2007) and Passi (2011) state that borders are no more boundary lines between independent states. Fundamental to their understanding of borders is the idea that borders also acts as spaces for borrowing and exchange rather than defining

exclusivity or othering. Borders are not just physical demarcations on the ground separating one territorial unit from the other but also a space where the power of geography is exercised through various means. For instance, the frontier region of a country may be used to create a buffer between two hostile states, it may be used to extract resources or may eventually be turned into a defined boundary depending upon the political ambitions of the state. The social and the territorial constructs around national identity play a significant role in impacting the passage of border construction. Ramford (2011) states that borders are more than lines on maps; these are spaces in their own right. They act as engines of connectivity which means that apart from curtailing mobility borders can increase mobility. Bordering practices are not always the business of the state or have to be always in the service of the state. Most importantly, borders can be invisible and informal and can manifest themselves at individual and group levels of interaction.

Borders perform a variety of roles. Borders sanction the authority of the state over a bounded unit to exercise its political legitimacy (Mostov 2008). Political legitimacy plays a crucial role in determining the control of the state over its subjects. Therefore, effective control over borders constitutes a central function of the state in order to assert its sovereignty since states assert sovereignty through bordering practices. It is crucial for every state that its borders are secure and defined. However a demarcated border may not be necessarily a safe border and it has serious implications for the security of the state. The threat to security of the border may arise from the presence of a hostile neighbour and also due to the lack of legitimacy from the subjects who may be associated with secessionist struggles.

One the most significant functions performed by borders pertains to the ways in which it shapes the politics of citizenship and governance. Borders shape the politics of citizenship by reinforcing the difference between 'us' and 'them' between communities. The difference between us and them instils the element of difference. The element of difference is instilled through the practice of partitioning the territorial units into exclusive political and social divisions. The political and social difference instilled through the process of delimitation of territory becomes profound as it defines the limits and scope of sovereignty, which determines the rights, duties, and ethos and political culture in the exclusive community. Therefore, borders play a

crucial role in determining the extent and scope of sovereignty in the current international system. It shapes the politics of identity and security, where each unit bounded within an exclusive territory is considered distinct from the other based on certain political and social identities. The process of political and social divisions shaped by borders has been articulated through the expression of ‘borders as othering’.

Moreover, although borders constitute one of the most basic and fundamental criteria for delimiting a state, border demarcations are not always flawless, which implies that, it might be challenged. This is evident by looking at the existing border conflicts all over the world. Most post-colonial states across the world have experienced conflicts with regard to border delimitations. Therefore, in reference to the experience of border making, Agnew (2007: 398) states:

Much of the border making in the current world has been the outcome of the spread of a model of territorial statehood and state-centred political economy from Western Europe into the rest of the world.

One of the fundamental reasons for discontentment over delimitation of territories could be attributed to the discrepancy between the idea of state as a political unit and the nation as a cultural unit. As Barkin and Cronin (1994:108) argue, it is not possible to fulfil the statist and the nationalist principles together, which leads to a conflict between the two. The idea of a state with a coherent border, followed by its assertion of exclusive sovereign control over a demarcated territory is a western understanding of the state, often attributed to the treaty of Westphalia as its genesis, formulated with the objective to end the Thirty Year’s War. The significance of this treaty lies in the fact that it identifies certain elements as an inalienable feature of the modern state. These features are: territory, recognition, autonomy, and control. These are considered to be the most crucial features of a Westphalian state. All these factors together constitute what we refer to as a ‘state’ in the contemporary world. However, many scholars (Jacques 2012: Scott 2015, Agnew 1994) are of the view that the idea of the Westphalian state is a western import and, therefore have its limitations in context of other cultures in the world, as every region may have experienced a unique historical trajectory. For instance, many communities in South Asia or South-East Asia have fluid identities. Many amongst these communities lead an agro-pastoral non-sedentary life and these were mostly self- governing communities. Therefore, for them the idea

of a defined territorial state with a fixed boundary did not exist. The notion of defined borders was absent for these communities.

Maxwell (1999), argues that one of the important features of a modern state is that it need's boundaries unlike the pre-modern states that could exist with frontiers. These frontiers were not lines but areas and zones of transition between state powers. Jacques (2012) has pointed out that the European understanding of state is not applicable to every country in the world. The western dominated world has restricted the worldview on other forms of arrangements in the international system. Jacques (2012) argues that the historical experiences of several non-western countries, such as China, have been delegitimised by western countries. He discusses alternatives to the western perspective on the state-system and analyses how the political authority or sovereignty may have operated for different states at different place and time in history. He states that China should be understood not as an outcome or a logical consequence or a by-product of the process of modernisation that occurred in places outside Europe. In other words, the unique relationship between the state and society that exists in China is a function of history and culture that may have been beyond European experience of industrialisation. The Chinese notion of nation, sovereignty and state differs from the European experience. However, the realist perspective on the international system does not take into consideration variables like culture and perceptions that may determine or influence states behaviour in international system. The structural realists take into consideration the role of power, i.e. relative power shaping state behaviour. However, the role of perception have been greatly emphasised upon by social constructivist, who do not deny the role of power but certainly respond to the deterministic characterisation of the international system which could be altered through the process in which we perceive events (Wendt 1991). The constructivists treat sovereignty not as a given objective condition of the world but as a socially constructed feature that has developed over time and space based on certain practices (Mishra 2008: 68).

The role of historical factors plays an important role in determining the nature of inter-state relations in context of its spatial location, with reference to other states. For instance, the India-China border disputes have been shaped by the colonial history of both the countries. Tibet has acted as a buffer state between India and China since the

colonial period. Since the colonial period, the presence of Tibet has not been a threat for India, unlike the expansionist China although the fixity of territorial borders was not sacrosanct.

It is important to therefore look for alternative ways of dealing with border problems. In this regard, Jacques (2012), claims that China has its unique way of dealing with the border problems, which may have existed before the colonial occupation in China or after. Since the Chinese civilisation is rooted in its historical experiences, its views on political authority and control may differ from the western experiences. For instance, upholding the Chinese civilisational value constitutes one of the most important political values of China that greatly influences their understanding of sovereignty. It differs from the European understanding of sovereignty which is associated with governance based on one country and one system of authority. Therefore, the Chinese idea of national unity, nation and political unity differs majorly from western understanding. Therefore the notion of sovereignty in Westphalian context indicates system which is based on homogeneity and a system based of uniformity and exclusive territorial claims. However, the notion of sovereignty and political authority may differ in other cultures which may have been shaped by history and time in several ways.

In this context, it is important to understand the territorial ambitions of China. Agnew (2010: 570) contests the view the China's emergence as a global power is not a result of regular hegemonic succession nor is it totally different from the other countries. Agnew argues that Chinese people, especially the elites have been confronting the western dominated world system for many years and this has resulted into the development of a contradictory amalgam of a 'western style nationalism and a traditional totalist conception of world order that is reactive and yet dependent on the current world order'. China is often perceived as a power that has to challenge the world hegemon, i.e. the United States. China's rise has been perceived with uncertainty and anxiousness but Al-Rodhan (2007: 41) argues that the proponents of threat theory have exaggerated China's threat as a growing power, and also that China's rise will not inevitably threaten the United States. Researchers have



challenged China's growth as a peaceful rise<sup>13</sup> (Ackermann 2014; Roy 1994). China's rise has been looked upon with apprehensions due to its territorial conflicts with its neighbours in Asia. The South China Sea territorial disputes constitute one of the most protracted territorial conflicts between China and the countries surrounding the sea such as Vietnam, Philippines and Malaysia. As researchers draw on to historical analogies to claim that the growth of any great power has hardly been peaceful, Al-Rodhan (2007: 41-42) claims that such historical claims are misplaced. China is not a status quo power and it is trying to alter the power structure in Asia-Pacific region. Fravel (2008, 2010) further stresses on the instances of cooperation to resolve territorial dispute between China and other countries.

### **Sovereignty and Territoriality in International Relations**

This section discusses various theoretical underpinnings of sovereignty. It explores how the notion of sovereignty has been described and defined by various scholars over a period of time. The changing need to define sovereignty as the concept reflects the changing meaning and function of the term. The word sovereignty has been derived from the Latin word *superanus* which mean the supreme. Hinsley (1967: 242) defines sovereignty as 'the idea that there is a final and absolute authority in the political community and no final and absolute authority exist elsewhere'. Ruggie (1986: 143) defines sovereignty as 'the institutionalization of public authority within mutually exclusive jurisdictional domains'. Benoist (1999: 99) argues that "sovereignty refers to the supreme public power and the capacity to impose authority in the last instance, Thomson (1995: 215) observes:

With Sovereignty states do not just have ultimate authority over things that are political but authority over things that are non-political, in a way relegate authority over activities, issues, and practices to the economic, social and cultural and scientific realms of authority or political. This is not to say that activities defined as apolitical are not intensely political but only that states will not treat them as political.

There are many debates about nature, meaning and the real essence of the term sovereignty (Barkin and Cronin 1994: 107; Benoist 1999). However, as Thomson (1995) argues, sovereignty remains a complex issue, as it is difficult to find a precise definition and meaning of the term. Since it always remains a debate if sovereignty refers to the ability of the state to defend its territory from external incursions or to the

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<sup>13</sup> China's peaceful rise or Chinese peace policy formulated as a counter argument to China's threat theory. It was the official policy adopted under the leadership of Hu Jintao.

act of controlling the people within its borders or both, similar contradictions over the meaning of the term can be observed.

Sovereignty as a concept has undergone changes. Fundamental to these changes is the impact it creates on the enabling and constraining aspects of the behaviour of the state in the international system (Barkin and Cornin 1994: 107-110). Sovereignty inherent in the form of political authority has been addressed by Aristotle, Bodin, Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1957) and in Rousseau's ideas on social contract which elaborates on the role of the sovereign.

This thesis looks into how the idea of sovereignty interacts with the idea of territoriality. In the discipline of international relations, notions of sovereignty and territoriality are considered as given. Territory, sovereignty, population and government are the basis of the Westphalian state. The notion of territoriality is important in exploring our understanding of the notions of sovereignty. The notion of territoriality is centred on the notions of governance and control over its subjects under an exclusive area. "To be able to define the domestic reach of sovereign power as well as to delineate its limits, a territorially bordered political unit is required (Behr 2007: 113). The notions of the inter-state system is characterised by territoriality and political authority. However, this thesis looks in the notion of political authority in the contested zones along Tawang and West Kameng in Arunachal Pradesh. This study suggests that although territorial control has been considered as one of the most fundamental basis for state control over a region; political authority of the state can be exercised even without exclusive territorial control of state, given the state has managed to acquire the element of legitimacy by the people. Legitimacy is an integral aspect of sovereignty.

Borders play a crucial role in monopolising the geography of power and act as instruments of territorial control (Agnew 2008: 177). Borders establish the control of a state within exclusive demarcated zone and determine the territorial possessions of state. Therefore, reinforces the political control of the state. However, as this thesis suggests, the pre-conditioned for exercising political authority of the state is not fulfilled by the presence of a defined space enclosed within a border. Territoriality alone is not a sufficient condition for ensuring political authority of the state, but it is

the sense of legitimacy bestowed by the people which establish the sovereignty of the state, especially in contested spaces.

One of the notable contributions in conceptualising the notion of sovereignty has been made by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78). He introduced the notion of popular sovereignty to the existing theories of sovereignty, which have been based over the social contract theory by Hobbes. He believed that sovereignty resided with the people. Rousseau's theory of social contract spoke of the contract as being signed between the people in their individual capacity on one hand and people in their corporate capacity on the other hand. On the other hand, the monistic theory of sovereignty, which was put forward by John Austin in the nineteenth century, propounded a monistic view of the state, law and sovereignty. Austin's ideas on sovereignty were based on his theory of positive law, which implied that the source of all law was to emanate from a single source, where the sovereign was not constrained by any other source of law. Law was considered as the command of the sovereign. Non-adherence to the laws could amount to sanctions. Therefore, the characteristics of sovereignty highlighted by the classical theorists of sovereignty were: sovereignty was considered indivisible, absolute and unlimited. The sovereign was regarded as the supreme and there was no power that could be higher than the sovereign and the role of the state as the sovereign became exclusive. The role of the state became absolute and no other institution within and outside the state had the power to govern. It rested on the assumption that the state is sovereign whose authority is absolute. This approach contains no requirement for the government to be legitimate in the eyes of the people over whom the authority is exercised. Ludsin (2012: 5), states, 'whoever has the power to control the population, territory, and borders, has the right to claim sovereignty and sovereign rights'.

However, sovereignty as an absolute concept has been debated. The meaning of the term 'absolute authority' may not be applicable in the international system since no state in the international system really has sovereignty in an absolute sense and needed to recognise and acknowledge the rights of other sovereign countries. The concept of sovereignty underwent further changes when Jeremy Bentham proposed that sovereignty was not an absolute concept but is limited by considerations, such as moral obligations, not necessarily bounded by law. The ideas on sovereignty were extended by Bentham, who was of the opinion that the sovereign could be held

accountable and it was the duty of the sovereign to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers, (quoted in Burns 2005: 46). The idea of absolute sovereignty has been rejected by the scholars of the nineteenth century. The theories and approaches on sovereignty found expression in the context of the prevailing time. The events in history such as the crusades in Europe made the feudal and religious heads weaker and gave rise to dilution of the Pope's power over the king. This led to the development of the theory of sovereignty which vested immense power with the king.

The Treaty of Westphalia is considered as the major landmark event in the history of the international state system and the foundational bedrock for understanding the notion of sovereignty and territoriality. The Westphalian model of state system includes the notion of exclusive territory, control, mutual recognition and autonomy. 'The Peace of Westphalia' is considered as the basis for tracing the epistemological origins of the term sovereignty. The treaty of Westphalia was signed in 1648, with the purpose of ending the Thirty Years war after five years of negotiation (Croxtton 1999: 569). The treaty was signed between the Munster and the Osnabruck. Another set of terms was signed between the Holy Roman Emperor and Louis XIV, the young king of France. The Treaty of Westphalia 1648 is considered as a landmark event leading to the beginning or the inauguration of modern states system in the world. Here, territoriality refers to an exclusive political authority for defined geographical area.

Two important elements of the Westphalian state are autonomy and mutual recognition. These two principles constitute the bedrock of the international system. Autonomy refers to the absence of external influence within the borders of the concerned state. It refers to the ability of the concerned state to take decisions without any external pressures. It also indicates the ability of the sovereign states to regulate movements across their territorial borders. Mutual recognition implies that entities that are juridically independent can recognise other such entities of being competent to participate into contractual arrangements. Mutual recognition plays an important role in granting the legitimacy to the state (Brahm 2004:1). It is an attribute which is bestowed by others states on the concerned state and not a quality that it possesses by itself. The modern states are considered equal in terms of its juridical power. This is based on the principle of mutual recognition of each other's powers. However, the issue of recognition entails two questions. Firstly, the question is: recognition by whom? In order to be recognised as a sovereign power, whose recognition that is

required? Secondly, which are those specific criteria that are required for a state to be recognised as a sovereign power.

Although the Treaty of Westphalia has been taken as the foundation of the nation-state system in international politics, it is not without criticism. Krasner (2001), argues that even in the treaty of Westphalia one may come across disappointment if one were to find an explicit definition of the term sovereignty. Croxton (1999: 569) argues that there is no piece of paper that can establish sovereignty, but only administrative practice. Krasner (2001) argues that the Westphalian entity has never been an accurate description of the various entities that exist in the international system. The claim that the Westphalian system is the regular feature of the international system is misleading as it negates that fact that the autonomy of the rulers in the international system has not been violated. The autonomy of various states has been breached several times and it is a regular feature of the international system. Norms such as minority rights, fiscal responsibility, democracy, communism, human rights have often been a cause for the breach of states autonomy. Krasner (2001: 17) also argues that 'mutual recognition has not always gone to juridically independent territorial entities'. Extending in the same line of argument, Mishra (2008: 66) states that, "the definitions on sovereignty are idealised abstractions and therefore they do not represent institutions and empirical reality, as theorising often demands the reification of concepts". Krasner (2001) calls sovereignty an 'organized hypocrisy' and argues that there has never been a golden age of Westphalia and that breaches of the Westphalian order have been an enduring characteristic of the international system.

Arguably thus, in International Relations, the notion of sovereignty is based on the two doctrines of international law: a) the principle of non-intervention and b) the principle of formal equality. This generates two aspects of sovereignty – internal and external sovereignty. The notion of internal sovereignty refers to the supreme power of the sovereign over all its people, associations and aliens within its territory. It is based on the assumption that the sovereign is entitled to obedience by the subjects. The people may be liable to penalties in case they fail to obey the command of the sovereign. However, such a notion of sovereignty is based on the absolute notion of sovereignty where the command of the sovereign is considered as supreme. However, such a conceptualisation of sovereignty is not without criticisms which will be discussed towards the later sections of this chapter. External sovereignty, on the other

hand, refers to autonomy of the sovereign from any external pressures. The notion of external sovereignty also implies that the sovereign is free and also equal to other sovereigns. The sovereign state may take its own decisions and it is not constrained by any external considerations. It can enter into treaties, declare war and peace, and participate in international events as per its decisions.

It is also important to look into the *de jure* and *de facto* aspects of sovereignty. It refers to the practice where the head of the state is vested with only nominal power and not real powers. *De Jure* sovereignty refers to sovereignty in context of law while *de facto* sovereignty refers to sovereignty in practice. Such a policy is practiced in many constitutional monarchies in different parts of the world, like England and Japan. The Queen of England is referred to as the monarch who has only nominal powers; borrowing the same tradition from England, the President of India also has only nominal powers. These concepts of sovereignty occupy essence during times of instability and uncertainty. However, some scholars refuse to associate these concepts with the notion of sovereignty while they believe that it is applicable to the government than sovereignty.

Sovereignty as a concept in international relations has been explored in the legal context. Barkin and Cronin (1994: 110) states that the 'definitions of sovereignty is looked mostly in its legal content in the realm of international relations'. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), known as the father of international law, has worked on the concept of sovereignty and its implications in the international realm. He worked on the concept of independence of states from the foreign control. Benoist (1999: 100) states:

Sovereignty in the international system is referred to as the independence from the interference from external powers in the internal affairs of the state. It is based on the sovereign equality of states; international law excludes interference and establishes universally accepted rules. It depends on only on the autonomous will of the state and but vis-a -vis other sovereign states.

Behr (2007: 113) defines sovereignty as the 'state's claim for the highest political power within a given territory'. Within this territory, the sovereign power is not to be questioned, challenged or fought. Thus, it is exclusive both towards foreign powers as well as towards domestic demands. The state is required to collect taxes and maintain its existence. However, as Tilly (1985) would argue, the state control of the economy is not meant for fulfilling the functional needs of the society as such but is rather meant for fulfilling its functional war making capabilities. The state, in the light of the

above, is perceived as an apparatus that has the control or monopoly over organised coercive forces. The state achieves monopoly over the coercive forces as a result of the role it has assumed in delivering goods, security and economic development to the society. It is a bargain that the state and the society have managed to strike in the state's quest for power.

In International Relations, sovereignty forms the foundation of the state-centric theories. The role of external recognition and power capability is central to the understanding of sovereignty in the context of international relations (Thomson 1995). It is based on the premise that states are by definition sovereign and it constitutes one of the fundamental assumptions from where the notion of anarchy has been derived, which explains the nature of international politics.

The concept of sovereignty has been debated amongst various schools within the discipline of International Relations. The realist and the liberal approaches on sovereignty presents a static notion of the concept, it takes the notion of sovereignty as a given. The concept of sovereignty has been treated as a unitary concept by both the liberals and the realists. For the realist, the notion of sovereignty refers to the ability of the states to defend itself and make authoritative decisions, such as the ability of the state to make decisions on war. On the other hand, the liberals regard sovereignty as the state's ability to control actors and activities within and across borders. However, the liberal interdependence theory suggests that the concept of sovereignty is not timeless and it proposes the erosion of state sovereignty due to factors which are economic such as trade, modern technology, capital flows, flow of goods which collectively have impacted the absolute authority of the state. The problem with liberal interdependence theory is that it seeks to treat sovereignty and its erosion in terms of its declining control over external flows. But state control over anything was never assured or secure.

Conversely, critics of liberal interdependence argue that although the advent of modern technology and capital flows may seem to erode state sovereignty, the current ratios of trans-border and within border interactions are not different from the nineteenth century (Thomson 1995: 215). Arguing on similar lines, Giddens (1985: 5) claims that the increasing global interconnectedness is the chief condition of the world wide extension of the nation-state system, which is based on the premise of

sovereignty and not an erosion of the same. However, crises with the concept of sovereignty arose not in the context of the limitations around the debate of what constitutes the best form of government but rather the relation between the government and the people (Benosit 1999; Mishra 1998: 66). Thomson (1995) argues that sovereignty has to be looked in terms of the function it serves while creating a dichotomy between the domestic and the international. Secondly, sovereignty can be best conceptualised not in terms of state control but in terms of state authority. This is because state control has waxed and waned over a period of time while the ultimate authority of the state has persisted over exigencies of time and most often state uses sovereignty as the unfettered right to exercise its right over a particular territory.

Undoubtedly, sovereignty is a fundamental organising principle of the modern inter-state system. There are certain systems of knowledge that seek to privilege one way of knowing and ordering the world and the notion of sovereignty in the context of the Westphalian has been an ordering principle of the international system. The notion of exclusive rights over the subjects has often been one of those ideas. However, globalisation, human rights, trade, economic interdependence, environmental threats, ballistic missiles, etc. have been believed to challenge and eroded the sovereign powers of the state (Croxtton 1999: 569).

The current notion of sovereignty is a product of the European historical experience. The European historical experience was imported into many Asian and African countries during colonialism and even after the process of decolonisation, continued across the world. For instance, the Indian state has incorporated several aspects of the British colonial administrative system. A lot of features of the colonial administrative features were directly imported from the Government of India Act 1935. Moreover, India carries the legacy of partition across the India-Pakistan border in 1947 as well as the McMahon line between India, Tibet and China as an outcome of the Simla Conference of 1914. Similarly, the Chinese experience of colonialism and some of the major territorial disputes of the country is an outcome of its colonial experiences.

### **India-China Border Conflict**

This study focuses on the territorial dispute between India and China. It looks at how the border dispute between the two countries has impacted the sovereignty of contested spaces. It looks into how the British colonial policies in the North East



Frontier Agency in India have shaped India's current position on its border communities and correspondingly shaped its administrative policies towards the region. It looks into the how the notions of sovereignty have been shaped in the frontiers of the Indian sub-continent due to the legacy of border dispute with China, which also involves the Tibetan angle.

India shares a huge portion of its borderland with many of its neighbours. It shares land borders with six nations which are as follows: Pakistan to its west, Nepal, Bangladesh, China to its northeast, Myanmar and Bangladesh to its east. India shares a land border of 15,106.7 Kilometres with all these six nations, a coastal boundary of 7,516 Kilometres out of which 5,422 Kilometres falls in the mainland and 2,094 Kilometres of coastline borders the islands. These borders pass through 92 districts in 17 states and coastline touches 13 states and Union territories (Centre of Land and Warfare Studies, 2014: 4280).

Borders and the associated border issues between India and its neighbours have played a significant role in determining India's foreign policy objectives. Considering the gravity and complexity of the issues, it becomes crucial for India to adopt a greater strategic perspective in dealing with its neighbours and foreign policy objectives (Pant 2009). Be it an act of crossing, or removal, transformation, multiplication and diversification of borders, all these factors have played a fundamental role in determining the nature of (i) bilateral relations between nations, (ii) internal and regional security concerns in the state and the South Asian region, (iii) issues of 'war' and 'peace' in the region. Considering the complexity of the issue, several scholars (Singh 2008; Rehman 2009; Bajpai and Matoo 2000) have tried to analyse the dynamics of the India-China mostly in reference to the historical roots of the issue, the nature and course of bilateral relationship between both the countries which is situated in the strategic milieu, and in context of India and China as the rising powers in Asia and globally.

In context of the India-China border dispute, the Aksai Chin, Despang Plains located near the border of Jammu and Kashmir, the Trans Karakoram tract and Arunachal Pradesh are the major source of dispute between both the countries. In the case of India-China relations 'China claims about 90,000 square kilometres of territory in the East and , India believes that China has occupied 38,000 square Kilometres of its

territory in the west' (Singh 2008:88). Such competing claims by both India and China makes India-China border dispute very complex. India and China have been laying claim on the disputed regions along with certain political and military considerations at play, emanating out of both international and domestic considerations. For instance, China's growing role over South Asia (Rehman 2009), the strategic cooperation between China and Pakistan and growing economic interactions between India and China (Mohan 2006) have played a crucial role in shaping India-China border disputes and territorial claims.

Although the India-China border disputes have always been a major security concern for both the states, very little has been achieved in terms of reaching a sustainable border arrangement. As Acharya and Deshpande (2003: 2) state, 'in popular perception, the two countries have precious little concrete achievements to show for nearly two decades of border discussions'. This has huge implications on the nature of bilateral relationship and the foreign policy objectives of both the countries.

The dominant lens to analyse the India-China relations and border dispute have been the neo-realist perspective. The element of competition and conflict dominates the perspective on India-China relation. However, the neo-liberal perspective has also been the other dominant literature on India-China relations. The struggle for military supremacy, economic capabilities and international influence constitutes the various perspective through which the dynamics of these countries have been analysed (Bajpai and Matoo 2000; Guihong 2005; Dutt 2008). For instance, the rise and growth of China in Asia have been considered as a major factor that may determine the future of India and China relations, especially the course of its territorial disputes (Sachdeva 2006; Rehman 2009). Apart from China and India's growth in economic and military terms, China's strategic cooperation with Pakistan and the other powers of the world has been examined as a major factor shaping the politics of the South Asia and India's border dispute with China in the future (Guihong 2005; Singh 2008; Pant 2009; Kondapalli 2013).

There are different strands of views on the nature of India-China border dispute. These views differ in terms of interpretation of the historical roots of India-China border disputes, its causes and the future solution. Bajpai (2007) employs three theoretical lenses to understand the border dispute between India and China – Nehruvian,

Neoliberal and Hyperrealist. These perspectives are used to analyse the India-China conflict from the vantage point of the respective schools of thought which is considered to be predominant in the discourse in the Indian strategic thought. The Nehruvian view holds that states and people can be brought around to make peace, and this extends to relations with China as well. Therefore, the border settlement must be based on an acknowledged principle of demarcation rather than a mere give and take. Ganguly and Pardeshi (2009) are of the opinion that the Nehruvian or the idealist school of thought dominated the Indian foreign policy until 1962 India-China war. The Indian attitude towards China has undergone changes after 1962.

This study examines the various factors that has shaped the India-China territorial dispute and looks at how the territorial dispute with China has created contested spaces along the India-China borders, including the region around Aksai Chin, along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the McMahon Line. However, the scope of this research is confined to the McMahon Line in Tawang and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh in India.

As pointed out earlier, the concept of sovereignty may have a different meaning as one moves away from the centre of a state or the seat of authority in a state. This leads us to a major gap in the existing literature, which is exploration of the concept of sovereignty at the margins or the frontiers of the nation that has been contested between states. Therefore, this study explores the idea of sovereignty along the contested spaces. The significance of the study lies in the fact that it will throw reflections on the perspective of the people on political authority and state. Such an understanding would throw light on two things: a) the role of the border and how people perceive borders, b) the role of borders in establishing political authority over a disputed territory.

While taking recognition by other sovereign authorities in the inter-state system to be an important attribute of sovereignty, this study focuses on the role of recognition from the citizens as being equally crucial in ensuring the political authority of the state. Hence, this study focuses on the internal dimension of recognition and how it shapes the discourse on sovereignty in areas that are contested by two competing states. The role of recognition is significant as it bestows legitimacy to the rule of the state which is based on consent rather than power. Granting consent to the rule of the

state is a major departure from the notion of political legitimacy as the 'right to rule'. Buchanan (2002:703) argues that the notion of political authority is beyond the right of the government or power holder to be obeyed and states that 'political authority, understood as including the right of the government to be obeyed, entails political legitimacy, but not vice versa'. Most importantly, the question on political legitimacy rests on the quality and nature of the reasons that has to be complied.

This thesis observes that the gradual penetration of the Indian state into the frontier regions of Arunachal Pradesh along the North East Frontier Tract (NEFA), has been carefully crafted in order to garner a sense of political legitimacy for the local communities based on the policy of careful intervention in the region (Elwin 1959; Rustomji 1985). It clearly indicates that the government policies in the region was based on garnering the obedience of the people based on the quality of the reasons that that to be complied rather than the obligation to obey the state. In light of the above, this study has explored the various socialising mechanisms that the state has employed in the frontier region in order to entrench its rule while keeping in mind the sensitive nature of the region. In sum, this study focuses on how the notion of legitimacy plays a crucial role in strengthening the sovereignty of the state in the frontier regions as discussed in the subsequent chapters.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **HISTORICISING THE CONTESTED BORDERS BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA**

The great Himalayas to the north and north east of India were considered as one of the most formidable natural barriers between India and China until the 1962 war. Sali (2008:15) states that, no matter what the barrier is, a determined enemy can cross the barrier at any point, which was proven during the course of the 1962 India-China war. The legacy of the India-China war left unresolved boundaries and contested territories between the two nations. The undefined territories soon became a major cause of border skirmishes between the military troops of both the countries. The patrolling units of both the countries would often come in contact with each other in the undefined areas and gets embroiled in physical and verbal spats. The undefined boundary and territories has been a major source of tension between India and China in the current scenario. However, a historical background to the India-China territorial dispute is crucial for a holistic analysis of the current India-China territorial dispute. This chapter is an attempt to offer a broad overview of the India-China territorial dispute since 1947 till the recent developments in 2017. This chapter offers an overview of the historical context of the India-China territorial dispute. It also discusses the trends in the India-China relations that may have shaped policy implications on issues of border settlement. It is important to analyse the discourse on India- China dispute over the contested spaces through the role of the leaders, provisions in the boundary settlement negotiations and most important the briefings in the parliament.

This chapter argues that the historical events and the political elites of the two countries have shaped the current discourse on India-China territorial disputes. Historical events such as India's independence, formation of Non-alignment movement, the Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1950's, and the India-China war of 1962 have greatly shaped the current foreign policy between India and China. Through an analysis of the historical events, this chapter attempts to substantiate one of the major objectives of this research, which is to understand how people along the disputed India-China border have perceived the role of India and China in

consolidating their political authority in the disputed regions, which will be substantiated with narratives from field work in the next two chapters.

The second section of this chapter would also a brief account of the administrative evolution in the Arunachal Pradesh or the erstwhile North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) region. The development of administrative apparatus would bring upon some of the challenges and the dilemmas that the Indian state had to face in the process of incorporating the frontier regions of Arunachal Pradesh. It would throw light on the question of tribal's in the nationalist discourse. It would also throw light on the development of the infrastructure projects and finally the narratives of the local stakeholders on the various themes pertaining to the contested territorial spaces between India and China. An account of the administrative institutions and simultaneously people's reaction to it would enable us to analyse how the Indian state have strengthen its position in the region.

## I

India's territorial dispute with China comprises of both the eastern and the western fronts of the country. India claims around 38,000sq km of the Chinese occupied territory in area of Askai Chin, on the western front, while Chinese claims pertains to 90,000sq km in Arunachal Pradesh, on the eastern sector (PIB 2014a). Apart from this, both the countries are embroiled in other territorial skirmishes which have surfaced from time to time. For instance, the stand-off between India and China at the India (Sikkim), Bhutan and China trijunction in 2017, known as the Donglang or the Doklam stand-off, that created alarming situation for India, Bhutan and China.

The 3,488-kilometre-long India-China border which starts from Jammu and Kashmir in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east, of which a 220-kilometre area passes through Sikkim constituted the Doklam crises (*First Post* 2017) The Doklam stand-off, began when Chinese troops started construction activities along the Sikkim, Bhutan and the Chinese trijunction. (MEA 2018a).The construction activities were of concern to the Bhutanese government as they were unsure of the Chinese intentions; therefore the incident was soon reported to the Indian government. Indian government responded by sending troops to the Doklam plateau. This incident was major setback for the India and China's bilateral relations as this border crises surfaced in a region where the India-China border disputes was considered to be settled. The India-China

border scuffles generally surface in places where territorial disputes remain unresolved i.e., regions along the eastern and western sectors of the LAC.

However, the Doklam standoff brought to the notice of the Indian public through a leaked video footage of the same, showed troops of both the countries pushing and shoving each other at the Doklam Plateau (*The Hindu* 2017). The crises at Doklam was a challenge to the existing status quo along the India- Bhutan-China trijunction, as a result of which the Indian and the Chinese troops were engaged in a 73 day long standoff, from 16 June 2017 to August 28. However the matter was finally resolved at the ministerial level between the governments. The Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj, in a reply to the issue on Doklam stated that;

The face-off between the Indian and Chinese border personnel in Doklam area of Bhutan started when the Chinese side tried to alter the status quo by building a road in the area in violation of its existing understandings both with Bhutan and India.....however the matter has been resolved (MEA 2018a)

Another factor of concern to the Indian government in the Doklam region has been the presence of Chinese troops in the region. It has been estimated that around 1600 to 1700 Chinese troops have been stationed in the Doklam region (*The Hindustan Times* 2017). Therefore, fear looms at large that the Chinese control of the region may threaten the Siliguri corridor or the ‘chicken’s neck’. The chicken neck is a narrow strip of land raging between 20 to 60 kilometres, vital for ensuring India’s connectivity with the north eastern states (Doshi and Denyer 2016). Also, Chinese control over Doklam would offer China tactical advantage. Since China has under its command the western sector in Askai Chin and regions along Arunachal Pradesh, it would not be difficult for China to cripple India from a the western, central and the eastern sector in case of a war between the two countries (*The Hindu* 2017). It is feared that Chinese presence in the Chumbi valley along with its control over the Doklam region would enable China to appear like a ‘dagger’ between Sikkim and Bhutan (MEA 2018a).

Narratives on the China by often using terms like the giant, dragger, elephant has often indicated the presence of worry that looms large with regard to the Chinese attitude towards its territorial claims. Dating back to history, the violations of the natural boundaries along the India China border began with the Chinese presence in Tibet in the 1950’s. The repeated intrusions into the Indian territory along the western

and eastern sectors drew the attention of then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who made an effort to consult the Chinese Premier with regard to issues on border intrusions, for instance Khenzeman and Lonju intrusions of 1959. The Chinese response was an outright denial of such intrusions as China claimed that Chinese troops were conducting business in their own territory and therefore question of intrusion did not arise under any circumstances. Even today we can observe similar responses from the Chinese government in case of territorial skirmishes and in particular matters relating to the position of Arunachal Pradesh vis-à-vis India and China. For instance, the visit of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Arunachal Pradesh in October 13, 2009 was expressed through “strong dissatisfaction on the visit to the disputed area”(Krishnan 2009). Similarly, the visit of newly elected Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014 and his visit to Arunachal Pradesh were protested by China. Also, denial of visas to people from Arunachal Pradesh has been a major issue of contention that has surfaced from time to time between the two states. In January 2012, Group Captain Mahanta Pangging, an officer of the Indian Air Force (IAF), was denied visa to China, on the grounds of his domicile status in Arunachal Pradesh. It was based on the premise that citizens of a country were not in need of visas to travel in their own country.

There have been other instances when China has not granted visas to residents from Arunachal Pradesh. For instance, in 2007, one of the incidents that created strains between the two countries was when a study trip to China by a group of 107 officers from the Indian administrative service (IAS) was cancelled. The study visit was based on a programme where the Indian officers could learn about Chinese economic growth and the policies on the same. However, the trip was cancelled as Beijing denied visa to one of the IAS officer named Ganesh Koyu, a 52-year-old promote of the Indian Administrative system, who belonged to Arunachal Pradesh. His domicile status was a concern for the Chinese government as they were not ready to host an Arunachali, as the people of this region belongs to a disputed territory and therefore their nationality contested by China. In 2011, a five member karate team from India was stopped at the Indira Gandhi airport in Delhi, on its way to Quanzhou in Fujian province. They were leaving to take part in the Asian karate-do Championship (The Citizen 2016; Dodum 2016). Then in 2012 January, a group of players, who were weightlifters from Arunachal Pradesh, were stopped from boarding their flights as they possessed stapled



visas. Again, in October 2013, two young archers from Arunachal Pradesh were denied participation in the Youth World Archery Championship in Wuxi in China for similar reasons. In 2016, Bamang Tago who is the manager of the Indian badminton contingent was denied visa by Beijing. Bamang Tago was ready to lead a fourteen member team from India. He was to represent a 14 member Indian team in China on the invitation by Fuzhou Municipal Sports Bureau to participate in the Thaihot China Open (The Wire 2016). However, Tago was denied visa by the Chinese embassy due to his domicile status, which was Arunachal Pradesh. He was able to recover his passport only after the using the threat of police (threatened to file a First Information Report (FIR) for recovering the same) and after the intervention of the Home and External Affairs ministries (*The Indian Express* 2016).

The instances above are an indication of the long-standing boundary dispute between India and China. China is continuously asserting its territorial claims over Arunachal Pradesh and by not granting visas to the people having a domicile status in Arunachal Pradesh, is pointing towards its new territorial claims. However, India has from time to time made it clear to China Jammu and Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh are an integral part of India.

### **Contextualising India-China Border Conflict in History**

Historical context is an important background to the understanding of the complexity in India-China territorial disputes. The ‘rise of China’ and its simultaneous reference to the ‘rise of India’ has become a common point of orientation when contextualising the India –China territorial disputes. Richard (2015: 9) echoes that civilizational status of India as “domestically tolerant and pluralistic, and externally non-aggressive and non-interventionist, with its sphere of influence based on culture, values and, to some extent, trade” has shaped the discourse around the issue. While for China, its civilisation status is rooted in elements of the Middle Kingdom, in which China ‘sits as equal to no-one’, culturally superior and surrounded by either hostile or subordinate states”. Therefore, the values on which the territorial claims over the contested spaces are based have been a perspective on their civilisation. It is argued that India as ancient state has focussed on values such a pluralism, heterogeneity and accommodation while the Chinese ideals based on homogeneity and uniformity.

The factors that are crucial in understanding the discourse around the India- China Territorial dispute and they are as follows:

These trends would enable us to analyse the India China territorial dispute through the course of time and how domestic and international events have shaped the issue.

1. The Colonial legacy of the McMahon line and the border dispute between India and China
2. The role of Jawaharlal Nehru in shaping the foreign policy objectives of a newly independent India.
3. The role of respective governments and their contribution to the resolution of India- China territorial disputes
4. The economic, military and trends in global power rivalry that have shaped India-China relations.
5. The impact of the 1962 India-China War and its implications on the future of India-China territorial dispute is one of the most fundamental factors that have shaped the discourse on India-China territorial disputes.

### **The Colonial Legacy of McMahon Line and India-China Border Dispute**

The McMahon line and the colonial legacy of the McMahon has been one of the most significant factors that have determined the nature of the India-China border dispute. The genesis of the debate around the McMahon line began from the time when the Tibet participated with India and Britain as *de-facto* independent state in the Simla conference in 1913. One of major factors that have hindered the resolution of the India- China border dispute is China's refusal to accept Tibet as a *de-facto* independent state during the Simla conference in 1913. China's acceptance of the McMahon line will be tantamount to Chinese acceptance of the Tibetan independence.

The Simla conference of 1913 was to the interest of the British. They wanted to keep Tibet as a buffer state between India and China. Therefore, during several occasions the British policy was of non-intervention in the frontier region that was connected to Tibet. As Gupta (1971: 521) states, the British objective of retaining Tibet as a buffer zone but creating two zonal divisions; one of outer Tibet and the other on inner Tibet, was akin to the aspirations of the Tibetans who wanted to assert their independence from China. So as a result the Tibetan worked in cooperation with the British. However, the Chinese refusal to be part of the conference as a major cause that

became a reason for the failure of the conference. The Foreign Secretary of the Government of India, Henry McMahon went ahead with the agreement with Tibet, which however was never accepted by China. The McMahon Line was drawn on 1914 as per the Simla convention on 3 July 1914, that separated Tibet from India in the eastern sector of the India. Kalha (2014) argues that although the convention considers Tibet as a part of China, it did not recognise the clause 9 of the convention which has the provision of delineating Tibet between outer and inner Tibet. The Tibetan side was represented by Lonchen Shastra and the Indian representatives were represented by Henry McMahon and Charles Bell (Shukla 2012: 410).

The demarcation of the line was vague and therefore it still continues to be a major cause of dispute between India and China.

However after independence the McMahon was considered as the international boundary between India and China, by India. The McMahon line was never accepted by China, since they refused to recognise Tibet as a power who could conclude treaties on equal footing with China or any other sovereign country. China considered the McMahon as illegal and a product of colonial legacy, hence it was in its utmost interest to reject it completely (Richards 2015: 4). Therefore, the colonial legacy of the McMahon line still continues to be an irritant in India-China relations.

### **The Nehruvian Era: Domestic Imperatives and Situating India in Asia**

“Nehru’s understanding and personal experience of the freedom struggle had shaped his outlook on the Indian foreign policy,” argues Mridula Mukherjee (2009: 1), a noted historian on Indian freedom struggle. Nehru’s vision was motivated by factors which were at play, at both the domestic and international level. India’s newly gained independence coupled with mounting pressure for self-sufficiency were the major domestic determinants in shaping India’s domestic policy objectives. For instance, at the domestic level India’s newly gained independent status have entrusted the government of the day with various socio-economic challenges in order to bring the country from the straits of extreme poverty and economic crises. Therefore India’s major economic and social planning was focussed in formulating the five year plans that would enable India to become self-sufficient through a major restructuring of the agricultural and the industrialisation sector. The immediate need of the country was to fight hunger, poverty and look into the socio-economic grievances of the people.

On the other hand Indian position on the international issues was motivated by three major conditions in the international arena. Firstly, the collapse of the colonial rule across several countries in the world and the simultaneous rise of freedom struggle in the Latin America and African countries. Secondly, the division of world into two power blocs due to great power rivalry between United States and the Soviet Union shaped the politics at the international level. These two were the most crucial factors that determined India's policy orientations. The belief that joining the power blocs will not lead to any benefits for the developing and poor nations of Asia and Africa was a major reason for the birth of Non-Alignment movement. The emergence of Non-Aligned movement, with India as one of its leaders was a decisive step towards concretising India's views and support on the major international issues of that day. This quest of India to remain sovereign in its internal and external arena led to the foundation of the Non-Aligned movement in 1961. The Non-Alignment movement was regarded as a foreign policy tool that would enable the newly independent states and emerging economies to take an independent path in deciding its foreign policy objectives without being a part of either of the power bloc's i.e., the western power bloc led by the United States and the eastern bloc led by the Soviet Union. Thirdly, the Indian commitment, primarily based on Nehru's vision of a powerful Asian identity had an important implication in determining Nehru's outlook towards China. Nehru's commitment to the Asian cause was testified by his interests in the Asian Relations Conference in 1947 March, at New Delhi Mukherjee (2009). The peace and stability of the Asian region was considered as one of the vital elements of a peaceful world order. Nehru believed that the need of the moment was to ensure a stable socio-economic growth of the country could be achieved only through the stability of the Asian region. India's distance from the cold war politics was an important criteria for ensuring stability in the region, by maintaining a distance from the cold war politics. Therefore, one of the major steps that India took was adopting the policy of Non-alignment.

The Non-Aligned movement was seen as counter- hegemonic to the established world order and was seen as one of the most essential foreign policy tools to maximise national interest (Abraham 2008: 195). Although, Nehru was at the forefront of the movement and took major initiatives in undertaking the movement, he also took initiatives to introduce Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai to the conference on

Non-Alignment. The participation of China in the Non-aligned movement was crucial for China to gain recognition and legitimacy in the affairs of international relations. Nehru decided to introduce his neighbour despite the fact that it was resisted by the other members of the conference. The conference at Bandung in 1955 talked about creating a new Asia-centric world with India as the torch-bearer (Borah 2015). In October 1954, Nehru stressed on the similarity of outlook and approach between the both countries which was based on the creation of a peaceful, progressive and stable Asia. Therefore, Nehru became a supporter of China's entry into the United Nations despite the resistance of the United States. Nehru's faith was built upon the conviction that a socialist China would never attack a non-aligned India. Nehru's conviction was based on his belief of not isolation a great power, which was China and in his attempt to establish cordial relations with China (PRC). The idea of admitting China into the United Nations was aimed at involving China within the norms and regulations of the international system. Also, the fact that having a neighbour who did not care for norms and regulations was perceived as a threat for India, therefore Nehru's stress on China's admission into the United Nations was based on strategic calculations then on idealism (Roy 2018: 3).

Nehru was not of the opinion that communism in PRC was a threat to the world stability and peace as the Chinese nationalism was shaped by many other factors apart from communism (Jain 2004). However, factors such as the presence of Pakistan and other socio-economic urgencies pushed India towards each of the super powers from time to time. Abraham (2008: 195) argues that it was the need for a more pragmatic approach that eventually led India to move away from the more radicalised approach of the Non-alignment movement, a movement which was based on "intellectual and moral superiority of non-alignment over racialism" and power politics.

### **The Tibet Factor between India China Territorial disputes**

Tibet has been a crucial factor in the strategic calculations of the dominant powers in Asia. Tibet has been the arena of the Great power game between Russia, China and Britain. Norbu (2008: 658), argues that "the domination of the region by power, either directly or indirectly, has been an accurate indication of one power's supremacy over the other.... And by 1950, when the two nationalist regimes had emerged in China and India, Tibet again became a matter of acute contention between the two nations."

The role of Tibet has been one of the central factors in determining the past, present and the future of Sino-India territorial disputes. From the strategic point of China's claim over Tibet is of immense importance to China as: Firstly, Tibet's inclination towards India, in case of a war between India and China, will enable India to come close to Tibet almost 100 kilometres away from the Sichuan province. Moreover, for India Tibet has been a buffer state since the colonial rule. As mentioned, Tibet position as a buffer state was responsible for enmeshing Tibet in the great power game. Secondly, Tibet's vast pool of natural resources has been of Chinese interests apart from its geographic position. The Tibetan plateau is considered as a resource rich region, with gold, lithium, coal and copper. Control over the Tibetan plateau region would mean having a control over the vast water resources. The Tibetan plateau consists some of the world's most important glaciers and sources of rivers system. It will enable China to have control over the downstream riparian states, such as India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Nepal and Thailand.

Tibet acted as a buffer zone for India. The occupation of Tibet by the PLA forces however directly exposed India to Chinese aggression. As Richard (2015: 7) echoes that the Chinese annexation of Tibet had removed India's buffer zone and therefore the Chinese development strategy has with network of airbases and airstrips have been of much concern to India.

Norbu (2008:286) argues that when the Chinese occupation of Tibet became an undeniable reality. Nehru decided to befriend China and thereby reducing the security threat that arose directly after the occupation of Tibet. Instead of antagonising China, New Delhi decided to by all means befriend China, which was given a practical shape through the Panchheel, by which Tibet was sacrificed at the altar of India China friendship.

Although India had recognised Tibet as part of China since 1954, India has been in support for Tibetan autonomy and India's stand on Tibet has been resented by China. India's asylum to Dalai Lama and other thousands of refugees from Tibet has been considered as a threat and interference in matters of Chinese territorial integrity and sovereignty. "China perceives a strong exiled Tibetan community as the root cause of Tibetan separatism; India, therefore, as the host nation for the government in exile, is

seen as a ‘hub of Tibetan separatism’ (Richards 2015: 9). It is argued that India has been using the Tibetan card to strengthen its barraging claims over the disputed territories or to even use it as a deterrent against a possible Chinese attack on India.

The presence of Dalai Lama has been a contention with the Chinese authorities. The Tibetan government in exile and its location in India’s Dharamshala have been looked upon India with suspicion. India supports Dalai Lama as a religious leader and not as a political leader and has charged China of suppressing the rights of the Tibetans on humanitarian grounds. However, dating back to history, Nehru was often criticised for his soft stand on the Tibetan issue in 1950’s and appeasing China.

### **Phases of India-China Relations**

*India China 1947-1962:* This period is often referred to as a ‘Phase of Panchel.’ India and China friendship during the 1950’s was based on the shared view that both the countries share a unique history and distinctive cultural and economic ties. It was based on the notion that India and China are one of the world’s most ancient civilisations and that the potential to emerge as major powers of the Asian region and possibly the world in future. The India China relationship was based on certain foundational assumptions. One such assumption was the virtue of the fact that India and China were one of the world’s oldest civilizations and that both the countries have shared very old civilizational ties. Such a view was mostly influenced by Rabindra Nath Tagore’s view that both the countries could ensure a mutually beneficial relationship due to the ancient civilizational ties. Nehru’s vision of a new Asian order, with the Asian countries playing a crucial role in the international affairs and mostly in matters which are Asian in its nature was a major factor in shaping India’s attitude towards Peoples Republic of China. As Jain (2004:254) states “In a rare gesture, India displayed excessive zeal in promoting its membership in the United Nations”. It is believed that Nehru’s enthusiasm for Asian solidarity made him perceive China as a friend in fulfilling his vision on Asian Solidarity. While, the other reason why India have been supporting the Chinese cause for United Nations is based on India’s attempt to extend friendly gestures towards Mao in context of straining relationship between India and China. It was based more on India’s strategic calculations than for moral idealism as Nehru’s critics would often like to believe. Moreover Nehru also believed that great powers in the international system should not be isolated, as it has been the

case with Germany during first world war, as such isolation can often become a reason for their unpredictable behaviour (Roy 2018: 1-2).

India was one of the first non-socialist/non-communist bloc countries to establish embassy in the People's Republic of China in 1950 (Embassy of India, Beijing; MEA 2016a). India was vocal in supporting Chinese membership to the United Nations and, similarly vouched for the Chinese representation in the Non-Alignment Movement. Panchheel doctrine was spearheaded by Jawaharlal Nehru and was based on the following principles:

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
2. Mutual non-aggression.
3. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
4. Equality and cooperation for mutual benefit.
5. Peaceful co-existence.

Therefore short period in the mid 1950's was marked by the spirit of *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai*, referring to the spirit of brotherhood between both the countries., mostly expressed through phrase of The Sino-Indian cultural society was established as a mark of India-India relationship and the *Cheena Bhavan* was established at Shantineekatan at Calcutta in India, which was a stepping stone of the India –China relationship. However, Panchheel could withstand the test of time and finally strategic factors led to rivalry among the two nations, culminating into the India- China war.

As far as the India-China relations in 1950's were concerned, India's slow growth rate and economic hardships demanded a stable relationship between both the countries. Bilateral relationship with China had to be based on mutual cooperation and trust, as it was a requirement of the need of the hour. Norbu (2008: 694), argues that Panchheel was an outcome of Tibetan occupation by China. Tibet acted as a strategic buffer zone between India and China, therefore the Chinese presence in Tibet was of immediate concern to India. As a response of the China's presence in the Himalayan kingdom of Tibet, India pursued Panchheel which contained India's hidden suspicion of the Chinese aggression. Soon the Chinese presence was of concern for the other Himalayan kingdom's like Bhutan Nepal and Sikkim that was bordering India. Nehru wanted to ensure a safe buffer zone; therefore he began assigning diplomatic treaties



with Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. Nehru visited 1958 Bhutan and both the states discussed common security and strategic implications of China's presence in Tibet.

New Delhi signed the Treaty of Friendship with Nepal in 1950 and gave Nepal the right to carry arms, ammunition for the protection of the Himalayan kingdom. Not just that by 1951 New Delhi, wanted to ensure that Sikkim was also away from the Chinese influence. So a treaty was signed with Sikkim in 1951 declaring Sikkim as the protectorate state whose defence and foreign affairs were to be decided by India. However, Sikkim was incorporated within the Indian territory in 16 May 1975.

Eventually certain events became a constraining factor in the India China relations. One of such events was the escape of Tenzin Gyatso, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama from Tibet into India in 17 March 1959, and it was a turning point in Sino-India relationships. The Dalai Lama had to flee Tibet due to the Chinese crackdown on the Tibetan uprising. The decision of New Delhi to grant asylum to Dalai Lama was resented by China as it was considered as an attack on its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Eventually the war in 1962 posed a severe blow to the relations between both the countries. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) attacked India from both the eastern and western fronts; they marched from the McMahon line in the east and from Ladakh from the west. Chinese troops captured places such as Bumla, Tawang, Jang, and Bomdila. The war came to an end when China declared unilateral ceasefire. China withdrew the after a month in 21 November 1962, while holding a position 20 kilometres behind the LAC, leaving behind unresolved territorial disputes across the 3,225-kilometer-long Himalayan border.

### ***The War of 1962***

The 1962 war between India and China still continues to be a major factor that has constrained the relationship between the two countries. This war had instilled a strong sense of miss-trust between the two nations. It has prevented normalisation of relations between both the countries despite several efforts.

The 1962 war was a national failure of which every Indian is guilty, it was a failure in higher direction of war, a failure of the opposition, a failure of the general staff (myself included): it was a failure of responsible public opinion and the press , for the government of India it was Himalayan blunder at all levels - Brig. J. P Dalvi in the Himalayan Blunder (1968) .

The India-China war of 1962 has been one of the landmark events in the history of Sino-India relations. Kak (2013) argues that “China’s military invasion on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1962, extending from Arunachal Pradesh [then Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA)] to Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), against which the nation failed to defend itself, was independent India’s darkest hour.” The war ended on November 21, 1962 with China declaring a unilateral ceasefire.

There has been a constant threat of the China in the India and it has been a concern for the Indian government at time and again. It has often stated in the parliamentary proceedings that ‘the government of India continuously reviews the threat perception in the borders regularly and accordingly appropriate measures are taken to ensure the defence preparedness to safeguard the territorial integrity, sovereignty and security of the India (MEA2018b). Therefore, both the nations have been engaged in construction activities like border posts in the contested regions leading to suspicion and border bickering’s from time to time. However, due to mutual mistrust even regular developmental activities have been looked upon with suspicion by each other.

The Indian response after the war has been to revise its attitude towards defence preparedness and India embarked on the modernisation and self-sufficiency of its defence requirements. India started making strategic partners and therefore was often criticised from moving away from its much self-initiated policy of non-alignment. For instance, The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), have initiated developmental and connectivity project in the state of Arunachal Pradesh in order to connect Tawang to Vijaynagar in Changlang District by road. The purpose of the road project is to offer livelihood/connectivity to the people of the border region. However, the other objective of the project as stated by the MEA was to provide adequate attention to the strategic and security needs of the areas. “The fact that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral and inalienable part of India has been clearly conveyed to the Chinese side on several occasions, including at the highest level” (MEA 2014, 2014a).

An analysis of the causes of the war and the other factors associated with the 1962 is crucial in order to understand the following factors:

1. The causes of war would enable us to understand the material costs and benefits of war, especially in light of how China may have used war as a bargaining tool to stress on the indivisibility of the territorial claims.
2. It enable us to examine the role of various factors that may have played an important role in bringing the frontier region under the governments control to deter a possible Chinese attack in future.
3. It would enable us to contextualize the state building activities of the Indian government in the frontier regions of the Arunachal Pradesh, after the 1962 war.
4. Most importantly, it will enable us to analyse significance of the narratives of the local stakeholders and their perspective on the territorial dispute after and before the 1962 war.

### ***Series of events on the Ground leading to the War***

Dalvi (1969: 31-43) argues that the era Chinese hostility began since 1956 when China started their military intrusions in Ladakh as they began patrolling the region in 1951. Also, there were other incidents 1959, which could have been taken as early warning signs of Chinese hostility. Two such events were the Khenzeman and Lonju intrusions. The encroachment in Khenzeman in 7<sup>th</sup> August 1959, which is situated to the north of the Chutangmu, in Kameng Frontier Division of NEFA was a major military skirmish between the two countries. The Chinese troops entered and came towards the Indian territory which was clearly a violation of the Indian border. During the Lonju incident, the Chinese crossed into the Subansiri Frontier Division and open fired at the Indian forward posts. However, despite these two incidents the parliamentarians learnt no lessons (Dalvi 1969). In 1959, the Chinese and the Indian troops began clashes from October. As a result of which nine Indian policemen died and ten were taken s prisoners at the Kongka Pass in Ladakh on 20 October 1959. Moreover, minor armed clashes began to surface up by the summer of 1962. The incident at Chushul in 10 July 1962, when China surrounded the Indian post was provocative (*India Today* 2016).

After, the 1962 war, the 1963 Agreement between China and Pakistan was another matter of concern for India. Under the China-Pakistan ‘Boundary Agreement’ which was signed between China and Pakistan on 2nd March, 1963. Under this treaty, Pakistan had illegally ceded 5180 sq. Kilometres of Indian territory in Pakistan

Occupied Kashmir (PoK) to China (MEA 2016b). This treaty was a setback for India-China relationship as China had signed this treaty with Pakistan even when India has categorically stated that Arunachal Pradesh and; Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India. Therefore, the Sino-Pakistan security and strategic nexus has remained a central issue in India–China relations ever since Beijing and Islamabad signed the agreement. Also, as stated in the MEA document, government of India has received reports on Chinese railway constructions in PoK and therefore conveyed its reservations on the constructions. The Chinese response was that since Jammu and Kashmir was a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan, India should deal with the issue on a bilateral level with Pakistan. Therefore, the 1963 China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement was a severe setback for the India –China relationship.

*The Phase after 1970's and onwards:* The war of 1962 was a severe setback for the India- China relations. However, by the 1980's there were developments that were responsible for normalising the relationship between the two countries. In 24 July 1976, diplomatic relations were set up between the two countries for the first time after the war of 1962. One of the senior most members of the India Foreign Service was posted as an Ambassador to Beijing in 1976. Ganguly (1989) highlighted the factors that were instrumental in such a policy and they are as follows: Firstly, India had received a setback in its neighbouring country Bangladesh due to Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's assassination; hence there was a need to establish neighbour friendly policies. Secondly, Sikkim inclusion as an Indian state in 1975 was another reason. However China was irked with Sikkim's inclusion into the Indian territory and as a reaction to Sikkim's inclusion, China had increased the troops at Longju, which was one of the first sites of Indian-Chinese armed clash in 1962. Thirdly, the demise of Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong, had made possibilities of holding discussions, since they were the central figures during the 1962 India China war.

The next Janata Party led government followed the policies of the previous government towards China. During the Janata Party led coalition government, Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited China in 1979, in his capacity as the External Affairs Minister of India and tried to discuss matters on the boundary resolution but it could not lead to any significant follow up. This was basically due to the collapse of the government in 1980's.

Indira Gandhi who came back to power after the defeat of the Janata government took new initiatives to cement the relationship. It was during this period that Chinese foreign minister Hunag Hua visited India from 26 to 29 June 1981. Indian foreign minister P.V Narasimaha Rao played a significant role during this phase. The eight rounds of talks during 1981-1989 was one of the crucial efforts that were conducted at a diplomatic level to resolve the boundary question between the two countries. India proposed a sector wise approach to resolve the boundary issue. The talks were grouped into two phases. One phase was about basic principles that would guide the discussions on the territorial question and the other phase of the talk was about the situation on ground. The first round of the talks began in 1981 and it was during this time that Deng Xiaoping's initiative called the 'Package Deal' came about. In the first rounds of talk India had its focus on the eastern sector which India felt could be resolved, while China desired for a more comprehensive settlement of the issue. However by 1988 China wanted concessions in the eastern sector which was rejected by India (Ganguly 1989). China began to press for Arunachal Pradesh and especially Tawang. As Raghavan (2008) observes, the package deal eventually was a Chinese stance to garner Indian concessions in the east and the Chinese in the west. The concessions that were demanded by China were too serious for India and India could not agree with the Chinese proposal (Ganguly 1989).

However the Package deal was rejected as the Indian Foreign Minister was of the opinion that aggressor; China from the Indian perspective was equated with the victim (India). Moreover the legality of McMahan line was denied. The Indian perspective echoed that the denial of McMohan line would legitimise Chinese gains through force during the 1962 war. On the other hand China found it hard to resolve the issue as, China's acceptance of the McMahan Line would mean accepting Tibet as a *de-facto* independent country during Simla conference in 1913 (Raghavan 2008). However, such demands were not accepted by the Indian side. As a result the talks remained inconclusive.

Granting statehood to Arunachal Pradesh on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1987 had become an irritant between the India-China relations. The recognition of Arunachal Pradesh was source of discord between India and China. China claims Arunachal Pradesh was a part of southern Tibet. The inclusion of the region under the Indian Union was seen as an act that violated the sovereignty of China.

In 19 December 1988, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China helped in improving the bilateral ties between both the countries. It was a crucial visit as it was for the first time after thirty four years that an Indian Prime Minister visited China. As a matter of fact even China, after a long time the recognised the significance of the boundary dispute that existed between the two states. Rajiv Gandhi came in contact with Deng Xiaoping and there was an emphasis on peaceful coexistence. A joint working group and a hotline service were established between India and China. Hence, the outcome of this meeting was crucial in context of dispute resolution.

In October 1989, Vice-Premier Wu Xueqian's returned Rajiv Gandhi's visit by coming over to New Delhi. It was an important period as it was during this period, began a series of confidence building measures (CBM's) between both the countries.

Efforts have been made to resolve the India-China territorial dispute through various means and at various forums. Active diplomacy has played an important role in starting negotiations and in reaching towards the various border settlement agreements. For instance, Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1989 was one such example. However, Rajiv's Gandhi's visit to China was seen as a betrayal towards the Tibetan people it was during this period Tibet was recognised as integral part of China. However, the Indian position on Tibet can be dated back to 1954 when India formally acknowledged China's rule over Tibet. Also, he was criticised for his failure to draw similar concessions on the Indian claim on Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Kashmir. The talks produced a document known as the 'Officials' Report', but it did not led to any conclusive outcomes.

On the other hand, the 1990's were a phase of liberalisation and India wanted to open up its economy and therefore P. V Narishama Rao took appropriate steps to improve the relationship between both the countries. Chinese Premier Li Peng visited New Delhi in 1991. Eventually, on 7 September 1993 'The Peace and Tranquillity Agreement on Borders' (MEA) was signed between both the countries which had the following provisions:

The Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China (hereinafter referred to as the two sides), have entered into the present Agreement in accordance with the Five Principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence and with a view to maintaining

peace and tranquillity in areas along the line of actual control in the India-China border areas.

The agreement had various clauses some of the significant ones are as follows:

1. The first major point of the agreement stressed on the need to resolve the territorial dispute through peaceful means and friendly consultations. Neither of the two sides was to use force and both the sides were to respect the LAC strictly. None of the sides were to cross the LAC and in case of any violation of the same, they were to pull back their troops immediately. Both the states were to jointly determine the disputed segments of the LAC.
2. The reduction of the troops along the border will be in accordance of the principle of mutual respect and ceilings of forces which had to be mutually agreed upon. The reduction of the troops along the LAC would be a stage based process, along with a sector based approach.
3. Reduction of the number of troops along the borders to maintain a friendly relation between the two countries and they were to notify each other on the movement of their troops.
4. Both the states are not to carry out military exercises along the mutually identified zones and a prior notification had to be given before undertaking any military exercises along the LAC. Also, the kind and form of such meetings and channels of communication has to be in agreement to both the sides.
5. Both sides are to avoid intrusions into each other's territory across the LAC and both sides have to avoid air exercises on areas mutually agreed upon.
6. The countries should consult experts from military and diplomats to formulate nay resolution of the on the LAC. These experts are to advice the Joint Working Group on the implementation of the agreement and settlement of any disputes in the course of implementing this agreement.

In 1996 President Jiang Zemin's visited India in November. However, India's nuclear test in May 1998 was again a major setback to the existing relations. The Joint Working Group was suspended due to the constraints that surfaced between the India and China. Although, efforts such as opening of the Nathu La Pass in July 1996 were significant, India's nuclear test in May 1998 has disturbed India-China relations yet again. China saw this move as a threat to China, while India claims that her move to conduct nuclear tests was a response to China's support to in building Pakistan's

nuclear capability. Kondapalli (1998: 493) observes that the Chinese position on India's nuclear tests has been of treating India as a non-nuclear state. The reason being, although China recognises India militarily as a strong state, the recognition of India as a nuclear state would imply treating India as an equal power vis-a-vis other nuclear power states. However, possession of nuclear power by India obviously does change the balance of power in the Asia-region and make impact how China and India is received by other nations in the region.

In 5 January 2000, the fleeing of Tibetan Buddhist leader Karmapa Ugyen Trinley Dorje into Indian territory was another setback to the bilateral relations between both the countries. Beijing started pressurising India to take appropriate stand on the issue and reiterated that providing asylum to Karmapa was a violation of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Considering the sensitivity of the issue, the government of India was once again faced with a tough challenge to handle the issue without provoking China. Many questions were raised in the parliament with regard to the issue of Karmapa's asylum status in India, such as (a) Is it Dalai Lama who has requested the government of India to offer asylum to Karmapa? (b) Whether the China has communicated any protests with regard to the issue of Karmapa's asylum in India? (c) Whether the government of India is in possession of any important information with regard to the flight of the 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapa from China?. The Ministry of External Affairs, in India then headed by Jaswant Singh , in his reply to the parliament said on 5 January 2000 that, Lama Ugyen Thinley Dorji who was respected as the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa did arrive in India. There have been requests by the Chinese to share the requisite details about the circumstances of his departure from Tibet. As per the MEA 2000); The Chinese position of Karmapas presence in India was that ,

Lama Ugyen Thinley Dorji had gone abroad to get the musical instruments of the Buddhist rituals and the black hat used by previous Karmapas.....and His Holiness the Dalai Lama has publicly stated that Lama Ugyen Thinley Dorji would like to stay in India and study.

Later, the Karmapa clarified in a statement that there was no reason for him to travel to India to collect the hat. He stated that his request to visit India was consistently rejected by the Chinese officials at several occasions therefore he had to take a decision to escape into India without being noticed. He wanted to visit India as many of his teachers and spiritual guides were in India living in exile, therefore after much consideration he decided to leave for India (*The Guardian* 2001).



The escape of the Karmapa was a huge blow to the Chinese prestige. Lama Ugyen Thinley Dorji was the 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapa and he was considered the third most important Buddhist leader in Tibetan Buddhism after Dalai Lama and the Panchem Lama. However, the Panchem Lama in China have not been seen since he was six years, as he was put under house arrest and replaced by China's own candidate as Panchem Lama. This issue was widely debated amongst many senior Buddhist leaders in India, for instance Shamarpa Rimpoche, the second- highest Lama of the Karma Kagyu lineage , who is the regent of Sikkim's Rumtek Monastery claimed that the escape of the Karmapa was a political ploy by the Chinese government along with the Dalai Lama, so that Dali Lama could use this boy for his political reasons and support Dalai Lama in every cause, unlike the 16<sup>th</sup> Karmapa who opposed Dalai Lama on several occasion (*The Hindu* 2000). The politics of Buddhist monastery and the issues on choosing representatives for the position of Dalai Lama, Panchem Lama has been an important issue in the territorial dispute on India and China. However, this issue will be discussed in detail in the later chapters.

Nonetheless 2000 was a year in which relations between the two countries took a positive turn as well. The Joint Working Group between India and China, constituted for resolution of boundary dispute was resumed.

The 23 June 2003 Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to China was landmark step towards reworking India-China relations. It was after 10 years that a visit by head of the state was made (Acharya and Deshpande 2003). A deal on strategic partnership was signed between the two sides which culminated into confidence building measures (CBM). This was the same period when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was engaged in a hard bargaining over the question of Sikkim with Beijing. The question on Sikkim was a complex issue as "New Delhi's willingness to address Chinese concerns on Tibet was matched by Beijing's readiness to resolve the Sikkim question" (MEA 2003). The removal of Sikkim from the list of independent states in the Chinese Foreign Office website was a major breakthrough of Indian diplomacy.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visit to Bangalore in April 2005 was significant event. The purpose of the visit was to push for Sino-Indian cooperation in high-tech industries. However, provisions were discussed to resolve the Sino- Indian border dispute as well. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Chinese premier Wen Jiabao signed the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of India-

China Boundary Question in 11 April 2005 to look into the border issue that exists between India and China. The document has 11 articles, dealing with provisions on the on the question of boundary settlement as given in the MEA (2005a) are as follows:

- Article I: States the resolution of the disputes through peaceful means and consultations, refrain from using force. The emphasis is on not to effect the other aspects of bi-lateral relations between the two countries.
- Article II: Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are to be followed and observed on equal footing.
- Article III: Both sides are to arrive at a package agreement<sup>14</sup> on the boundary question
- Article IV: Both sides are to respect each other's mutual strategic interests.
- Article V: The two are to taken into consideration national sentiments, practical difficulties, historical evidence and sensitivities of both the sides along with actual state of border areas.
- Article VI: Natural boundaries are to be respected by both the sides.
- Article VII: The interests of the settled population of the both sides are to be taken into consideration in the border areas.
- Article VIII: Modern cartographic and surveying practices and joint surveys are to be used in final delimitation of the boundary.
- Article IX: the two sides should strictly respect and observe the line of actual control and work together to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas. The India-China Joint Working Group and the India-China Diplomatic and Military Expert Group shall continue their work under the Agreements of 7 September 1993 and 29 November 1996, including the clarification of the line of actual control and the implementation of confidence building measures.
- Article X: The Special Representatives on the boundary question are to arrive at a definite framework on the same.
- Article XI: the agreement is into come one force on the date of signing.

During this period, the re-opening of Nathu La Pass was a historic step. This pass was once on a trade route of the Silk Road, which was closed since 1962 war. Also, in

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<sup>14</sup> A comprehensive swap deal included exchange of territories.

2007, President Pranab Mukherjee visited China and announced the creation of a Working Group to prepare a framework to resolve the India-China border issue (Verma 2010).

On 13-15 January 2008, The Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh made a visit to China. The two countries exchanged a joint document called "A Shared Vision for the 21st Century of the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China" which highlighted the mutual positions on a various international and some bilateral issues. India and China emerged as two most significant trading partners. In 2012 Working Mechanism on India-China border management was set up and it was directed at dealing with "important affairs related to maintaining peace and tranquillity in the border areas" (*The Hindu* 2012).

Unfortunately, border skirmishes between the two countries were witnessed in April 2013. The Chinese troops entered into Despang Bulge in East of Ladakh as China claimed it to be a part of Xinjian Province; however the Chinese forces had to move back. The resolution of the stand-off came up on 5May 2013 when the military commanders of both India and China pulled out their forces. It the situation was diffused through diplomatic actions. For instance, as Singh (2013:130), reflects that once there the intrusions were reported the MEA followed the protocols of the 1996 and 2005 to diffuse the situation.

However, in October 13, 2009: India and China become embroiled in a dispute over Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Arunachal Pradesh. China expresses "strong dissatisfaction" on the visit to the "disputed area." India responds by saying Arunachal Pradesh is an "integral and inalienable" part of India (Krishnan 2009).

In 2013, the Border Defence Cooperation agreement was signed between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang. The Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA) aimed at maintaining peace along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). This agreement was signed in the context of the intrusions that were reported in the Indian territories, popularly known as the Daulat Beg Oldi of April 2013. This agreement was signed in the backdrop of the previous treaties that was signed between India and China. It had ten articles in the agreement. The objective of

this agreement is to avoid tensions and misunderstandings between the two nations as per the information in (PIB 2015a) are as follows;

Some of the provisions of the treaties are:

- Both the sides will not use force to establish unilateral superiority.
- The two countries were to carry out defence cooperation based on mutual respect and bilateral agreements.
- The two sides were to exchange information on the military exercises and demolition operations. Assist each other in combating smuggling and locating personal livestock.
- Border cooperation was to be implemented through flag meetings along LAC and meetings were to be held with the military and defence ministry.
- Both sides were to set up Border Personnel Meeting and a hot-line service between the headquarters of the military.
- Each side could invite the other for the celebration of major national or military days
- Both sides were to avoid following the patrols of the other.
- In case of doubts relating to the alignment of the line, matter should be resolved through the provisions of article 3 of the agreement.
- Both sides were to exercise maximum self-restraint.
- Both sides were to employ this agreement with any prejudice to their respective positions on LAC
- This agreement can be revised and amended when mutually agreed upon.

September 2014 was a significant year in the Sino-India relationship. Chinese President Xi Jinping visited India and Narendra Modi received him at Ahmedabad. In the Joint Statement, the two sides exchanged views on the India-China boundary question and reiterated their commitment to seek a “fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution” (*The Hindu* 2014 a). Measures like imparting Chinese language lessons to ITBP forces along the Arunachal and Sikkim post was noteworthy effort to deal with the border disputes in the region. The objective of the language classes was aimed at removing communication blocks along the sensitive India-China border (*The Hindu* 2014 b). Also Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping had

discussed the border issue along the side lines of Fortaleza BRICS summit in 2014 at Brazil and five point approach was decided upon.

However, in November 2014: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, refused the invitation to participate in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in 2014. It was the same time when Ajit Doval was appointed as India's special representative for Sino-India boundary negotiations (*Economic Times* 2014).

May 2015 was a significant year as Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited China, with his visit to Xian, Xi's home town first then to Beijing. Narendra Modi met the Chinese president Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Goa BRICS Summit in October 2016. But, in May 2017 India had declined the offer to participate in the One Belt One Road initiative that has been undertaken by China. India submitted a list of objections on the project, one of the major reasons being the road belt passing through India's territory in POK. Nonetheless, the period in June 2017 was a period of full significance as has India and China entered the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as a full-member along with Pakistan, despite the Doklam standoff between India and China. It can be observed the crucial role of multilateral regional organisations in impacting the discourse on India-China territorial dispute. For example, in 2014 Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping tried to discuss the border issue during the Fortaleza BRICS summit. Regional forums such as APEC or China's OBOR (One Belt One Road) has been often used a stage to express India's resentment with the Chinese position on the India-China territorial disputes. The OBOR policy and China's involvement in POK has again raised concerns in the Indian security circles. China have tried to block India's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group and also been blocking India's attempt to designate Jaish-e-Muhamamd (JeM) as a terrorist group. The rise of India and growing Indian influence in the region has created an environment of competition between both the countries.

In the ministry of External affairs cites in its website that "Conditions seem more propitious today than ever before for rapid progress in the border talks between the two Asian giant" (MEA 2003). The ministry attributed two reasons that have impacted the process of Sino- India territorial disputes. Firstly, the end of cold war and the implications of cold war between the United States and Russia had a severe impact on how New Delhi and Beijing responded to their bilateral territorial disputes. However,

the end of cold war has offered opportunities to both the countries to improve their relationships and it has created new opportunities for both the country to develop cooperation in common fields. China is now taking interest in India due to four key developments and they are as follows: India's growing influences regionally and globally, its defence modernisation initiatives, new regional initiatives and increasing India-US relations (Sehgal 2017). The fact that both India and PRC are improving their relationship with Moscow and the United States has impacted how the boundary question has been dealt with.

Secondly, India and China are engaged in bilateral relationship that spans across range of issues beyond the territorial disputes. Hong Kong, Taiwan and China are India top three trading partners and the cooperation with these countries on trade and other bi-lateral issues have offered a template for the countries to resolve the boundary dispute in future (MEA 2003).

Norbu (2008: 286-287) claims that India and China have been objectively placed as rivals in the international system rather than cooperative partners. The rivalry between the two countries can be gauged from the fact that India follows a dual policy towards China. For instance, India's official position on Tibet is it is a part of China. On the other hand it has been the home to thousands of Tibetans refugees and the Tibetan government in exile.

However, factors such as the demise of Soviet Union have created space for China to assert its hegemony in the region. The rise of China as a major trading partner for most of the countries in the world, major military partner have increased the Chinese clout in many African and Asian countries.

China's encirclement of India argues David Scott is one of the major security threats faced by India at present. He argues that China's threat perception as it was in the United States and Japan have been evident in India after 1962 and 1990's, which is evident through Indian nuclear tests in 1998. China's hold over the Central Asian region, Tibet and growing influence over the South China Sea has been a cause of concern for India. However, at the current times the India's back seat in the affairs of the NAM have created opportunities for China to take a lead role in making a Asian Centric world with China as its leader.

An analysis of the boundary settlement procedures states that despite the efforts of both the countries to resolve the dispute, a final and sound border settlement mechanism has not been reached.

In the Indian context, border management has been a difficult task due to several factors at play. The international borders of the Indian state have been a legacy of the colonial rule. Most of the international borders that India shares with its neighbours are porous and artificial. Moreover it lacked natural boundaries like a river or mountain in many regions, for instance the India Bangladesh border along the Assam and Tripura border. The India Nepal border also lacks any concrete natural barrier, so does the India Myanmar and India Pakistan border. However, in the context the India–China border in Arunachal Pradesh, the mighty Himalayas act the natural barriers between the two countries. The role of the Himalayas as the natural barriers and how it has shaped the local Chinese threat perception will be discussed in the later chapters.

Factors such as insurgency and cross-border migration have been an important aspect of border management. In the light of threats mentioned above the system of inner line permit has been mandatory in Arunachal Pradesh for any non-resident to travel in Arunachal Pradesh. Other border states like Jammu and Kashmir in west, Nagaland, Manipur in the east have been infested with severe insurgency groups which operate across the international borders. Under such conditions, the safety and security of the people of these regions gets compromised.

Another significant factor that has shaped the discourse along the frontier region has the limited coverage of the Indian media and the Indian government into reach the frontier spaces either due to the terrain or priorities. It has worked to the advantage of the hostile groups which are against India. For instance, the locals of the contested spaces in Tawang claimed that during the war of 1962 war, the absence of the state presence, either in terms of infrastructure or institutions was a one major reason which failed them to distinguish between the aggressor and the defender.

Apart from issues like insurgency, the porosity of the borders, the rough terrain, lack of adequate technology has made border maintenance difficult. For, an instance when asked about the India-China border (LAC), an Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)

official said that “It is the world’s toughest border where we are faced with a rough and hostile terrain. It takes almost 25 to 30 days for the ITBP personnel to patrol some stretches” (*The Hindu* 2014b). The extreme weather conditions, ambiguity over territorial demarcation and lack of upgraded GPS systems have often caused difficulties in manning the India-China border. Kanwal(2007:2)., Additional Director of Land and Warfare Studies, New Delhi, argues that the lack of coordination has been a major hurdle in managing borders effectively, especially along the LAC. He also underlines the difficulty of sustaining a long-term border management along the LAC. He argues that although

The Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement signed with the Chinese in 1993 and the agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field signed in 1996 were expected to reduce the operational commitments of the army from having to permanently man the difficult LAC with China. However, it has not been possible to withdraw a single soldier from the border with China so far

However, factors like ambiguity over territorial control and boundary demarcations have always led to mutual apprehensions between the two countries. For instance, India’s decision to construct 54 new border posts in Arunachal Pradesh has not been welcomed by China. China has considered such measures to unnecessarily complicate security issues between both the countries. On being consulted about the construction of 54 new border posts, the Defence Ministry of China responded by stating that “We have noticed relevant report. The dispute still exists in the eastern part of China-India border” (*The Hindu* 2014c). Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju’s, responded to the Chinese statement by pointing that

We will do certain infrastructural activities which have not been done in the last 60 years. The Chinese should not have a problem with my statement... They cannot stop me from doing my work...I didn’t say that we are going to do anything on their territory. I am an MP from Arunachal Pradesh. I am constitutionally elected and I have the constitutional right and obligation to do whatever is right in our territory. I am looking at border management also (*The Hindu* 2014 d).

The measures to handle the borders along the India-China frontier especially along the eastern frontier throws light on the role of ‘location and distance’, ‘geographic features’ or variables such as ‘number of states surrounding a state’. All these factors play a crucial role in influencing how we manage borders.



The issues in managing India-China border is to a large extent determined by what we call as the 'spatial context' in international relations. It suggests that 'opportunity of interaction' and 'threat perception' does play an important role in interpreting the actions of two states. It can be suggested that the nature of borders does play an important role in determining the overall dynamics of the border dispute. The strategies implemented towards the management of borders are determined by a host of functional and symbolic role associated with borders.

## II

### **The Frontier Geography and Population**

The presence of military and their constant movement up and down the terrain, throughout the region was already a reason enough for them to realise the special significance of the region, with regard to India-China territorial dispute. The presence of military camps, towns, vehicles, trucks and tankers was one of the most common sites in the region. The route to Bumla, via Dhirang, Bomdila, Sela and Jang are dotted with military and their trucks after specific intervals. The respondents seem to be aware of the strategic significance of the region, especially Tawang and they had quick views on the 1962 India-China war. As discussed in the earlier chapters the places of Tawang, Bumla, Bomdila, Jang were some of the most important sites of the 1962 war. The Chinese attacked India through these routes and some of the deadliest battles were fought at these places. The field work, in these places reflected how these places are still beyond access due to the harsh climatic conditions. However, these places are now highly militarised regions. Therefore, militarisation of the region has its implications on the region. It can throw light on state subject relationship in the contested frontiers.

Geography and culture have played a crucial role in giving a distinct character to the region. The region is sparsely populated due to harsh weather and climatic conditions. The people in the region are mostly tribal's who have demanded protection of their land from the people from the plains and Indian mainland entering their region right from the colonial times. Therefore, the introduction of inner line permit was a major step towards protecting the culture and identity of the region, and moreover to keep a bay the hostility of the locals. The inner line was a result of the British administrative policy, which was enacted through the Inner Line Regulation Act of 1873. The inner

line system was an extension of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act. The idea of implementing the inner line was to protect the culture and identity of the people of the hills and to protect the commercial interest of the British by not antagonising the indigenous people of the region (Neba 2015:50-51). The population pattern and the presence of the tribal's in the region have shaped the culture and politics of the region to a great extent. Even, today although the region has highest density of languages, it also has the lowest density of population in the country. The location of the region close to China with a difficult terrain has added a distinctive feature to the region.

Below is a brief account of the population distribution in the region for a holistic understating of the region and culture of the place. The total population of Arunachal Pradesh constitutes 0.11percent of the total population of India as per 2001 census report of India, which is one of the lowest populated regions of the country. The total population of the state is 1,383,727 in which the population is 713,912 while females were 669,815. Thus the population density of Arunachal Pradesh is 17 per square km which is lower than national average 382 per square km (Census of India 2011).

In table 3.1, which presents a select states and its comparison with Arunachal Pradesh, one can observe that there is a huge difference in terms of population composition in the region when we compare it with the other highly densely populated states from the Indian heartland. For instance, Uttar Pradesh has a population of 828 per square km. The population discrepancy in Arunachal Pradesh can be observed in context of other border states of India like West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Mizoram, Assam or Nagaland, Sikkim and Rajasthan. For instance, West Bengal which is a bordering state with Bangladesh has a population density of 1,029 per square kilometre which is far higher than Arunachal Pradesh's. Even the Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir and Sikkim has a higher density of population. Union Territories like Andaman and Nicobar record higher population density patterns as well.

**Table 3.1 Population in Select States of India in Comparison to Arunachal Pradesh**

States and Union Territories	Area Square Km	Population Density	Population per square Km
Arunachal Pradesh	83743	13	17
Assam	78438	340	397
West Bengal	88752	903	1,029
Uttar Pradesh	240928	690	828
Nagaland	16579	119	120
Uttarakhand	53483	159	189
Himachal Pradesh	55673	109	123
Jammu and Kashmir	222236	100	124
Rajasthan	342239	165	201
Sikkim	7096	76	86
Mizoram	21081	42	52
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	8249,	43	46

*Source: Census of India 2011*

Table 3.2 presents the population density of some of the districts in Arunachal Pradesh, which would give us an idea of the population dynamics of the region. Each district is governed by a district collector.

**Table 3. 2: Population Density in Districts of Arunachal Pradesh**

Districts of Arunachal Pradesh	Density of Population per square km as per census 2011	Current Administration
Kurung Kumey	7	District collector
East Siang	27	District collector
East Kameng	19	District collector
Tawang	23	District collector
Changlang	32	District collector
Dibang Valley	1	District collector
West Kameng	11	District collector
Upper Siang	5	District collector

*Source: Census 2011*

**Table no. 3.3: Population of Schedule Tribe's in the District of Arunachal Pradesh**

Districts of Arunachal Pradesh	Population of ST's to the total population of the state, as per census 2001
East Siang	69.1%
East Kameng	87.25%
Tawang	75%
Changlang	36.2%
Dibang Valley	46.5%
West Kameng	49.5%
Upper Siang	78.2%
Lohit	38.2%
Lower Subansiri	90.1%
Tirap	83.7%
Upper Subansiri	89.5%
Papum Pare	56.6%
West Siang	81.7%

*Source: Census 2011*

### **Integrating the Frontiers: Politics of Development and Infrastructure**

An account of the infrastructure development project would offer an understating of the various initiatives that have been taken by the Indian state in order to penetrate the interiors of Arunachal Pradesh. The objective of the state-led development projects in the region has two fold motives: Firstly, to expand the legitimacy of the state by assuming the role of the service provider through critical infrastructure projects in the region Secondly, establishment of institutions and projects by the state in the frontier

will enhance India's hold in the region. It will give a fillip to India's position as the rightful claimant of the region which is claimed by both India and China.

The government of India has penetrated into the region by building infrastructure and enhancing its military presence. Infrastructure projects like the construction of roads, dams, hospitals, schools have enhanced the government's presence in the region. For instance, the passenger train was started in 2014 in the region. Rehman(2014) argues that it was the war of 1962 that pushed the Central government to consider this region within the national security calculations. Unfortunately, it was in only in some areas where road connectivity was stressed upon, but as such the interstate connectivity still remained very poor as it was not within the considerations of colonial rule. It was the "Bhalukpong-Bomdi La Tawang, Itanagar-Ziro-Along-Mechuka, and the eastern areas of Tezu-Roing-Anini, Hawaii-Walong-Kibithoo and Jairampur-Nampong-Miao which included a maze of roads with no inter-connectivity".

Rahman (2014) argues that even today, in independent India the road building activities of the government have been at a very cosmetic level and it has been confined just to the deployment of forces in the region. Also, China is still ahead of the border infrastructure development through its western development strategy. It has established critical infrastructure development in the region with the ability to mobilise its troops faster.

However, the central government of India has taken several initiatives to build and improve the infrastructure of the region, although it can be argued that the pace and scale of these projects remains widely inadequate. The development of the border area and the roads in the region has been an important component of national security and integration of the frontier region. The integration of the communication system in the region have been realised through several projects after 1947. The Special Accelerated Road Development Programme for the Northeast (SARDP-NE) has been an important project for the same. The SARDP-NE has been an initiative of the Ministry of Road and Transport and Highways. The purpose of this project is to develop road connectivity in all district headquarters in the north eastern region by constructing a two lane highway and providing road connectivity in remote and backward areas of strategic importance. The project will be implemented by the Border Roads

Organisation, National Highway Authority of India, the Public Work Distribution as well (PIB 2013b)

One section of this project focuses exclusively on Arunachal Pradesh, which is known as the Arunachal Pradesh Package for Roads and Highways. It covers 6,418 km of roads with an estimated cost of Rs 33,688 crore. Apart from the SARDP-NE, New Delhi has identified 27 border roads in the state (DONER 2012a). The DONER Ministry also cites that the road building project is a part of an initiative to strengthen the infrastructure along the border states of India. Efforts have been taken by ITBP and BRO to strengthen infrastructure. Eight stretches of roads in Arunachal Pradesh (5 roads -271.04 km) and Sikkim (3 roads-103 km) are being constructed by ITBP. The Border Roads Organisation is constructing 15 stretches in Arunachal Pradesh (13 roads -1326.77 km) and Sikkim (2 roads-47.28km) and the probable year of estimation has been estimated as 2016<sup>15</sup>.

Another important organisation entrusted with infrastructure and road building in the region is the Border Roads Organisation (BRO has completed its construction of 10 roads by 2012 February and the work has been continuing on another 13 roads in the region. The role of Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has been instrumental in completing the construction of these roads (Rahaman 2014).

The table below offers a state wise length of border roads constructed by Border Roads Organisation (BRO) as part of Indo-China Border Roads Project in last five years (2008-2013) is given below:

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<sup>15</sup> Data has been taken from the website of Ministry of DONER

**Table 3.4: India- China Border Roads Project**

State	Length completed in last 5 years	
	Formation completed (Km)	Surfacing completed (Km)
Sikkim	12.16	7.63
Arunachal Pradesh	419.98	392.16
Uttarakhand	186.73	56.96
Himachal Pradesh	114.05	71.92
Jammu & Kashmir	384.28	328.38

*Source:* PIB (2013), Ministry of Defence, Government of India,

The Press information Bureau (PIB) report stated that 73 critical and strategically important roads have been planned in order to ensure development of the India-China Border Roads Project, so that it would facilitate faster and better movements. Out of this, 61 roads have been assigned to Border Roads Organisation.

Some of the other efforts that have been now entrusted to the BRO, which is under the Ministry of Defence are the following:

Project Arunank in 24 October 2008: This project has been based in Itanagar. The objective of this project has been to accelerate the development of the high priority roads. The development of the project would boost delivery of SARDP-NE and PM package roads. The headquarters of this project was to be located at Itanagar to ensure coordination and faster progress. Some of the roads announced during the wake of PM package roads by Manmohan Singh in 2008, were to be included in this project. The Chief Engineer of this project, S. K Tripathi states that the objective of this project has been the development of strategic roads, which will pass through some of the treacherous hills and mountains so that the Arunachalis could march on regardless of all odds. The project credo has been ‘pragati ka surya Arunank’ (Border Roads Organisation website).

Another project on the similar lines is Project Brahmanak, which became operational from 3 December 2011: The named of project derived its name from the river



Brahmaputra and the logo of the project is the state animal of Arunachal Pradesh. The animal represents the wealth and holds immense significance in the socio-cultural life of the people. The objective of this project has been “ to align and fulfil strategic communication needs with the regional aspiration in the central Arunachal in a most credible and time bound manner with the aim of achieving the trust and satisfaction of the people” while the vision of the project has been to integrate the region as a major stakeholder in strategic needs and meeting all around development (Border Roads Organisation website).

Then, Project Tusker in 1960 which was renamed as project Vartak in June 1963 It was one of the first, which was started in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Under this project, 2776 Km of new roads, 150 permanent bridges and building projects such as the construction of North East Regional Institute of Science and Technology in Itanagar, Navodaya Vidyalayas have undertaken. KP Purushothaman, the Chief Engineer of Project Vartak state’s that the aim of the project was to build priority roads, which began in 1999. The project was carried through air lifts of personnel and bull dozers. The motto of the project is ‘Patience, Perseverance and Performance’ and the project has been successfully going on despite heavily rains, heavy landslides. “Vartak is the name to reckon with economic progress of Arunachal Pradesh” states Purushothaman from the Border Roads Organisation<sup>16</sup>

Projects by the BRO have been a common feature in the frontier region. The BRO has carried activities in the western and the eastern frontiers of the country. Projects aiming at the construction of all-weather roads, amenities for the military and buildings in remote areas and insurgency hot regions have been the primary task of this organisation. For, instance the BRO has several projects to its credit such as the project Setuk raised in September 1989 in Tripura and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Pushpak (1 May 1967) in Mizoram. Projects in the western sector include Project Beacon in Jammu and Kashmir (18 May 1960), Project Himank in Ladakh in 1985, Rohtang Tunnel project in 1983, Sampark in Jammu (started in 1975), and many others.

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<sup>16</sup> The information has been taken from the website of Border Roads Organisation available online

On May 26, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the one of the longest road bridge of the country. Its 9.15 kms long and it is wide enough to let the Indian Army's 60 tonne Arjun and T-72 battle tanks (*Outlook* 2017).

Also, Home Minister Rajnath Singh had a meeting with the five Himalayan states in order to discuss the infrastructure of the regions in May 2017. One of the major moves discussed in the meeting was the enhancement of Central Assistance for Border Area Development Programmes (BADP) from 990 Crore in 2016-17 to Rs. 1,100 crore in the current financial year. The infrastructure project under the BADP was to be given high priority and he said that since the India- China border road is 'demarcated, extremely cold with very difficult terrain and thus it is more important that impetus should be given to boost up infrastructure and peace in the border areas' (PIB 2017a).

One of the major endeavours of the government has been to connect the Arunachal Pradesh through the Trans-Arunachal Highway project. As the title of the report in the PIB website cites "RRM Dedicates to the Nation Two Crucial Bridges in Eastern Arunachal Pradesh". The 140 metre long Injupani bridge, was constructed to connect Roing and Tezu, which are two crucial district headquarters of Arunachal Pradesh. The other bridge being the 300 metre Deopani/Eze Bridge over the Eze river at Roing in Arunachal Pradesh. The Raksha Rajya Mantri Dr Subhash Bhamre 'dedicated the bridges to the nation' and the work of the Project Udayak under the BRO was appreciated as these bridges would offer connectivity to the 'strategic' Dibang valley bordering China (PIB 2017b). The construction of bridges and roads in the region has mostly been presented in the positive light in the nationalist discourse. The highlight of these constructions lay in its strategic significance vis-à-vis China. The infrastructure development in the region has been considered as a signal that validates state's presence in the frontier region. It does not only present the initiatives of the central government in developmental activities but also acts a projection of India's growing capacity in science and technology, which is often required to carry infrastructure development in tough terrains.

As a part of developmental project, construction of multi-purpose river valley projects has been common in Arunachal Pradesh. The Dibang valley multipurpose project with a capacity to harness 3000MW of energy, also received the environmental clearances in 2014. The creation of biosphere reserves and national parks has been developed

with reference to the green development and ecological modernisation as Ambika Aiyadurai and Claire Seunguen Lee (2017) argues. India's projects in these regions would ensure the presence of the state and the control of the state in the remote areas and water bodies. The construction of multi-purpose dams would offer India an advantage over the riparian rights in case of a dispute with China. Arguing on similar lines Rahman (2014), through an appraisal of the infrastructure projects in Arunachal Pradesh examines how the developmental projects have been used the Indian state in fulfilling its developmental and strategic goals in the region. He argues that the most of the developmental projects in the Arunachal have been portrayed as a provision for war preparedness, bridge the gap in less developed regions, enable the government and the private companies to carry turbines for the construction of dams which would thereby consolidate the riparian claims .

Verrier Elwin would argue that developmental projects in the region have been initiated with mostly an interventionist perspective. While, the argument that these projects are a crucial component in assimilating the people of the nation have been echoed by the many nationalist both during the colonial and post-colonial period.

### **NEFA: The Evolution of the Administration in the region**

Frontier regions play an important role in defining the limits of sovereignty. The government may deploy various socialising methods to familiarise the population within the standardised means of governance. Therefore, the role of institution is very crucial in introducing homogeneity to the governance structure in the frontier region and it brings the population within the ambit of state surveillance. However, the task of bringing the frontier population within the mainstream nationalist discourse has been a daunting task as has been full of challenges at various levels. At one level, the task of establishing political and administrative clout of the Indian state in contested region have been a daunting task, considering the international element attached to it. This region has been contested by China and it has been a bone of contestation between the Indian state and China. Chinese claim over the territory has often thrown up challenges for the Indian state, especially in context security of the region, in light of the experience of the 1962 war. Also, during several occasions as it has been discussed in the previous chapters, the refusal to issue visas to residents of Arunachal

Pradesh, resentment to road building activities by Indian authorities have been constant irritant between the two countries.

At the other level, debates on assimilation and integration of the tribal and indigenous population of the region within the standardised Indian nationalist discourse have been a course of debate among several policy makers, anthropologists and within the anthropologist themselves.

The daunting task of unifying India and the creation of one Indian identity, during and after the freedom struggle had opened up challenging questions with regard to the frontier regions. Firstly, the undefined India-China borders soon began to be contested with the rise of China and as well as India. In the colonial period, the borders of the British India and Tibet did not cross beyond a particular point. For instance, the British did not set up their administrative unit beyond Dhirang (which is 10 hours away from Tawang) while the Tibetan authorities did not extend beyond Powo. Secondly, the other challenge pertained to the position of the huge tribal population and in deciding the provisions under which they were to be governed. This became a source of deviation between the tribal narratives versus the national narratives. It was represented by debates on interventionism, represented by thinkers such as Thakkar , M. S Ghurye, M. S Srivisan versus protectionism represented by Verrier Elwin and his followers (Guha 1996).

Considering the cultural and geographical complexity of the region, it is a crucial to understand the pattern of NEFA administration. An examination of the same will enable us to appreciate the ways in which the Indian state has established its presence in the frontier region. The administrative history of the region is important as it throw light over the role of various state institutions and socialising mechanisms used by the state to incorporate the region within the nationalist discourse.

True to the nature of terrain in Arunachal Pradesh, Elwin quoted in Sharma and Sharma (2005:5), and put forwards that;

there are thirty thousand square miles of NEFA, hardly any of it flat, bounded by Bhutan in the west and the Tibetan and Sikang region to the north and east, Burma to the south east. It is so mountainous, so cut about, chopped up and divided by countless streams that on a month's tour you may well climb a total height that of exceeding the Mt. Everest.

The challenges of the terrain and the rugged mountains have been of major concern to the policy makers of the colonial and the post-colonial Indian state. Even today, the place is considered backward due to lack of connectivity and lack of infrastructure (Baurah 2007).

The objective of the British Indian administration in the region was twofold: one commercial and the other strategic. Commercial interests were vested in tapping the region for raw materials, like timber, ivory and other items. Therefore, the British administrative policies were aimed at maintaining law and order in the region that would be conducive for ensuring commercial interests. Strategically, the region served as a buffer zone between China and Russia in context of great power rivalry and the British had to ensure that it remains so.

The British needed to conquer and subdue the people in the region to pursue their economic interests. The economic interests were pursued by introducing new methods of land relations; for instance, turning land for commercial purposes such as cultivation of tea that began with the introduction of new land use patterns and consequently introducing new labour relations and tax collection methods. For example, introducing tea plantations in Assam had changed land use patterns, the labour relations and demography of the region as they brought labourers from Odhisa and Jharkand to settle in Assam and work in the plantations (Aiyadurai and Lee 2017: 9).

However, the unfamiliarity of the region was a challenge to the administration of the region. Elwin (1959) argued that even in the 1950's, the region of Arunachal Pradesh was so difficult to penetrate, that one required major expeditions to reach the interior of the regions. The British could have their administrative point up till Bomdila only, which at one point was considered the highest administrative point in the country. Also, the role of British administration gradually diminished as one moved away from the Brahmaputra valley and as one moved upwards the Himalayan watershed. However, today Tawang could be considered as one of the major administrative centres which are located at much higher elevation than Bomdila. Tawang is located at an elevation of 2669 metres while Bomdila at 2217 metres. Moreover, the Indian units are located up till Bumla which is located at an elevation of 4633 metres.

NEFA was governed as a part of Assam, under the Ministry of External Affairs, with the Governor of the state acting as the agent of the President. Eventually, the administration of the region was shifted from the Ministry of External Affairs to the Ministry of Home Affairs on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1965 as per the recommendations of the Dying Ering Commission 1965. The Governor of the region was assisted by his administrative head and the secretariat was located in Shillong, in Meghalaya.<sup>17</sup> The advisor is aided by a legal advisor, departments on health, forests, tribal affairs and engineering. The advisor was responsible to coordinate the work of the Assam Rifles and report it to the Governor and finally to the President (Elwin 1959: 4). The districts were under the political officers, along with technical officers. The subdivisions were administered by assistant political officers and further by area superintendent.

By the 1954, the administration of the region was redesigned on the lines of single line system to increase political efficiency. The departments were integrated with the secretariat in Shillong at Meghalaya while at the district level the political officers at each district were guided by the technical experts on issues. These changes had integrated the political and the developmental plans for the regions and made administration efficient in the region. In 1956, the Frontier Administrative Service was formed, which was meant for people with an aptitude to deal with the frontier region and also for those who were ready to serve in the frontier regions. In terms of planning, the second five year plan has given priority to communication, food and then health. Elwin argues that the whole of the NEFA would be regarded as a National Extension Block, while the objective of administration was to just maintain law and order but it is about inducing welfare practices as well.

The section below gives brief administrative changes in some of the districts in Arunachal Pradesh to give an account on how the Indian administrative apparatus have developed in the region. The administrative evolution of this region may throw light on how the Indian state has made its inroads into the region and therefore peoples response towards these changes. It will throw light on the development of the various administrative and political processes that has unfolded in the region bringing the frontier region within the nationalist discourse. For instance, the district of Tawang, remained as a sub-division of the West Kameng district, until 5<sup>th</sup> October 1984. It was

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<sup>17</sup> Shillong had served as the capital of the undivided Assam until 21 January 1971, when a separate state of Meghalaya was carved out of Assam. The capital of Assam shifted to Dispur thereafter.

in 6<sup>th</sup> October 1984 that a full-fledged district of Tawang was created from the West-Kameng district. The administrative arrangement of the district has been done in a manner that the entire district has been divided into three sub-divisions which are the Tawang sub division, the Lumla sub division and the Jang sub division. The head of the district that is responsible for maintaining the law and order in the district has been vested with the District Commissioner, who is aided by other administrative officers and political officers. Also, The Assam Frontier (Administrative of Justice) Regulation, 1945 is one of the crucial acts that authorises the village council to settle all the criminal and civil matters within their jurisdiction. The Panchayat Raj system has been introduced in the region in 1967, through the North East Frontier Agency Panchayat Regulation, 1967. This Panchayat Raj consists of three (3) tier system *viz-* Gram Panchayat Body exist at the village level, the Anchal Samiti at the Block or Anchal level and the Zilla Parishad operates at the district level (Government of Arunachal Pradesh). The Panchayat Raj system calls for the participation of the local people and participate in the matters of administrative concern, necessary for the effective governance of the region. These changes reflect how the frontier region has been gradually incorporated within the body politic of the nation. Administrative changes, introduction of new institutions and forms of governance suggest how the people may be incorporated within the standardised national discourse.

Similarly, the other districts such as Kurung Kumey was incorporated within administrative changes: By a government of India notification became a part of Northern section of the 'North East Frontier Tract.' The British subjects under it were to be regulated by the provisions of Inner Line 1919. In 1954, it was renamed as the Subansiri Frontier Division and it was under the administration of Ministry of External Affairs. This region was renamed a Lower Subansiri district and in 2001 it was bifurcated from the Kurung Kameng district.

The East Siang: The headquarters' of the district are in Pasighat, it is one of the oldest towns in Arunachal Pradesh which is called the gateway to the region. Pasighat was established as a city in 1911, with a political officer as an administrator for commerce and trade. The people of this region are considered as one of the earliest regions to come into contact with the peoples from the plains.

Then, the district of West Kameng, which is surrounded by Tibet in the North, Bhutan in West and Tawang district in Northwest and East Kameng is the East. The headquarters of the district is Bomdila. This district has been under the Mon kingdom, Tibet and Bhutan historically. The district becomes a part of western section of the North East Frontier tract by a notification in 1914 which regulated the entry of British subjects into the region by an inner line. Like other regions administered under NEFA, this district was under Ministry of External Affairs with a political officer as in charge which was later designated as a Deputy Commissioner.

East Kameng: As per re-organisation of District Act, 1980, this district was bifurcated into two districts namely East Kameng and West Kameng. The East Kameng District has of 3 Sub-Divisions, 7 Blocks and 13 Circles for better Administrative purposes. The East Kameng district was created as a result of a House-listing Operation of 1981 Census. This district was governed under the district administration of Darrang in Assam.

The Changlang district was a part of Tirap district. It became a separate district under Arunachal Pradesh Reorganisation of District's Amendment Bill on 14 November, 1987. This district is known for the Stilwell's road, Nampadha Tiger Reserve and the cemetery of Second World War. The Stilwell Road was constructed by the United States to connect to Myanmar. It was the one of the important links for the Assam Bengal railways.

The examples from above indicate that the administrative process in the region have undergone much changes since the colonial time. From a time when these regions were governed by a political officer, now by a Deputy Commissioner, each district has been divided into sub divisions for greater administrative efficiency. These changes have been instrumental in creating homogeneity in governance and administrative institutions. The rearrangement of the region brings to light how the state makes its presence in the region. For, control over the frontiers and the people, it was necessary that these regions be brought under more administrative control and with efficiency.

The next section offers the complexity and the politics of the authority and power. It elaborates on the role of the Tawang monastery and how the Indian government negotiated and co-opted its authority while interacting with the Tawang Monastery in the region.



## **The Tawang Factor in India-China Territorial Disputes**

This section offers a brief introduction to the territorial dispute over Tawang situated in Arunachal Pradesh. Tawang has been a major bone of contention between India-China territorial disputes. Tawang was occupied by China in 1962, in fact the Chinese troops reached uptill Bombdilla and even Tezpur in Assam. There have been questions that were raised in the parliament with regard to the position of Tawang, which is a vis-à-vis boundary settlement across India China border. The government of India has maintained its firm position that “China illegally claims approximately 90,000 square kilometres of Indian territory including Tawang in the State of Arunachal Pradesh. Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India and Government have conveyed this fact to the Chinese side” (MEA 2008b).

The Chinese claim over Tawang has been based on the following grounds:

1. One of the most sacred Buddhist monasteries with its linkages to the Buddhist monastery in Lasha is situated in Tawang. Therefore from the point of religious and cultural influence, Tawang is claimed by China on the basis of its connection to Lhasa and therefore Tawang constitutes an important Buddhist conclave of Tibetan Buddhism.
2. Tawang has been the birth place of the fifth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso. China is concerned with the prospects of Tawang being the next birth place of the reincarnated fourteenth Dalai Lama. China fears that in case the birth place of the next Dalai Lama is outside China’s control then China would have to deal with another generation of spiritual leader of Tibet opposed to the Chinese rule.
3. China claims that Arunachal is a part of South Tibet; therefore even Tawang becomes a part of China on the basis of similar claims to Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore on several occasions China has refused to give visas to the people of Arunachal Pradesh.

The visit of Dalai Lama to Arunachal has been a contentious issue between the two countries. The recent visit of Dalai Lama in 4 April 2017 was a matter of dispute between both the countries. This research analysis the opinion of the local stakeholders of the region towards Dalai Lama and the Chinese position on Dalai Lama in the later chapters. As per the Ministry of External Affairs, Dalai Lama

visited Arunachal on six occasions. The Ministry states that data on his visits to Arunachal have been compiled from the Dalai Lama's official website (MEA 2017a).

(i) 1983: March 24 – May 6[(March 24-27), Miao (March 27-29), Tenzingang (March 29-April 10), Bomdila (April 10-11), Tawang (April 11-17), Dirang (April 17-29), Bomdila (April 29- May4), Itanagar (May 4-6)]

(ii) 1996: December 7 – 16 [Miao (December 8-11), Tezu (December 11-14) & Mirig (Miring) (December 14-16)]

(iii). 1997: October 9 – 21 [Tenzin Gang (October 10-13), Bomdila (October 13-14), Dirang (October 14-15), Tawang (October 15-21)]

(iv). 2003: April 29 – May 9[Tenzingang (Apr 29 - May 1), Dahung (May 1), Bomdila (May 1-3), Dirang (May 3) & Tawang (May 3-9)]

(v). 2003: December 11-17 [Miao (December 11-13), Tuting (December 13), Tezu (December 13-15), Mechuka (December 15), Itanagar (December 15-17) & Chowkham (December 17)]

(vi). 2009: November 8-15. He commenced visit from Tawang on Nov 8 and was there for 4 days .

The visit of Dalai Lama to Arunachal Pradesh has been significant as it raises questions with regard to two important issues 1. The Indian position on Tibet and 2. The Indian position on Arunachal Pradesh. The stand of Government of India on the issue of Tibet has been that Tibet is an autonomous region of the People's Republic of China and this stance has remained constant. Also, the need to resolve the boundary question between India and China amicably remains a priority for Indian Government (MEA 2017b).

The position of Indian government on Dalai Lama has been that, he is a 'revered religious and spiritual leader who is respected by many people, including the Indians and he has been granted complete freedom to carry religious activities in India' (MEA 2018c). China has always considered the visits of the Dalai Lama to Arunachal as act that is responsible for challenging the territorial integrity and sovereignty of a United China. China considers Dalai Lama as a separatist who wants to separate Tibet from China. The current Dalai Lama's position on Tibet has been that Tibet is a part of China but

he is demanding autonomy for the region as the region has a different religion, culture and language. Also, China has at times considered Tawang as an inalienable part of Southern Tibet from the cultural and administrative point of view (Joshi 2017). However, the Indian position remains firm that Tawang is a part of Indian territory.

The question of Tawnag has assumed a complex shape due to reasons colonial legacy, role of religion across the borders, coupled with counter territorial claims by both the states. Regular transgression of borders along the LAC, in the region has been of concern to India. For instance, On 13 July 2011, a People's Liberation Army's (PLA) patrol attempted to cross a 200 feet wall of loose stones constructed 250 metres on our side of the LAC in Yangtse area of Tawang which was prevented by our troops. The stone wall was partially damaged and has been reconstructed. As per the established mechanism with China, a strong protest was lodged with the Chinese side on the action of the PLA patrol in a Flag meeting. As there is no commonly delineated Line of Actual Control (LAC) between India and China, there are a few areas along the border where India and China have different perceptions of the LAC. Both sides patrol upto their respective perceptions of the LAC.

Tawang has become an important factor in the India-China territorial dispute is in the context of the swap deal. The Chinese effort to resolve the territorial disputes between both the countries were put forward through the 'swap deal'. The swap deal stated that China would give up its territorial claims over Askai Chin if Tawang was handed over to China unconditionally. India on the other hand rejected the swap deal and the Chinese proposal on the swap deal was rather considered impractical.

One of the recent incidents that drew a lot of attention in the Indian parliament was when China renamed six places in Arunachal Pradesh along the LAC in the Tawang region. The Ministry of Civil Affairs of China had published the 'notification' on 13 April 2017 on its website (MEA.2018d). The names mentioned by China had a similarity with the names of places that were claimed by China along the undefined LAC. However, this not the first time when China has assigned names to places in Arunachal Pradesh .China standardised the names the places as retaliation to Dali Lama's visit to India, so that Chin once again reaffirm its sovereign territorial claim over the region. The names of the places have been written in Chinese characters, Tibetan and Roman alphabets along with coordinates of all the places (*Times of India*

2017). The names six places given official are by China are Wo'gyainling, Mila Ri, Qoidengarbo Ri, Mainquka, Bumo La and Namkapub Ri. Given the similarity of the names and the coordinates by the Chinese authorities these places could be the following places in Arunachal Pradesh in India:

Bum La- This place might be a reference to Bumla, which is located 37 kilometres away from Tawang at the LAC. The road to Bumla is considered as historical route in the context of 1962 war as Chinese troops invaded India through this route Mila Ri: It has been guessed that it is the place located Daporijo in Upper Subansiri area. Then a lake in the same district has been named as Qoidengarbo R. Namkapub Ri- Namka Chu located in Tawang district might have been standardised as Namkapub Ri. This place holds significance as some of fiercest battles of the India- China war was fought here 9 (*The Indian Express* 2017; Gurung 2017).

The government of India responded by stating that assigning names to places within the Indian territory would not change the fact that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India. (MEA 2018d)

### **The Significance of Tawang Monastery: Taxation Policies and Authority**

The Tawang monastery and its connection to Lasha has been a vital factor in determining the status of Tawang. In earlier times the Tawang monastery was under the authority of the monastery at Lasha. The Tawang region and the Tawang district was under the control of the Tibetan district called *Tonsa* until 1914 argues Namgyal (2017: 11).

The significance of the Tawang monastery lays in the fact that it played and still plays a vital role in the daily lives and culture of the people. The role of Tawang monastery has played a crucial role in the region due to the following reasons; firstly, religion and culture plays a crucial role in the lives of the people in Tawang. The Monastery has been vital in preserving the beliefs and the culture of the people. Secondly, the monastery has performed both political and quasi-judicial functions for the people of the region for several years, before the British Indian and Indian governments rule to reach there. Thirdly, ever since the colonial period, the ownership of the Tawang Monastery and political authority over the region is inter-linked. This is because since the Tawang monastery is an important source of authority in the region which

commands the respect and reverence of the people in the region; the ability to acquire influence over the Monastery would mean ability to influence the choices and perspective of the local people in the region. Therefore, the significance of the monastery in ensuring political control over the region was realised as early as the colonial period when some of the notable officers from the British Indian administration played a crucial role in entrenching the political influence of the Indian state in the region. For instance, in order to penetrate the region, expeditions to Tawang undertaken by the colonial Indian administration. One of the earliest expeditions was led by Capt. G.A Nevill in 1914 and then later by G. S Lightfoot in 1938 (Shukla 2012:411). The objective of these expeditions was to explore the region and start establishing the presence of the state in the region. The significance of these expeditions lay in the fact that it was as early as 1938, that Lightfoot's recommendations stated the need for a local control over the Tawang monastery. The Tibetan control over the Monastery implied Lasha's direct control over the Monastery, therefore (possibly) China's hold over the region as Lasha was accountable to China. Therefore, the issue of ownership and political control over the Tawang Monastery was a significant issue. As a consequence come's Lightwood's recommendations, that election of a local Monpa to some of the important positions of the monastery could change the dynamics between Lasha's control of the monastery and as a result the region as well (ibid). Even today, the appointments in the Tawang monastery play an important role in shaping the relationship between the Indian government and the people of the region. For instance, the appointment of a Monpa as the Rimpoche of the Tawang Monastery by Dalai Lama in 2008 has enhanced Tawang's autonomy from Lasha. This is significant in the light of integrating Arunachal Pradesh within the Indian nationalist discourse.

Also the fact that Firstly, the Dalai Lama has been refuge in India, as a political exile, has been an instrumental factor that has enabled the Indian state to establish its identity as a defender of the Buddhist religion and create a positive image of the state. These perspectives have been presented and analysed in the next chapters of this thesis. It presents how the Indian government's policies on the Dalai Lama and protecting religious freedom of the people have become one of the crucial factors for identifying with the Indian state in the region.

These instances reflect how the monastery was a major source of power in the region. The monastery had exercised considerable authority in the region. Therefore, this brings to light the challenges the Indian government had to overcome while negotiating with the traditional sources of authority in the region making its presence in the region. Apart from the two expeditions mentioned above, another notable expedition in the region which enabled the Indian state to percolate in the region was led by Bod Khating in 1951 argues Das (2017: 25). The importance of his expedition in the region rests on the fact that his was able to extract a positive response of the local community. This was primarily attributed to the exiting exploitative and harsh taxation policies of the Tibetan government like forced taxation, harsh punishment methods, which welcomed the Indian state over the Tibetan authorities. Also, assurances by Bod Khating that Indian state would refrain from interfering in the cultural and religious affairs of the people was also a major reason responsible for instilling a positive impression of the Indian state.

This brings to light how the economic and taxation policies of the Indian government have enabled the state to garner allegiance and acceptance of the people. Taxation in the region has determined the relationship between the ruler and the subjects. It determines the scope and nature of political authority in a region; therefore it was an active policy by the colonial administration to alter the existing taxation system in the region.

Shukla argues that (2012: 417-418) The British policy was to discourage the locals along the Dhirang, the Rupa to pay tribute to the Dzongpongs, who were at the north of Sela pass to tactically wither away the control of the Dzongpongs in the region. It was based on the assumption that the loss of economic control would amount to the loss of political control by the Dzongpongs. Secondly, harsh and brutal means of tax collection by the Tibetan authorities have been exploited as a reason that would strengthen the apathy of the people towards the Tibetan authorities. Moreover, the unequal relationship between the rulers and the subjects was resented by the people. The Tibetans called the Monpa's as the Grinda's. The Monpa's were considered subordinate subjects and the Tibetans as the superior rulers (Shukla 2012). The position of Monpa's from unequal citizens to equal citizens has been instrumental in shaping the attitude of the people towards the Indian state. In light of this context, the role of the Indian government and its penetration into the frontier region has been

welcomed by the locals. The narratives from the field express people's relief from the brutal taxation regime.

In order to entrench its rule in the region, the Indian state had to ensure a balance between the nationalist construction of the Indian state while respecting the religion and traditions of the local people. This has been achieved by delegating the local authorities with powers to decide certain issues, e.g. religion, food and matters related to culture and customs. This is reflective of the protectionist policies of the Indian government towards the people of the region that are considered as the tribal's or as Verrier Elwin would call the 'aboriginals.' On the other hand, state consolidating began creeping in with well-planned tactical moves by the government which are interventionist in nature. For instance, setting up of government institutions like the military, the re-arrangements of districts for thorough governance have contributed in entrenching the political authority of the state.

The socialising mechanisms used the Indian state has enabled the state to consolidate its rule in the frontier region despite the cultural, geographical and political challenges that pertains to the region. The Indian state had to balance its policies for both securing the trust of the people and as well as its ambitions for state consolidation in a disputed frontier. Measures such as establishment of Hindi medium schools, organisation of government funded rallies and schemes have been used as a tactical device for states consolidation, which is often interventionist in nature while policies such as declaring Arunachal Pradesh as a tribal state, continuation of the inner line permit are examples of protectionist policies. The debates on interventionism versus protectionism in context of the population and governance have often surfaced before 1947 and after as well. These debates have been largely discussed through the works of Verrier Elwin and Guha 1996, of importance. The works of these scholars is crucial in understanding the how knowledge creation and the discourse on the nationalist construction of the Indian state have influenced the consolidation of the North Eastern states in India.

The next chapter provides a detailed collection of narratives from the Tawang and West Kameng region, along the disputed territories of India and China border. The narratives reflect various perspectives of the people in the region. These narratives would enable us to understand how people perceive political authority in contested

spaces. It would also throw light on the role of state institutions in strengthening sovereignty in the frontier region.



## CHAPTER 4

### **DIVERSE NARRATIVES ON THE McMAHON LINE: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE FIELD**

#### **Perspective of the People**

This research looks into how the people of the region have reacted to the various policies of the government of India, be it developmental projects, construction of roads, politics of monastery and other issues. The objective of the narratives is to bring forth the process in which the local and the government stakeholders have interacted with each other in the region. The field work comprised of collecting narratives in the backdrop of the 1962 India- China war and the various developmental and administrative changes introduced by the state in the region.

The narratives presented in this chapter would enable us to understand the impact of the local narratives on the nationalist policy of state consolidation, which draws primarily from field work. The narratives of the people in the frontier region are essential in understanding how people have reacted towards the state policies. For instance, the introduction of railways in the colonial period has been associated with the drain of wealth from many frontier and remote regions. There has been a possibility that even in independent India; the policies in the frontier region could have been looked upon as the exploitation of the periphery by the centre, which have often been cause of insurgency and secessionists movements in other parts of North Eastern India.

#### **Peoples Perspectives on China**

##### *Views on the India-China War of 1962*

The purpose of this section was to understand the perception of people with regard to the following: Firstly, to understand if there is a Chinese threat perception in the border regions. Considering there were two contradictory historical narrative on the region, one that of an ancient historical tie of the region with Tibet and the other one of a sudden Chinese attack in in the region through the Bumla, Tawang, Jang, Bomdila in 1962, this research explored the perspective of how people perceived their current position vis-à-vis the Indian state before 1962 and after 1962. Moreover an

analysis of a threat perception would indicate how the local community perceives both India and China. Secondly, it offers insights into how the people perceive the presence of the Indian state as a security provider and also the role of the military in the region. Also, it will offer insights into the role of geography and terrain based on experiences of the local stakeholders in the high altitude region. Most importantly, the perceptions of the people on the Indian state, the borders and the territorial dispute between India-China will open up reflections on state building and national integration in the frontier regions. It will enable us to upon how political authority is perceived in the frontier regions. It will be a reflection on the various processes that has been employed by the state to garner confidence of the people and accordingly peoples responses towards the government's policies in the region.

During the course of the interviews the respondents were asked if there were aware of the India-China 1962 war and their views on the same. The objective of this question was explore how people perceived the 1962 India-China war and their views on the same. The narratives of the people was a necessary medium to analyse how they identified with China, whether as the aggressor or as liberator? The narratives on the war were useful to understand their expectations from the India government, in the frontier region. Also, the narrative on the 1962 war provides us a comparative understanding of the views of the tribal or indigenous population in Arunachal Pradesh and the nationalist discourse on the same during 1962 and after.

An analysis of the responses from the field reflects similarity of viewpoints with regard to the 1962 war. The narratives which were gathered from Tawang, Bomdila, Dhirang, Mechuka reflected a similarity of opinion on the question of 1962 war. The views of the local people were however not based on any specialised knowledge of the subject matter. Their views were a response of what they have acquired as stories or accounts from the older generation, i.e. their parents, grandparents and older villagers.

The majority of the respondents were familiar with the event of 1962 war, which was irrespective of their profession and social position.

Most the respondents also clarified that 'he/she were young when the 1962 war took place and their accounts were based on stories that they heard from their parents and grandparents. It is interesting to note that the oral accounts by the people suggest that although many of these people have not encountered the Chinese war of 1962, the

experience of war by the older generation in the region casts its shadow in shaping their views on India and China.

Accounts of older generation differed with the current generation as they did not have any opinion with regard to a specific cause of the India-China war. They could not really point a reason as a cause of the war but they would share with great enthusiasm, often with a smile, about their escape from Tawang when the Chinese entered Arunachal Pradesh. However, the scope of the research was constrained as only three people from the older generation, who were present during the 1962 war and could be interviewed. The three men who were interviewed however did not have any opinion on the current India-China relations. They were keen on sharing their memories on the war, sometimes vague, but overall a coherent account of the event.

Tashi Shiring, who is an 80 year old man from the Monpa community, lives in Tawang. As he was strolling within monastery premises of Tawang, assisting with the preparations on much awaited visit of their spiritual head Dalai Lama, he takes out a few minutes for the interview. Tashi Shiring who belongs to the Monpa tribe recounts with much nostalgia on how he had to run away from his village during the 1962 war. He recalls that “when China attacked India I was very young, I was 22 years old, and I had to run for my life, to Guwahati, Nagoan, Diphu in Assam”. He says that he had to walk all the way to save his life as there was panic everywhere. However, he did not mention any event that mentioned any violence by the Chinese troops on the civilians. He had mentioned that the Chinese troops who had come to their village did not inflict any harm on the locals or their property. He also mentioned that the government of Assam was very helpful by providing the war refugees from the hills in Arunachal Pradesh with food, water and shelter. The description of events during 1962 war by Tashi Shiring, provides us with an interesting account of how the people in the contested region perceived China at that time. His account of the Chinese aggression indicates that the Chinese presence in the region was seen as an aggressor despite the fact that the Chinese troops were considered non-violent, non-destructive and even helpful during certain instances.

However, there were narratives that stressed on the helpful nature of the Chinese troops. Some respondents from the region claimed that they have heard stories of the Chinese troops helping the local population with agricultural practices. For instance,

Leda Merapka from Mandalapudung village in Bomdila, who is a student union leader in West Kameng district, said that his grandparents told him that the Chinese never attacked the locals. In fact the Chinese army have helped them to carry agricultural operations. N. Tashi, shared that he was only four years old when China came over to Tawang, so he doesn't remember anything. His views are based on what people have told him about the event. The popular narrative shared by his acquaintances was that "the Chinese came here, helped us with a few agricultural activities and did not trouble us".

However, an interesting line of argument provided by the respondents was, even though the Chinese troops did not inflict harm on the locals during 1962, the scenario will be somewhat different in future. Leda Merapka says;

in case of an attack by the China in future, unlike the war of 1962, the China may harm the local populations as the population across Arunachal Pradesh and especially people in East and West Kameng district identify themselves with India and over a period of time have become Indian citizens.

They are of the opinion that since people of Arunachal Pradesh now avails the resources and services delivered by the Indian state; there is a possibility that China may harm locals now. "The Chinese now feel that the people of Arunachal Pradesh are Indians" says Sangey who is a young Monpa business man, dealing with garments and clothing market in the central Tawang city.

However the account of the older generation, like Tashi Shiring shared his experiences of the war in a different light. He said that he had to escape and flee like hundreds of others. He was a witness to concentration of hundreds of people in shelter camps in Bhutan and Assam. His responses were followed by appreciation of efforts taken by Indian and the state government of Assam during 1962.

Other respondents, especially the respondents from the younger generation, mentioned that their knowledge of the war is based on information received from their parents, which they used to narrate to them like stories. The common understanding of the people was that they left their village and run to the plains in Assam or flee to Bhutan which lies to the west of Tawang. The opinion of the respondents on the 1962 India China war, which were either informed or shaped by the views of their parents and the

community in general, pertained to the criticism of policies on the NEFA region by Jawaharlal Nehru majorly.

The local people, however, did not mention the name of any political party while expressing their views on the administration of the NEFA region before the 1962 war. Their opinions were confined to the role of the highest leadership, particularly the role of Nehru and the central government in general. The people of the region considered the policies formulated by Jawaharlal Nehru as for the cause of defeat in 1962 war. Jayang Chanzom, a 24 year old female from the Monpa community from Changprong village in Tawang, said that the cause of 1962 war was “the neglect of Indian government headed by then Prime Minister Nehru”. They blame the central government and former Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru for neglecting the region and for his policies towards the region which they described as a flawed policy. However, the respondents did not clarify the policies which they considered as flawed in particular.

However, it is to be noted that even when the people interviewed expressed their views on the policies of Nehru, they did not share any negative image about the leader in general. Their criticism of the leader was majorly in context of the India’s defeat in 1962. This was evident through their opinion on the presence of Nehru Gompa in the main town of Tawang which will be discussed in the later sections of this chapter. Secondly, they also took into consideration the Tibetan angle as a factor to the India-China territorial conflict. They believed that Dalai Lama’s exile into India was as a challenge to China’s prestige, which China counterbalanced by attacking India.

Jayang Chanzom’s emphasis was on the feeling of neglect by the highest leadership. Echoing similar views, the respondents were of the opinion that the government never paid enough emphasis on the region until the war of 1962. The 1962 war was an eye opener for the government to pay attention towards the region. Tsering Yangjom , 28 years , a post graduate from the Changprong village in Tawang, who is employed with the Indian government in the All India Radio says “I personally feel that the war was a result of negligence of the Indian government in the region.....” . She adds by saying that it was only after the 1962 India-China war the ‘consciousness’ of the government of India was ‘awaken’. They are also of the view that it was the ‘fault’ of the Indian governments, since the government never paid serious attention to the India-China

border concerns before 1962 war. Thupten Shastri, 24 years old and a post graduate, serving as a monk in the Tawang monastery states that “China attacked India, everyone knows, India lost it because weapons were less”. He said that the ‘vikas’ (development) was less then. As they feel that the Indian state had taken steps to deploy troops like the Indo Tibetan Border Task, SSB only after the war. However, arguments on the deployment of troops as an eye opener indicates two things: One, the local perceive the presence of the military as a symbol of security and not necessarily in a negative light as opposed to the presence of military in other North-Eastern states under AFPSA. Second, the people of the contested region regard the Indian state a provider, responsible for the security and maintenance of the state.

Another set of narrative on the 1962 was primarily a response to the people’s belief that India was ‘wronged’ by China. Several respondents expressed that China’s intention to attack India was to weaken India and pull India’s attention from its developmental goals. A senior officer at the Tawang Library, said that “It was a Chinese way of demonstrating its power”. He also believes that China have always tried to distract India from catering towards its domestic concerns by engaging India with the tensions around its border region. This would make India divert its resources and spend in its defence expenditure rather than spending it on developing its social and economic capabilities.

A senior government official at the All India Radio Station at Tawang, Tashi Dorjee, is of the opinion that the 1962 war was a reflection a ‘proxy war’ between India and China. When asked about the meaning of proxy war, he clarified the meaning of the term in Hindi and said with outmost sincerity that proxy war meant “Chori-Chupa”, when translated into English meant deceitfully. He was of the opinion that China tried to deceit India and waged the war just to demonstrate its power. Respondents used descriptions such as ‘wrong’ on the part of China to attack India. Similar arguments were made by other respondents, which expressed their views on China as a country which prefers expansion through power projection over the reputation of a peaceful rising power with commitment towards observance of international norms and rules. They believe that the China is an expansionist state and it had been trying to take the Tibetan territory within Chinese Territory. They feel the reason why China crossed the McMahon line and came up till the Assam plains is because Chinese wanted to expand and project its power in Asia. Sangey Tashi, in the Tawang Monastery

expresses that “China took wrong steps to suppress India. It shows China is not a good country”. However, he never explained what he exactly meant by wrong.

Most of the respondents stated that it was the Tibetan angle that complicated the India- China relations. The refugee of Dalai Lama into India through Bumla pass and the exile of many Tibetans in India during the Tibetan uprising has been a cause of the 1962 conflict. The fact that Dalai Lama could cross over to India through the Bumla irked China, claims the respondents. According to Tashi Dorjee from Tawang “it was the unhappiness of the Chinese government with the Indian government due to the issue of His Holiness Dalai Lama that angered China. Also the fact that India had given shelter to His Holiness Dalai Lama has made China angry”. Nawang Thupten , a PhD holder in Buddhist philosophy and a senior monk at the Bomdila monastery believes that the “visit of His Holiness Dalai Lama was a cause of displeasure for the Indian Government. The Dalai Lama His Holiness was just an excuse for China to attack India”. Even, Thupten Shastri from Tawang Monastery claimed that “Dalai Lama’s escape from Tibet in 1959 across Bumla in Arunachal has been a major cause of displeasure of the China towards India”.

The views of the respondent’s on another attack by the Chinese over India were mixed. Most of them felt that China will have to exercise much caution before attacking India presently. The times during 1962 and after 1962 have changed. They used phrases like “China will think ten times”, “Think many times” before attacking India. Tashi Shiring at the monastery with pride on his face and confidence and says that “China can only talk but it cannot attack India, since India exemplifies strength’. They believed that India has become a stronger nation, due to its emerging military strength. They were of the opinion that India possesses huge quantities of ‘arms’ and ‘ammunitions’ may act as a tough match to the Chinese weapons. Tsering Yangjon says that “India has built itself as one of the strongest countries with huge arms and ammunitions at its disposal”. Therefore, India’s military capability and progress in research and development in the defence sector is seen as a deterrent to Chinese attack on India again. Also, even in case of an attack unlike the earlier times, India is seen as a country that can defend itself from the aggressor. Sangey Tashi says that since the Indian state is economically and military stronger, it has the ability to defend itself in wake of an aggression. Jayang Chonzom a graduate and a Monpa from the Changprong village in Tawang said that:

since the central government has not paid much attention to the development of the Tawang region and border areas or any other part of Arunachal Pradesh that shares borders with China, may be a matter of concern due to which China may attack India.

The logic of development and India's growing economy has been identified as a crucial factor in deterring the Chinese from attacking India again. The locals are of the opinion that since India's military and economic position vis-à-vis China has improved. India can counter China both economically and militarily. The presence of military camps throughout the region may act as deterrent for the Chinese. It reflects that the nationalist policy of developing and integrating Arunachal Pradesh through construction of bridges and roads as strategic infrastructure projects has appealed to the people. Whereas there is a huge section of people who believe that Arunachal Pradesh lacks the basic infrastructure and connectivity with rest of the country which they express have been a cause of alienation or a cause for future attack by China. Respondents agreed that China may attack India from the eastern sector considering the frequent border clashes that occur along the LAC. Also, the negligence of the border areas in terms of lack of infrastructure may be a cause for the Chinese to attack the Indian front. Thupten Shastri, the senior monk in the Tawang Monastery, a Monpa shares that the future attack on India may be driven by Chinese intentions to destroy Buddhist culture in the region. China has been claiming Arunachal Pradesh in context of the question around position of Dalai Lama and Buddhism, notes the senior monk with much seriousness.

Another line of opinions by the respondents echoed the liberal logic of market and trade which prevent conflicts. They were of the opinion that a war between both the countries was not mutually conducive to both the countries as it would affect both the countries negatively. Rather strengthening of economic and trading ties could be seen as another alternative means of engagement between both the countries.

A third line of respondents were unsure of the situation between India and China. N. Tashi says that "Although we have forces now, but we never know what may happen". They believed that China may or may not attack India.

### ***Tibetan Angle and Position on the Dalai Lama***

Buddhism has played a crucial role in the region. This is because the role of the Tawang monastery has been very significant in shaping the daily lives of the people.



In light of the above, this research has gathered narratives from the local stakeholders with regard to their views on the role of the monastery, the Dalai Lama, issue of Tibet and the stake of the Monpa community in the future.

As discussed in the previous sections the question of Tibet and Dalai Lama has been a central issue in dealing with China's attitude in resolving the territorial dispute with India and especially in context of 1962 war. Likewise, question of the Tibetans was a sensitive topic amongst the participants. People were reluctant to speak or comment on the issue while a handful of them were not hesitant to show their sympathy for the Tibetan cause.

The commonly heard narrative was that the human rights violations should end in Tibet. Most respondents had awareness of the Tibetan issue and they had expressed their concern for the human right violations. Most respondents shared the view that Tibet should be granted autonomy and allowed to practice their own religion. There was a concern that people be left alone to profess their own religion. The demands of the Tibetans are genuine and if not complete independence they should be given some sort of autonomy. Arguing on the same lines Tashi Dorjee says that "the demand for autonomy is genuine; if not complete they should be given partial autonomy". The Chinese government is creating problems. However, the Tibetan government is lacking a support to pursue its agenda" says Sangey Tashi. The views of the Government of India on the status of Tibet are that Tibet is an autonomous region of the People's Republic of China. The question on India's position on Tibet and Dalai Lama's presence in India has been often linked with the boundary negotiations between India and China (MEA 2017b.). However, from time to time the government of India has made it clear that Tibet is an autonomous region but a part of Peoples Republic of China. The Indian government on Tibet, interestingly holds similarities with the views of some of the local respondents mentioned above. The view that Tibet should be granted autonomy if not independence is the common viewpoint that is prevalent among the locals of the region and the government of India.

The people interviewed, although sympathetic with the Tibetan cause have never personally participated in political rally or shown support for the Tibetan cause in any public platform like, public demonstrations. For instance, like most respondents Urgan Dorjee a student union leader in Tawang says that "There are around 90 families in the

Shoy village and but we do not have any contacts”. Leda Merakpa a student’s leader from West Kameng said with much passion that;

His Holiness is the king of Tibet who was chased by China, that why he is fighting for a free Tibet. Also, there are a lot of Tibetan here, do conduct business but not given citizenship rights, however we do not have any touch with them, they are in the Tenzin Gaon with 90 families in Shyok Basti.

On the question of Dalai Lama all the respondents said often clarifying that he is the spiritual head of the Buddhists in India and abroad. He is considered as one of the most revered religious and spiritual head. Some of the generally heard narratives are, “His Holiness Dalai Lama is a Buddhist leader and compassionate and peace loving monk” speaks Sangey Dhintso. Jambel Chorghel articulates that “Yes, being a Buddhist his holiness Dalai Lama is our Guru and His Holiness is a world-wide respected figure” “Dalai Lama is our God” says Tenzin Dolma. “His Holiness Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of the Tibetan community and the Buddhist community as well” states Sangey. The position of the people with regard to Dalai Lama is that he is not only the spiritual head of the Buddhist in India but in Tibet and other places for the Buddhist. They refer to him as the Dharam Guru. The concept of Dharam Guru surfaced several times during the course of the interviews. Pema Dorjee, from Tawang says “he is our saviour and Dharam Guru”, adding on the same lines says that “Dalai Lama is our Dharma Guru and we are Buddhist”.

The representatives of the Tawang monastery also clarifies that they regard Dalai Lama as their spiritual head. While some of them also said that they support the Tibetan government in exile and they pray for their wishes. A senior monk who wishes to remain anonymous says that “I pray every day for the Tibetan government in exile and pray that His Holiness Dalai Lama’s wishes are fulfilled.

The respondents were also asked about how should the Indian government deal with the Tibetan issue and the stakes around it?

The responses of the people were based on their understanding and desire to be connected with the spiritual centres in Lasha and Tawang. Secondly, most of the respondents were of the opinion that an autonomous Tibet would act as buffer between China and India and hence it would be in the security interest of the Indian state. They stated Tibet’s Independence would save Indian Governments resources which are spent in securing the border areas.

The question of India's position on Tibet has always been subjected to debates since Panchheel. India have been criticised for not taking a strong stand on the issue of Tibet while making use of the Tibetan card to garner its strategic interest vis-à-vis China. Arguing on the same lines some respondents believed that India has to be more strong and vocal about the Tibetan issue.

### *The Tibetan Angle and the Monpa Community*

Monpa community share similarities with the Tibetans. They share a unique cultural, religious tie with Tibet historically. In such a scenario the stakes and the views of the Monpa community in context of the India- China border dispute is important to understand. Therefore the respondents were asked the following questions:

They were asked if the Monpa's share similarities with the Tibet, with regard to social, cultural, and religious practices? "Yes" says Jambel Chorghel. "Of course there are certain similarities in terms of language and culture but in Tawang the people speak a different language". Sangey Tashi argues on the similar lines and says that "In the earlier days the languages of the Monpas and Tibetans used to be similar but not anymore. It had some similarity with the language in Tibet. The His Holiness Dalai Lama is the religious head of both the communities". It can be noted that most of the narratives indicate that the people of Tawang and Bomdila agree on sharing similar cultural and religious practices but not in context of linguistics basis. The respondents were quick to respond that they do not understand the language of Tibet and they comprise distinct ethnic tribe with their own identity. For instance, Tashi Dorji from All India Radio at Tawang clarifies that "Even if Monpa's have cultural and religious similarity with Tibetans the language of both the communities is really different"

The respondents were asked to express their opinion on their position on a scenario of Tibet securing Independence from China. They were asked to share their views on the stakes of the Monpa Community in case of such a scenario and also whom would they like to represent the claims of their community?

The responses of the people could be assembled under three perspectives: Firstly, the respondents believed that Tibet's autonomy /independence would not impact them as they are Indian's. For instance, Jambel Chorghel says that;

Tibet and Monpa community share age long history, so I personally believe Monpa community should support Tibet's independence but we are Indian". Speaking on identical lines Tenzin Dolma says that "Monpa shall remain Indian. Don't want to go anywhere, Mera Bharat Mahaan (India is Great)

Secondly, in such a scenario it would be beneficial for India as India will have to incur less money on defence

Thirdly, it would enable both the countries to pursue trade. Tashi Dorji, an executive of All India Radio from the Gyanang Khar village in Tawang remarks that "If Tibet is freed from China, there will be total cordial relationship between India and China and there will be trading relationship between India and Tibet..."

Lastly, the Monpa's from India would be able to establish religious linkages with Lasha. Sangey Tashi says with enthusiasm that "The Monpa community will be very happy as due to several reasons. The travelling between the communities will become easy. The people will be having easy access to the religious places. Lasha is a Buddhist centre and people from here would be able to visit Lasha without any problem".

### ***Chinese Claim over Arunachal***

This was one of the most crucial components of the field work. Respondents were asked to give their views by filling a questionnaire with objective responses as well as explain their views on the same through a subjective questionnaire. In the light of current dynamics between India and China on the question of Arunachal Pradesh and other places like Tawang, Bumla the respondents were asked to share their views on the China's claim over Arunachal Pradesh.

Arunachal Pradesh has been claimed as a part of China and the respondents were asked to comment the issue. The respondent has used words like 'invalid, baseless and irrelevant'. The perspective of the respondents was that prior to 1959 Tibet was a free and an independent country. They believe that some parts of Arunachal Pradesh did belong to Southern Tibet but Arunachal has never been a part of China. In this context Jambel Chorghel a self-employed Monpa from Tawang argued that "If at all China should claim for Tibet but Tibet will never claim Arunachal Pradesh". He also says that "China Talks too much and Tawang is India's. Also, Sangey Tashi says that;

The Chinese government is claiming Arunachal Pradesh. They should claim for Tibet but Tibet never claimed Arunachal Pradesh. The Chinese

government is claiming Arunachal Pradesh but the Chinese claim is invalid. But India's claim is valid.

On the question of validity of the Chinese claim over Arunachal Pradesh the respondents had no disagreements with their views. They strongly believed that Arunachal Pradesh is a part of India. Tashi Dorjee a Monpa from Gayang Khar village, working with the All India Radio says that "The entire Arunachal Pradesh is part of India and an Integral part of India, the claim over Arunachal Pradesh is totally baseless". Lham Tashi a post-graduate and a Monpa from Changprong village in Tawang responds that "Arunachal Pradesh is part of India and there is no reason to claim our Arunachal Pradesh by China" exclaims On the question of Chinese claim over Tawang Pema Dorjee, a self- employed Monpa from Tawang said that "Tawang is a part of India and any aggression will be an act of war". Thuptel Jamba, from Kharteng village , a Monpa with the All India Radio says in Hindi that " China ka claim koi authenticity nahi hai...and its baseless." This means that the Chinese claim lacks any valid authenticity and the claim is baseless. Similarly, Thupten Jamba from Tawang says that "Chinese just claim verbally, it has no authenticity to their claim".

Respondents also staged their views on the inability of the central government to extract any concessions and solutions on the question of India-China border dispute. "The Indian government has no strong views with regard to the border dispute and in the Bumla flag meeting. The government has no views. India is not strong enough to say it is our territory while Chinese has maps to support their claims" says Sangey, a shopkeeper from Tawang.

An analysis of the responses from the field work confers that the respondents believed that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India and secondly they were of the opinion China's territorial claim over Arunachal Pradesh was not valid. The data collected shows that the respondents used certain words much frequently to express China's claim over Arunachal Pradesh and they were 'baseless', 'totally irrelevant', 'no authenticity' and 'it would be wrong for China' to make such claims.

Also, on the question of Arunachal Pradesh being a part of Tibet was denied by the respondents. Tashi Lobsang from Jang claims that "It is a misconception or an illusion by the nagging communist Chinese party, that China can claim Arunachal on the basis of its link to Tibet". Jambel Chorgel , a self-employed Monpa makes an argument that

“prior to 1959 Tibet was a free and independent country .It is believed that some parts of Arunachal was a part of Southern Tibet , therefore by that logic Arunachal was a part of Tibet and not China”. The commonly used phrases to this question are ‘Arunachal is a part of India’, ‘Arunachal is an integral part of India’ and ‘China can’t claim it as its unfair’.

Likewise, the respondents few of them are aware of China’s claim over Aksai Chin so they are of the opinion that it is in China’s overall policy is expansionist, therefore such claims by China should be dismissed.

### ***Presence of China: Is it a source of Insecurity in the Frontier Region***

This section was an attempt to explore how the local stakeholders perceive the presence of China as a neighbour. Their views would enable us to delve into three crucial factors in understanding the India-China territorial dispute: Firstly, it would throw light on the question whether the constant territorial claims made by China are a source of anxiety by the people in the frontier region? Secondly, would throw light on how people perceive the efforts of the Indian government in the frontier region. Thirdly, it would enable us to analyse people’s response to the presence of the large scale military in the region.

In context of the above the respondents were asked about the presence of China so close to Tawang. The respondents had shared divergent views on this. Some of the respondents felt that the presence of China was threat to people of Tawang. For instance, N. Tashi said that “China can just bomb us. If they had come till Tezpur , then it is possible that they can bomb us in the future”. Similarly, Jamlel Chozlel said that “we feel so insecure with the presence of China”. Pema Gonton, a government employee from Jang says that “Presence of China so close, sometimes creates fear among the people of Tawang . China cannot be trusted and the memories of 1962 war are still fresh in the minds of people in Tawang and other places”.

Respondents such as Urgyan Dorjee, who is a representative of the Arunachal Students Union (student leader) said that he feels nothing “since the army is here” and talks of a very cordial relationship with the army. He said that they have been guiding the army since 2009. He said that the army personnel was initially scared and worried on being posted in Tawang but eventually even the army have settled down here and starting liking the place so much that they do not want to leave from here

because it is very peaceful. Similar responses were derived from Tashi Shiring who is a monk serving in the Tawang monastery claims that “earlier we used to be scared but no more....” Sangey, the business men says that he does not feel anything with regard to presence of China as a neighbour which is just 43 kilometres from Tawang at Bumla He said that, “We are different and the presence of China does not matter but we do pity the state of Tibetans”. Tashi Dorjee at All India Radio says that “as of now border areas have no intrusions so the situation is peaceful between India and China so there is no such worry. Also, we hope for a peaceful situation that would exist between India and China”.

### **The Perspective of the Locals their Location and Borders**

#### ***The Role of the Himalayas as the Barrier: Perspective of the Locals***

Natural boundaries and physical features play an important role in shaping the culture and security of a state. Similarly, the role of the Himalayas has been significant in determining the attitude of the Indian policy makers until the 1962 war and even after that. As discussed in the previous chapters the mighty Himalayas were regarded as a defence against the China. Also time again, the unfamiliarity of the rugged terrain by the Indian army has been cited as a reason for India’s defeat in the 1962 war much often. However, it is important to understand how the local stakeholders, who are the dwellers of the region, have interacted with the mountains. This section presents perspective of the locals on the how they have related with the mountains and how they perceive the mountains in the current context, with reference to India-China border dispute.

One of the fundamental questions of inquiry has been; Is the Himalaya still as natural defence against China? On this question the views of the respondents have been largely similar. They mostly believed that although the Chinese troops crossed over the mountains during 1962, the Himalayas are still a source of security in the region.

The role of Himalaya’s as a barrier between China and India has not been underestimated by a single respondent who lives in Tawang and as well as Bomdila which is located at a further distance from Tawang and Bumla<sup>18</sup>. The respondents were of the opinion that the region of Tawang has a harsh climate with heavy snowfall

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<sup>18</sup> The distance between Tawang and Bomdila is 65kms via national highway NH13 and the distance from Bumla to Bomdila is 83.1 km

and rainfall which makes mobility across the mountains and for that matter even Tawang difficult. Coupled with the harsh climate the rugged terrain makes lives of the local residents difficult since basic necessities and communication facilities remain disconnected.

Nawang Thupten from Jangda village exclaims that that “although the Himalayan Mountain range have several passes, it is difficult to cross over the ranges very easily, therefore it acts as a wall of security for Tawang and the lower regions”. However, respondents also stated that the role of modern means of warfare may have reduced the importance of physical boundaries between states as some of the respondents stated.

The views of the respondents were an indication of the natural features has demarcated the frontier areas in terms of two exclusive spaces with different culture and governance. All respondents have identified themselves with the Indian state and the people across the mountains as the ‘other’.

### ***Views on the Controversial McMahon line and Boundaries issues of India with China and other Countries***

This section is an attempt to gather people’s perceptive on their awareness with India’s colonial history and a historical understanding of the India-China border dispute in context of the McMahon Line. The respondents were asked about their familiarity with the issue of McMahon line and their awareness with India’s boundary problems with China over Aksai Chin. They were also asked if they were aware about India’s conflict over the Line of Control (LOC) with Pakistan, in order to access their underrating of India’s territorial and border disputes. The question on LOC was asked in order to examine the perception of the people in frontier region on some of India’s major issues on the nationalist agenda. The question on LOC has dominated the nationalist imagination within the Indian policy makers and executive, along with the people of the heartland.

On the question of the people’s familiarity with the McMahon line and how they perceive the debates around the alignment of the line the respondents have given the following views on the issue:



When the respondents were asked they have heard of the 'McMahon Line'? Most respondents replied "Yes". However, they also said that they never really saw it. Thupten Shastri from the Tawang monastery gives a very detailed response on his understanding of the McMahon line. He is one of the leading heads of the Tawang monastery said that he did not have much idea about the McMahon line until read a book. He shares with much excitement that his knowledge on the McMahon was based on the book that he found in a library in Benares. The book was written in Tibetan. He further says that "the book had a profound influence on me....." and further remarked that "Iwinchin and the British was given Tawang and Tibet.....". However, this does not negate the fact that now Tawang remains a part of India.

Thupten Jamba, a Monpa who is a government official works at the all India Radio in Tawang. He said that "the McMahon Line was a result of an agreement that was signed in 1914 between India and Tibet. Even China was present but China did not sign it". Sangey who is a local shopkeeper in Tawang main market, says heard of McMahon line and claims that he has seen the border that demarcates India and China. He comments that people are not allowed to build wall at the location of McMahon Line, and the boundary line is represented with has stones, as this place neither belongs to India or China. Jamlel Chozlel says that he has heard of the McMahon line and shares his understanding of the boundary limits of the region, "yes it is boundary that is from Tawang to Mechuka". Another respondent from the Tawang Monastery called, Sangey Tashi, comments that the McMahon Line was demarcated by the British's.

However, there were many respondents who have not heard about the McMahon Line. Tashi Shiring from Tawang monastery said "he has no idea about what is the McMahon Line". Pema Dorjee stated that he has not heard about the McMahon line and has no idea about it and nor he is aware with the border settlement mechanisms in place. Kesang Derma who is a house wife states her says that she has never heard about the McMahon Line nor does she have any knowledge about the border settlement mechanisms. She has never been outside Tawang so she does not realise the concept of isolation or alienation from New Delhi. However, she is aware of the growing number of defence personnel in the Tawang Township and continues to share that the thought of China next to Tawang is a symbol of fear. Even Kesang Derma shared similar views that he feels fearful about the presence of China next to his town.

The local stakeholders were aware of the McMahon Line, however it was the educated section who could if not in detail at least vaguely comment on the question of McMahon line. The respondents from older generation did not know what the line stood for nor did ever hear about it. Similarly there were others who could not comment on the same as they did not have any idea on the same. However, they are vaguely aware of the border problem that exists between India and China.

On the general awareness of the respondents on India's border disputes there was a mixed response. Some of the people had no clue about India's border dispute in Aksai Chin or the LOC while some could make a vague guess on the same. Sangey who had an underrating of the McMahon Line, when questioned on the China's claim over Aksai Chin or other Indian border disputes like the Line of Control across the India Pakistan border, he said that he has "never heard about it.....". While, Thupten Jamba, a graduate had his opinion to share about the India-China's Aksai Chin dispute, he says that "Before 1962 Aksai Chin was a part of India but the Chinese have illegally militarised and captured it".

Some of the respondents were aware of the problem along India's western front, i.e. the LOC. They said that India shares her international borders with Rajasthan, Bhutan and Bangladesh and India is involved in border tiffs with these countries. On the other hand some respondents were respondents who have not heard about it at all.

#### ***Views on Border Settlement Mechanisms: Views from the Local Stakeholders***

India and China have participated in several border meetings in order to resolve the disputes between the two countries. Measures have been taken right from Indira Gandhi's time till the current regime which has been discussed in the previous chapters. Efforts such as restoration of diplomatic ties, rounds of border talks, confidence building measures have constituted a part border settlement process. Therefore, in light of the same it becomes crucial to consider and understand the insights of the local stakeholders on the awareness and views on the border settlement process in the region. When, asked about if the respondents fully support the current mechanism of border dispute settlement mechanism by the Indian and Chinese government the respondents were mostly in agreement with the government policies. However there are people who were of the opinion that the policies of the both the

government are not fetching any results. The responses of the participants were the following:

An effective border resolution: This was the most common and frequent response from the participants. Jamlel Chozlel says that “personally I feel that India and China has to resolve the dispute soon and they should come with concrete solutions for resolving the dispute”. N. Tashi commented that “If they can solve then it is best”<sup>19</sup>. Dialogue as a way out for resolving the dispute has been stressed by many respondents. Student leader Urgyan Dorjee, says that “peace and dialogue is the only way out....” but he also admittingly says that he cannot comment much on it as it’s a high level talk amongst the concerned government authorities. He adds that “To keep India enmeshed in border controversy is China’s policy to distract India from its developmental goals”. Leda Merakpa from Bomdila, a Vice President of student Union in West Kameng District expresses that “ the resolving the border problem should also be in the interests of the locals , however national security should be given importance , otherwise we will be victimised”.

The respondents were also asked about their views on the Bumla meetings that take place in Bumla twice a year. “The flag meetings here are about keeping peace and status quo” says Thupten Shastri and adds that he feels that dialogue is the only way to resolve the issue. Similarly, Tashi Shiring, a representative from the Tawang monastery said that “it is good, that there are regular meetings held in Bumla as war is never a solution, dialogue is the only way”. Pema Gonton a graduate and a government employee from Jang , feels that “ Talks and Flag meetings have been useful in stabilising the situation at the border and these should be constituted more”. Their views get supplemented with other interesting observations on the flag meetings. They often showed excitement in sharing their views on the Chinese troops and on the Chinese people who participate in the BPM’s. For instance, as one of the female respondent, who works in the District Commissioners office in Tawang, a Buddhist by religion and belongs to the Monpa tribe, expressed that;

the Chinese are a show off, they show off their gadgets and all the *sophisticated* technology just to show us that they are superior; but we on the other hand do not have anything, I am sure they have better roads and infrastructure as well.

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<sup>19</sup> By the reference to ‘they’, the respondent is referring to the government of India and China.

Similar views were shared by other local people that will be discussed and elaborated in the corresponding chapters on field work and analysis.

During the course of the field work very few people expressed their dissatisfaction with the current process of resolving the boundary dispute. As, Sangey says that he is not convinced by the current system of border resolution as people have to be consulted a proper resolution of the dispute. Similarly Tashi Lobsang from Jang, is of the opinion that although he is satisfied with the current mechanism he feels that “the needs of the local people have to be

taken into consideration and one needs to resolve the issue sooner”. Views reflecting dissatisfaction on the current mechanism is also common, for instance Thupten Wangay from Tawang district expresses that there has not been a concrete solution to the issue. Sangey from Tawang a shopkeeper argues that “I do not agree as I feel that the Indian army should be strong enough to defend the country”.

Also, many respondents felt that matter of border settlement contained high level talk so they lacked any specialised knowledge to comment on it and they refused to comment on the process or suggest a mechanism to do the same. For instance, when the locals were asked about the Parameters and Guiding Principles of 2005 for the settlement India-China boundary dispute not a single respondent has an idea of the Treaty. The respondents believed that these acts were a matter of discussion for the higher officials. The responses of the people suggest that they lacked any idea on the border settlement mechanisms between the India and China. At times there was a sense of reluctance and under confidence on the part of the respondents to comment on the issue. Their responses suggest that the people of the frontiers are at the margins in terms of their relation to matters of national security.

### **National Integration and Challenges of the Frontier Region**

The respondents were asked a set on questions on the reasons of how and why (if any) they feel or felt alienated by New Delhi. The following set of responses was gathered<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> This question was asked in the context of the experiences of the North Eastern in New Delhi and other parts of India. People from North-East have felt discriminated and alienated from other states of central, western, northern and southern India on the basis of their difference in physical appearance and cultural habits.

Deplorable state of roads and transportation as has been major cause of disappointment. The roads to Tawang are full of dangers for anyone who wants to travel to this place. Landslides, cloudburst and un-motorable roads are just a few problems to name. Thupten Jamba who works at the all India Radio, he said that “the conditions even worst initially, it was after the 1962 that things have changed, we used to get things from Bhutan but now food consumption has improved”. Sangey responds that, “we feel distant due to the route and bad communication. The communication is very weak”. N. Tashi commented that “there has not been much problem but the roads may us feel alienated”.

Lack of Development and basic amenities: Tawang lacks basic amenities and institutions for higher education. The locals are dependent on tourism for revenue or drive taxi for earnings. Tashi Dorjee at All India Radio, says that, “Arunachal Pradesh has many resources and the government of India is yet to explore these resources, the government has yet not explored it”.

Lack of awareness and negative attitude of towards the North-Eastern states by other Indian States: Most respondents who have travelled outside Tawang or Arunachal to other parts of India like Mysore, Bangalore, Pune and New Delhi have gone through a sense of discrimination. “The people in mainland India calls us Chinks and that is not only New Delhi but all other states treats us like non-Indians” says Jamlel Chozlel. However, the respondents who have embraced monkhood and have travelled and lived in different parts of India like Benares, Patna, Mysore and other parts of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have not faced any discrimination

### ***Perspectives of the People on India and the Institutions in the Contested Territories***

This section constitutes the significant aspect of this research. Respondents were asked on their views on the current working of the government and the various government institutions. They were on four major subject of inquiry; firstly the issue of identity was of central concern in this section. Secondly, the presence of the war memorial and Nehru Gompa in Tawang was subject of exploration. Thirdly, the presence of military and the attitude of the local people towards the military were analysed. Fourthly, the respondents were asked to share their views on the role of central government of India in Arunachal Pradesh, especially Tawang and their views on it.

### ***Views on their Identity as Indian***

Some of the questions that was put forward to the respondents to answer were ‘What makes you proud to be an Indian?’ and ‘What do you think about the war memorial and the Nehru Gompa in your town?’

The respondents felt that the democratic space in India has given them space to express and practice their religion and this is what makes them proud to be an Indian. The respondents have often compared their condition to profess freedom of religion to their Buddhist counterparts in Tibet and felt sorry for the Tibetans who have been not given the same right in China. “The fact that India is has a democratic form of government is something that makes us proud to be an Indian” came as a prompt reply by Jambel Chorghel. Some respondents have cited emotional reasons for their connection with India and their Indian identity, for instance Jambel Chorghel says that “Due to emotions I feel connected to India”. However, there were a few instances when the respondents expressed their anger towards the Indian state.

Some respondents felt that the citizens of India along the border and the contested spaces should be ‘Indianised’ through cultural activities and by providing basic amenities to the people. Culture would be proper channel to ensure the security of the border regions

### ***Views on War Memorial and Nehru Gompa***

The war memorial in Tawang is respected and looked upon as a sign of bravery in Tawang. “The war memorial represents the bravery of the Indian army” says Jambel Chorghel, who a self-employed Buddhist from the Monpa community. “The war memorial is related to the 1962 war” Tashi, a Buddhist representative from Tawang Monastery. Ngawng Thupten from Jangda village, who holds a PhD in Buddhist Philosophy is of the opinion that “The war memorial is significant as these soldiers are the real patriots who laid their lives for the cause of the nation unlike the top policy makers who sit in air conditioned rooms and direct policies, the war memorial is a dedication for all those laid their lives defending the nation”. Even Sangey who is a local business man reiterates the significance of the war memorial and shares that “The war memorial and is important as it is dedicated to the lives of army men and soldiers who laid their lives for this region says”. The common narrative on the war memorial at Tawang was that the war memorial is a symbol of sacrifice and patriotism

of the Indian soldiers. “The people of Tawang were proud to have the memorial in their town. The war memorial is a symbol of pride for all of us .It is a sign of respect for the soldiers who died defending Tawang” remarked Pema Gonton from Jang. Lobsang a B. A student from Jang says with much pride that the “war memorial symbolises our respect for the soldiers who fought in 1962 .It enhances are respect for the soldiers and India”. One interesting remarked was made by when Gwamite a 21 year old boy, pursuing his B.A from Tawang said that “the war memorial gives a very positive feeling about the war, it is dedicated to the shaheed (martyred) armies”. Expressing on the similar lines expresses with much pride , Thuptel Jamba from All India Radio says with a smile on his face that “ Desh bhakt lagta hai”( we feel patriotic).

The presence of Nehru Gompa in the main city of Tawang reflects some important aspects of state building through symbolism. The significance of symbols and politics of naming will be discussed in the later chapters. This section illustrates how the local community in Tawang and Bomdila , Tenzin Dolma who is from the Wxankhar Village says that he feels proud to have such distant places get named after eminent Indian personality like the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru. However, some respondents also expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact that there is no dedicated Buddhist gompa’s but a gompa named after Jawaharlal Nehru was not a requirement of the region. Pema Dorjee a 33 years old man, a self- employed, says that “The war memorial is good, but the Nehru gompa , just because Nehru visited certain gompa’s”. Lama Tashi, an advocate from Tawang, says that he is disappointed with certain things and he is not proud to be an Indian and he has no idea about the war memorial or the Nehru gompa. The responses by the participants indicate the general level of awareness about the two structures. The commonly gathered narrative is that the war memorial was constructed in the memory of the soldiers and the Nehru gompa in the memory of the Nerhu, for instance N. Thashi says that “The gompa is for Nehru, Indira Gandhi’s name is also there , but I think not Rajiv Gandhi”.

### ***Governance of the Frontier Region***

Governance, control and political authority are some of the most crucial components to exercise sovereignty over a region. Since the time of the colonial administration the challenge of British India government have been to penetrate the region. As it has

been mentioned in the accounts of Verrier Elwin, that one of the most daunting tasks was to enter the region. The issue of governance of the region have been widely debated among the policy makers and the anthropologist in post-colonial India as well. The issue of governance pertains to the debate on protectionism versus intervention in the region. The debates on assimilation versus isolation and the creation of a standardised Indian identity fall within the crux of issues of governance in the region. Delivery of services and resources forms the basics of governance and it indicates the ability of the government to enter the distant contested spaces in the frontier. It reflects people's expectations from the state as its subject and their dependence. It also denotes the mechanisms through which the state makes its presence in the frontiers.

There were three commonly heard narratives on the issue of governance in the region. Firstly, although most respondents feel they are Indian by identity and their position, they feel that the government has failed to look into their grievances. Most respondents felt that the Indian government has not done enough for Arunachal Pradesh. According to Jambel Chorghel "the government has not done anything for our land considering there is so much more that need to be done here. Sangey Tashi states that the central government has been sending some allowances and benefits to the people of Arunachal Pradesh since it is a border state but still it is inadequate.

Secondly, the poor condition of facilities, services, and infrastructure has been attributed to corruption but at a local level. The majority of the respondents felt that local corruption have been the major cause of the backwardness of the region. Tenzin Dolma argues that it is not the central government that has to be blamed for the deplorable state of affairs in Arunachal Pradesh but the local politicians. He says that it is "not Indian Government but corrupt state government who is more corrupt, India has done somewhat for the border state".

The respondents mostly said that Infrastructure is the most important aspect of defence and India is totally lacking on this aspect as the roads are not even motorable. It takes them one full day to reach a nearest hospital. There are frequent power cuts and therefore no infrastructure for the military to even operate on. Security of the border region has been an important component of national security. Similarly, the security of Arunachal Pradesh along the disputed McMahon line has been of crucial importance for the Indian government. On the future of border security and the



security of the contested regions along West and East Kameng the respondents said that there are certain requirements that need to be fulfilled if India wants to secure its international borders from future foreign aggression and infrastructural development is one of them.

Thirdly, people from the older generation expressed their gratitude towards the state. An old wrinkled man, who was a witness to the India China war said that “India Bhagwan Hai (India is god)”. Similarly, a few other respondents feel that now things are much better in the region. They were referring to the availability of basic amenities like ration, medicines and connectivity. The respondents shared stories of a time when the people were subjected to harsh taxation and punishments.

### **Perspective of the People on the Presence of Military in the Region**

#### ***Militarisation of the Region: views of the Locals***

On being asked on the militarisation of the space in Tawang and throughout Dhirang, Bomdila and Bumla the respondents had similar views. Most participants expressed that they did not perceive the Indian army as an encroacher or an alien force who would disturb the peace and tranquillity of the region. They view the army as a force in the service of the public and the security of the place. In fact, the locals expressed their sense of security and support due to the presence of army in the region. The respondents belonged to various professions and age shared similar views. They often used words like ‘safety<sup>21</sup>, secured, strong’ to describe the presence of Indian army’s in the region.

There were majorly four lines of argument that were gathered from the narratives on the presence of the Indian army: Firstly, the respondents expressed their sense of security due to the presence of army in the region. For instance, Jambel Chorghel said “we feel very much secure due to their presence here; they are here to protect our land here”. Jambel Chorzal from Tawang says that “We feel very much secure because of their presence. They help us to protect our land”. The local people felt that the army was stationed in the region as a safety mechanism to prevent the territorial dispute between India and China. Sangey a shopkeeper from Tawang adds that “the army is here to prevent the border dispute”. Leda Meraka, the vice president of students union

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<sup>21</sup> The term safety was often used in the context of safety from China and help in case of a natural hazard.

in West Kameng exclaims that, “We feel obviously secured; the army is here as a duty and not for enjoyment. They are here for the sake of our motherland and to protect the border and the dispute on the border” .Secondly, respondents stressed upon the emergency services that is provided by the army in the region from time to time due to bad weather and harsh climatic conditions. Thuptel Jamba, opined that “that presence of army is a source of security and they support local people..kuch problem nahi hai(there is no problem)”. N. Tashi says “Because we are in a border area the army helps us with getting medicines. They help us”. Adding onto similar line of opinion says that “Tawang is helped by the army” Urgyan Dorgee a student leader and a graduate from Khinmey village.

Thirdly, there has been a stress that the Indian army is to be made stronger. For example Tashi Dorgee, a graduate from All India Radio accounts that;

Safety from China and terrorism is the main reason why we need the army here. ....Every country has its military and in fact one need to make the Indian army stronger....inko aur powerful banana hai kyu ki prevention is better than cure. ....

Lastly, some narratives were precautionary in their tone, as these respondents have pointed out the factors which need to be ensured so that the locals do not build a negative image about the army in the region. Thupten Shastri from Tawang monastery, a monk from Gongkhar village says that “Although the army is doing desh seva it needs to be ensured that they do not become a problem for the locals, there have been instances when a lot of land is sold to the army and there might come a time when there is no grazing land and that may become a problem”. Also, one of the heads in the leading library in Vivekanda Library in Tawang has said that;

the locals may get antagonistic towards the army if their land is taken away for military construction and military housing purposes, suddenly one day the locals may realise that they do not land and that may create problems.

The army’s role have been emphasised to a great extent in context of the security of the frontier region. They have felt the army should be properly equipped unlike the war of 1962 . Also, in context of the border war between India and China, most respondents feel that India should act bravely in the future and be more assertive about its claims. It was suggested that Tibetan independence would be a huge boost for India in terms of securing its borders as Tibet could act like a buffer state and India could engage in more rewarding activities with Tibet like trade and economics.

## **Perspectives on the Indian State Initiatives**

### ***The Inner Line permit: Politics of Space***

The provision of the inner line permit in Arunachal Pradesh have widely discussed even today. The debate around the inner line permit constitutes politics of space and identity. The inner line as discussed was established during the colonial period and continued in independent India. The question around inner line can be examined through the prism of discussions that revolve around isolation versus assimilation, intervention versus protectionism in the nationalist discourse. The creation of a standardised national identity and homogenous Indian identity right till the frontiers has been a looming question since independence or even before that. The Congress Party and its representatives like Nehru along with anthropologist like M.S Ghurye, Verrier Elwin and M. S Srivisan have dominated the debate on the future and position of the tribal population in Arunachal Pradesh. In context of the complexity of the issue, this section attempts to bring forward the narratives by the local stakeholders on the inner line permit in Arunachal Pradesh. It would enable us to appreciate the (a) the significance of the permit and the concerns of the tribal population in the frontier (b) It would enable us to reflect upon how local identities respond and interact with the state. It will reflect upon how identities are negotiated, since at one level the Indian state has constituted all socialising mechanisms to create a consolidated Indian identity in the frontier while at the other end it acts as the protector of the local culture and tradition.

The commonly gathered narrative on the inner line permit constitutes the viewpoint that, the requirement of the permit arises from the need to (a) prevent insurgency in the border region, which is common in other parts of North-Eastern states, especially the bordering states with Myanmar and Bangladesh. “Since it’s a border area it should have special provisions. The population of Monpa will be dead otherwise and any one can get in, even a militant. So it should be in place” comments Urgan Dorjee, a Student leader. Tashi Dorjee at All India Radio, an executive states that “the main reason is that Arunachal Pradesh is a border with China. It might deter terrorist entry into Arunachal Pradesh....”

(b) To preserve the culture and identity of the people. Extending his views on the inner line permit Urgan Dorjee speaks “the second reason to have inner line is to

protect the faith, culture, tradition of the state”. Arguing on similar lines Thupten Shastri from Tawang Monastery says that “It is for protecting culture”. Another representative from the monastery Sangey Tashi , argues that “it will prevent Arunachal Pradesh from bad influence, as even bad influence come along with good influence . The modern culture will change the population as well”. Jayang Chonzom argues on similar lines and says that “Inner line permit is essential while entering Arunachal so that there would not be any mix culture or people residing within Arunachal people, as we the Arunachal believe that loss of culture is a loss of identity”. Sangey says “that it is provide protection from mainland Indians entering the region. We have a long history of rich culture and so we want to preserve our rich culture therefore Inner Line Permit plays a vital role”. Thupten Jamba who works at the all India Radio, feels that it is in place to protect indigenous culture and identity.

Therefore, one could from the narratives that the protection of culture and identity has been a major concern for the people of the region. At one level they identify themselves as distinct from the rest of the country or the people from the plains, while the narratives during the course of field work also point towards also their strong sense of Indian identity. Therefore, it is an important reference point of understanding the how the state have interacted with the local population in the frontier region.

Also, noting the importance of culture and tradition of the region, preservation of cultural tradition in Arunachal Pradesh has been discussed with much seriousness within the government circles. For instance, the PIB (2016)report on the Ministry of culture’s scheme on the scheme i.e. “Preservation and development of Cultural Heritage of the Himalayas” lists the achievements of the government in some of the districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

**Table 4.1 Table on Preservation and development of Cultural Heritage of Arunachal Pradesh**

Achievements	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
East Siang	Preservation of old manuscripts. Cultural events and training.	Training in Traditional Art.	Training in Traditional and Folk Art
Bomdila		Archiving Buddhist Sites in Mon-Tawang in Audio-Video Format	
West Siang		Cultural show on folk dances Cultural Events & training	
Papumpare		Study on Himalayan culture	
East Kameng			Preservation of Old Manuscripts, Literature, Art & Crafts and Documentation of Cultural Activities/Events like Music, Dance etc. Training in Traditional and Folk Art

Source: PIB (2016), Ministry of Culture

Therefore, one can argue that Indian state have employed very tactically various means of socialisation in the region. The understanding of the state presence have undergone shift from the time of 1962 when the residents of the region when a few residents were unsure about the presence of the Chinese troops to a position their claim their identity to be as strongly Indian. The narratives indicate a complex dynamics of how the local and the state have negotiated with each other in context of

building expectations from each other. The next chapter discusses and offers an analysis of the narratives collected in his study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **ASSESSMENT OF PEOPLE'S NARRATIVES**

This chapter would offer an analysis of the various narratives gathered from the field work in Arunachal Pradesh in Tawang and West Kameng. Most importantly, this region is an interesting case which has transformed tremendously. The frontier marks a transition from a region which lacked the presence of the state to a region which has greatly assimilated within the standardised nationalist discourse. An analysis of the narratives constitutes a major component of this study. The objective of the analysis entails to the central research question of this study i.e. to understand how people perceive borders and political authority along contested spaces. This thesis argues that the notion of sovereignty varies as one move away from the seat of the centre to the periphery and marginal frontiers of a state. This research claims that state institutions in the frontier region strengthen sovereignty of the state. The narratives, which have been presented in the previous chapters, are reflections on people's understanding of the state and its institutions in the disputed region of Arunachal Pradesh. The findings of the field work indicate that the people of Tawang and West Kameng have accommodated with the various ways of governance by the Indian state and in some cases often welcomed the presence of certain state institutions considering the vulnerability of the region as a border state.

An analysis of narrative is crucial in exploring the research objective of the study as: Firstly, it would throw light on the nuances of people's perception on the role of the state and its institutions in the frontier region. Secondly, the narratives reflect the nature of interactions between the people, bureaucracy, military and the monastery. The interaction between these institutions sheds light on how the people have responded to the presence of state institutions and how the state has shaped its policies towards the region.

The section below enumerates the analysis of the various narratives that have been collected during the course of field work. It highlights the major inferences drawn from the field work. The composition and background of the respondents have been given in detail in the first chapter, on the section on research methodology.

## **Perspective of the People on China: Security Perspective**

### ***The War of 1962: China's Sudden Attack and the Allegiance of the Frontier Community***

As discussed, the India-China war of 1962 remains one of the defining events in the history of India-China relations. It has played a crucial role in determining Indian state's response towards the people of NEFA, now Arunachal Pradesh. The India-China war became a major factor that shaped the administrative policies of the state in the region. Nevertheless, although the war of 1962 was a major determinant in shaping the government's policies towards NEFA, administrative changes were introduced in the region much before, since the time of undivided Assam, which was later divided into Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Manipur due to unrest in the region. The first signs of nationalist struggles within Assam were from several tribes which led to the creation of several states out of Assam. It began with the creation of Nagaland in 1963 which was the 16<sup>th</sup> state of India. In 1972 the people of Garo, Khasi and Jaintia hills wanted to have their own territorial space, therefore an autonomous council was created within Assam, which was granted statehood in 1972. Therefore, the state of Meghalaya was created for the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia region. The state for the Mizo population was created in 1986, initially the region was administered as a Union Territory, but finally granted statehood. The administrative reorganisation of Assam was a result of political aspirations of the local tribes during several instances and the Indian states demand to administer the region effectively.

However, this study does not delve into the specifics of administrative changes in Assam and the other North-Eastern states that were eventually carved out of Assam, as it is beyond the scope of this study.

Coming back to the question of the frontier region, after the war of 1962 the Indian government had to take important decisions with regard to the degree and extent of political and administrative changes that had to be taken in order to ensure its hold over the frontier region vis-à-vis China. The objective of the Indian government can be well captured in the words of Nari Rustomji, who in one of his most celebrated works called the *Imperilled Frontiers* (1983: 102), writes;



For the administrations purpose is no longer to be limited to the maintenance of law and order. It was to be extended to ensure that the directive principles of the Constitution should apply in the remotest tribal areas with as much force and effect as in the capital at New Delhi.

The section below offers an analysis of the local stakeholders on the 1962 India-China war. These versions constitute the popular accounts of the people in the region on how they perceived the Indian state in the region during 1962 and subsequently. The war memories or the war stories have been passed on to the new generation from the older generations.

It was observed that the majority of the narratives collected during the course of the field work constitute respondents from younger generation whose accounts are based on the account of their parents and grandparents, as some of them were not even born and some were still too young to recollect any memories of the war. It is notable that their worldview on the Chinese aggression, the state of affairs in Tawang before 1962 is largely informed by the opinion of the older generation. On the other hand, some of the most interesting inputs on the 1962 war have been gathered from the older generation<sup>22</sup>, which consisted of two men who aged around 80 and 85 years. These two men of the older generation were a witness to the 1962 war. Their accounts tell us not just how they have reacted to the Chinese presence on the Indian border but also how the people in their villages have reacted to it. Their thoughts were filled with nostalgia on how their current home town Tawang looked like at the time of their childhood, during the 1962 war and after that. They have shared their views on the 1962 war and their personal experiences on the same.

Firstly, from the perspective of the local stakeholders, the war of 1962 has had immense impact on the mind-set of the Indian government and people of Tawang and other parts of Arunachal Pradesh. The impact of the war has been discussed in Chapter three of this thesis. This chapter discusses the implications of the 1962 war and how it led to the revision of administrative policies in the region.

The commonly heard narrative on the 1962 was majorly a criticism of the policies of Jawaharlal Nehru and the central government at New Delhi towards the region. The respondents believed that it was the flawed policy calculations of the leaders in New

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<sup>22</sup> However, during the course of the field I could have access to only two persons from the older generation, aged around 80 to 85 years, who could share their views and memories of the 1962 war and the transition of Tawang before 1962. Mention details about their occupation, etc

Delhi that led to an attack and eventually defeat of India during the war. The respondents argued that it was 'Nehru' who did not pay attention to the security needs of the region. An analysis of the narratives suggests that certain words and themes had a recurring pattern. The respondents used words like 'neglect', 'negligence', 'flawed policy' and 'carelessness' to describe the policies of the government in the region. The policies of the government, which were flawed in their perspective, were a cause for the war. The respondents claimed that the war 'awakened', acted as an 'eye opener' for the Indian government. These narratives suggest a sense of negligence that the people of the disputed territory may have felt after the 1962 war.

Secondly, the narratives highlight the perspectives of the local stakeholders on India-China relations and the emerging dynamics between the two countries on the international platform. It demonstrates people's engagement with issues related to international politics. It reflects on how the people perceive both the states.

Amongst the reasons for attack, many respondents cited several causes that prompted China to attack India. Most of the respondents believed that it was the Tibetan angle that led to the Chinese attack on India. The majority of respondents shared that 'the issue of Dalai Lama angered China', 'Dalai India Aya'<sup>23</sup>, 'Tibetan issue was a reason that angered China'. Another set of arguments provided by the respondents was that, 'The 1962 war was a Chinese way of demonstrating power to the Indian state and the world' and 'It was also an attempt by China to sabotage India's focus from its developmental goals'. These narratives reflect how the people perceive the two nations in context of its emerging economies and status as rising Asian powers.

Thirdly, and most importantly the interviews reveal that most respondents viewed the war as an act of Chinese aggression over the Indian Territory. The views of the people on the 1962 indicate how people view the Indian state. The people view the 1962 war as an act of Chinese aggression. This would mean for them the Chinese force was an alien force and the Indian state a familiar sight in the region. The Indian state may not have been viewed as a force that had to be resisted as the idea of an aggressor was associated with China in the region. Therefore, the indigenous population had to worry about their location along the border due to the Chinese aggression over India in 1962.

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<sup>23</sup> This means that 'Dalai Lama had come'

An interesting feature of the responses was that despite the limited reach of the Indian administrative apparatus in the region, the narratives reveal that the Chinese presence across the McMahon line was seen as an act of aggression. The respondents used words like ‘attack India’, ‘wrong steps to suppress India’ and ‘suppress our tradition’ to describe the Chinese presence across Arunachal Pradesh during the war. Therefore, the presence of Chinese forces was perceived as an intrusion by the locals. The accounts of the war by Tashi Shiring, an 80 year old who was one of the witnesses of the war had his story to share. He shares that ‘when the Chinese forces marched into India most of the people in the village ran for their lives. They walked for miles and to India, Assam and Bhutan for food and support. Tashi Shiring often mentioned the gestures of generosity that was offered by the Indian state and the Government of Assam by giving the refugees food, water and shelter. This indicates that although this region may constitute a part of a disputed territory along the frontier, there have been conditions which have facilitated the creation of an identity that is distinct from the Tibetan identity and the Chinese claim over these regions. The events mentioned by the people indicate that the people of the Arunachal Pradesh associated themselves with the Indian state and the sense of belonging with the Indian state has been profound.

On the other hand, another set of narratives share a different perspective on the Chinese attack. A few people from the local community shared that the troops Chinese did not attack the civilians and were in fact helpful towards the locals. The respondents shared that ‘Chinese did agriculture’, and ‘helped us’. The respondents claim that the Chinese army never attacked the locals, did not even touch a grain of rice but in fact assisted the villagers in cultivation of their crops. On the contrary there were complaints on the misconduct of the Indian soldiers, who ate and drank forcibly from the villagers. While accounts by Nari Rustom ji (1983:139), which specifically addresses the issue of Chinese conduct in the Indian territory of NEFA, has been cited as propaganda by China to win the loyalty of the people in the region by being extra friendly.

However the perception on the Indian army is very different now, which will be discussed in the later sections of this chapter. The local stakeholders view the Indian army as a brave and respectful institution while the military of China is considered aggressive and inhuman due to the atrocities on the Tibetans. In context of the 1962

war, the interviewee's respondents claimed that they did not help or support the Chinese in their bid to conquer Arunachal. However, a couple of responses as it can be seen in the previous chapter, also stated that since the people of the region were unfamiliar with the presence of the both Indian and Chinese army, they helped the Chinese troops to locate passes as they were ignorant of their presence in the territory then.

The narratives above do not necessarily indicate paradoxically viewpoints. Most respondents were of the opinion that the Chinese were the aggressor but exercised restraint in harming the local population. The few respondents believe that, in case of another attack by China today, the locals of the region would be targeted as they avail the services of the Indian government now, which indicates that now they are subjects of the Indian state.

The region around Arunachal Pradesh is a contested space, and it is interesting to note how the people of the disputed region identified themselves during the 1962 war. Considering the limited administrative reach of the government institutions until 1962, it is interesting to note that the people of NEFA bestowed their confidence in the Indian government even after India's failure in the war. Nari Rustomji in *Imperilled Frontiers* (1983) argues that the administrative polices of the Indian state may have enabled the Indian government to win the confidence of the frontier region. According to him the nature of polices which were carefully crafted for the region with its unique culture, landscape and geography was a reason strong enough for not losing the confidence of the people even after India's the defeat in the 1962 war.

### ***Insecurity in the Frontier Region***

The presence of China along the borders of Arunachal Pradesh has been a concern for the Indian security apparatus. This section analyses the responses of the local stakeholder on the presence of China across the Bumla border and other locations. In this context, the respondents were asked if they thought the border around Arunachal Pradesh was secure.

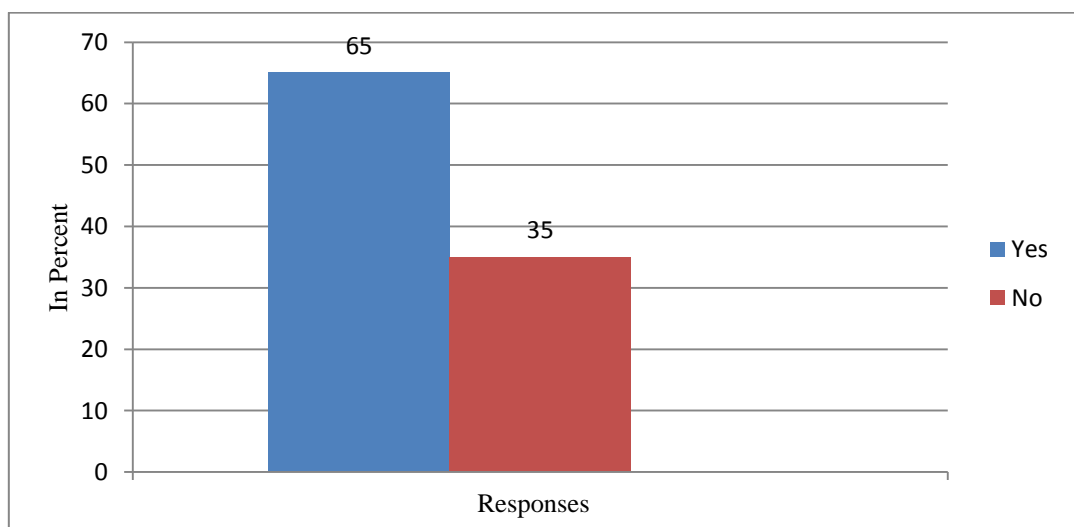
The respondents had divergent views with regard to the issue.

A few reactions were based on an understanding that 'China cannot be trusted' and that it may 'attack India any time'. The commonly heard narratives consisted of

words and phrases like Chinese presence is a sense of ‘fear’, insecurity’ and ‘threat’ in the region. The constant claim over Arunachal Pradesh and the border skirmishes between India and China reported in the television is of concern to the people.

On the other hand, many respondents were of the opinion that the presence of China as a neighbour is not a matter of concern as India has sufficient capabilities to defend itself now, unlike the war of 1962. The reactions of the respondents were, ‘India is strong now’, ‘India has arms and weapons’, and ‘India is economically strong now’. These responses reflect two things: Firstly, the role of media and how the media affects the perceptions of the people in the frontier in context of creating the image of the Indian state. The media reports and news channels have influenced the opinion of the people with regard to the India-China border disputes. An analysis of interviews with different stakeholders in the region point that frequent news on Indian television channels on border intrusions along the India-China border often creates tension and anxiety in the minds of the people in the region. Also, media reports on Chinese atrocities on the Buddhist population in Tibet have created a negative image about China, as a country that does not respect religious diversity. Secondly, people have a tendency to draw co-relation between increasing economic growth with increasing capacity of the state to defend its country. Therefore, as the analysis of the narratives points out the, the India’s growing might in military and economic sphere has created as a sense of security for the people in the frontier region.

**Figure 5.1: Sense of Security along the India-China Borders**



*Source:* Compilation of data from field work, during a period from March 2017 to May 2017.

### *People's Response to China's Territorial Claim in Arunachal Pradesh*

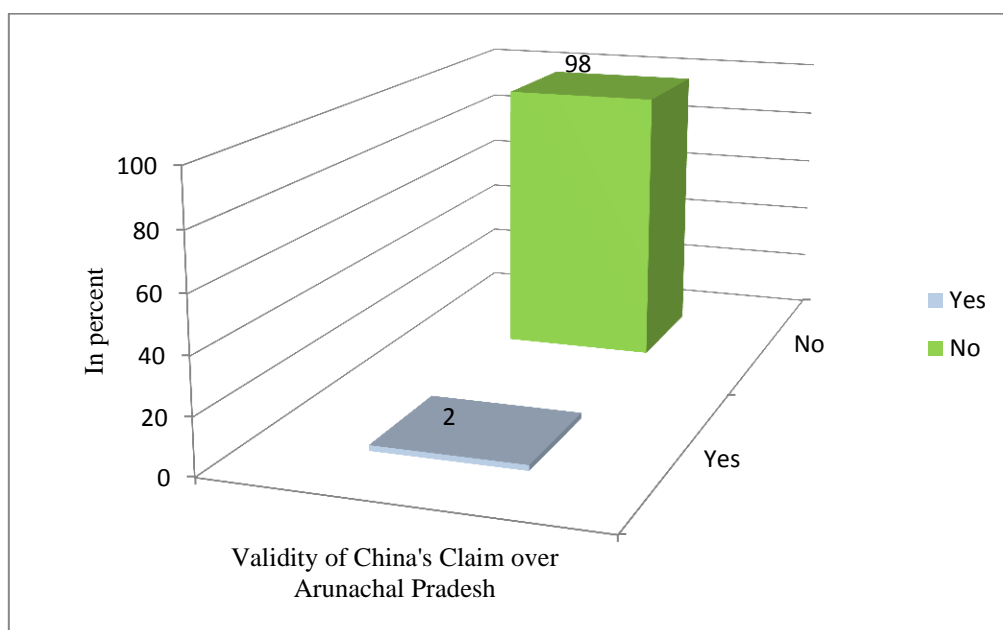
The boundary dispute between India and China in Arunachal Pradesh consists of claims and counter claims by both the states over the contested territory. For instance, China claims some of the major parts of Arunachal Pradesh, including Tawang. As discussed in Chapter Three of this research, China has included some of the locations in Arunachal Pradesh as a part of Chinese territories. Chinese claim to these locations in Arunachal Pradesh is based on historical claims. The unique culture and identity of the region have led to a complex administrative evolution in the region. The nature and scope of the administrative apparatus which was to be implemented in the region has been a matter of dispute between the policy makers.

Therefore, in light of the above, it is essential to understand how local stakeholder perceives the India-China territorial dispute, with specific reference to China's claim over Arunachal Pradesh. The section below offers an analysis of the narratives of the people on China's territorial claim to Arunachal Pradesh.

The responses of the participants were overwhelming patriotic, although this does not mean that there was an absence of grievances by the local population. The respondents identified themselves as a 'proud Indians'. On the question of China's territorial claim over Arunachal Pradesh the respondents stated that the Chinese's claim is 'totally invalid'. They used words like 'baseless', 'China talks too much', 'No legal basis', 'nonsense talks' to describe the claim. The respondents made several statements like that Arunachal Pradesh is an 'integral part of India', 'we are Indians', 'I am proud to be an Indian'. Mostly all the respondent strongly feels that Arunachal is an 'integral part' of India and so is Tawang. They feel it is 'morally wrong' for China to claim Tawang or for that matter any other part of Arunachal Pradesh. These commonly recurring narratives indicate the position of the people vis-à-vis the Indian state.

The figure below shows a graphical representation of the people's response towards China's claim over Arunachal Pradesh. The responses were negative towards China's territorial claims in the region. The total percentage of responses saying 'No' to the claims was 98 %. while 2 % of the total respondents felt that China may have a reason to claim certain tracts in Arunachal Pradesh due to historical complexities.

**Figure 5.2: The Responses on China's Claim over Arunachal Pradesh**



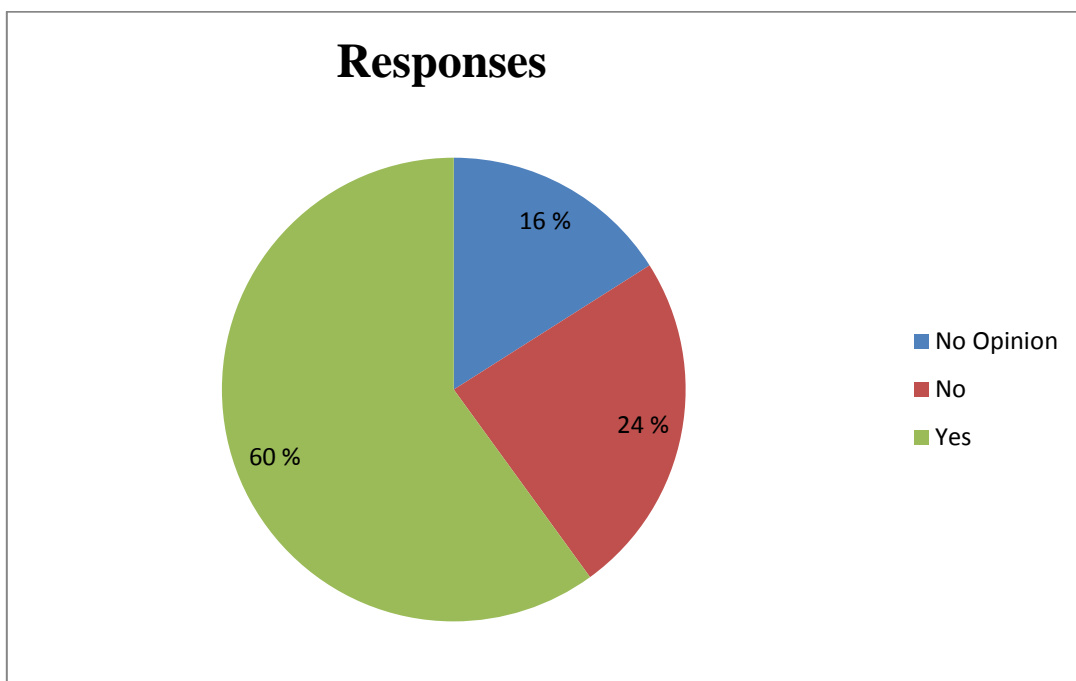
*Source:* Compilation of data from field work, during a period from March 2017 to May 2017.

***Perspective of the local stakeholders on another attack by China***

This section consisted of mixed responses from the people. The responses of this section overlapped with the responses on India's ability to defend in borders in context of another attack along the borders in Arunachal Pradesh. The reactions of the people can be classified around two sets of reactions: Firstly, many respondents believed that a Chinese attack is not possible. The reasons cited were India's growing economic and military strength at a global level. The frequently repeated narratives were that 'China will think', 'China only talks', 'India is strong now', 'India's economy is strong', 'India has arms and ammunitions'. However, another set of responses points that a few respondents were of the opinion that China might attack India as Chinese intentions on territorial expansion cannot be underestimated and that India is still way backward in terms of development vis-à-vis China and most importantly the respondents said that 'China cannot be trusted'. However, it was not clear what the people exactly meant by 'trust' in context of India - China relations. Perhaps, it could be their views on the probability of another Chinese attack, despite the stress on resolving border conflicts by the two countries through various diplomatic engagements and despite growing economic cooperation between the two countries.

On the question of India's ability to defend its borders in case of an aggression, 60% respondents believed that India can defend its borders due India's enhanced position both economically and militarily. While 24% were of the opinion that lack of infrastructure development and economic backwardness of the region might be a major for India's unpreparedness in case of another attack. The responses consisted of 'India still has bad roads', 'China has good infrastructure even at the borders', 'this region is backward, and there are no roads'.

**Figure 5.3: Perspective of the respondents on India's ability to defend its borders along Arunachal Pradesh in future.**



*Source:* Compilation of data from field work, during a period from March 2017 to May 2017.

### ***Security of the Frontiers***

About securing the frontiers, the perspective of the people was mainly based on the following recurrent patterns in the responses: Firstly, the lack of infrastructure and adequate development in the region has been of concern for the local stakeholders for the security of the region. The bad condition of the roads, lack of all-weather condition roads and infrastructure has been cause of disappointed for the locals of the region. They were of the opinion that, although India's defence capabilities have



improved, the unconnected and un-motorable conditions of the roads may become a cause for India's set back in case of an attack from the other side of the border. The lack of infrastructure has created the impression of a China, which is more advanced than India and therefore with higher capabilities even in context military power.

Secondly, the respondents suggested more involvement by the Indian government in the affairs of the state in order to instil more 'Indianess' into the region. Although the people of the region clearly identified themselves with India, a few respondents suggested that there are still a few far flung, unconnected places in the region which still awaits integration with the mainstream Indian discourse. By, 'Indianess', the respondents implied, more socio and cultural connect and exposure with rest of the country. This would also imply, bringing the culture of Arunachal Pradesh to the rest of the country and create awareness about the other cultures of India in the frontier region, so that the region is fully integrated both culturally and socially.

Thirdly, the creation of a buffer state i.e. Tibet. The respondents were of the opinion that the presence of a buffer state between India and China would act as a safety mechanism for India. It would save India's defence expenditure on guarding the current international borders between India and China. It was suggested that the autonomy of Tibet, would save India's defence spending. Also, stationing Tibet as a buffer state will lead to other benefits apart from security considerations, such as trading benefits, as it used be earlier. Cordial relations with Tibet will enable people of India to visit the holy places in Tibet which are relevant in Buddhism.

Fourthly, also, most importantly the role of the military has been emphasised upon as an institution that needs to be strengthened. These responses indicate that the local stakeholders view the presence of the Indian state positively. The Indian administration has been able to garner its legitimacy in the region, since its involvement has not been perceived as a threat to the local cultural and social fabric. Moreover, when the respondents pointed towards the role of the military as an enabling factor in ensuring the defence of the borders, it indicates the willingness of the people to accept the role of hard power in a Buddhist dominated region. These narratives point that people perceive the state as a guarantor of security and the state is expected to fulfil its role through various institutions at its disposal.

## **The Perspective of the Locals on their Location and Borders**

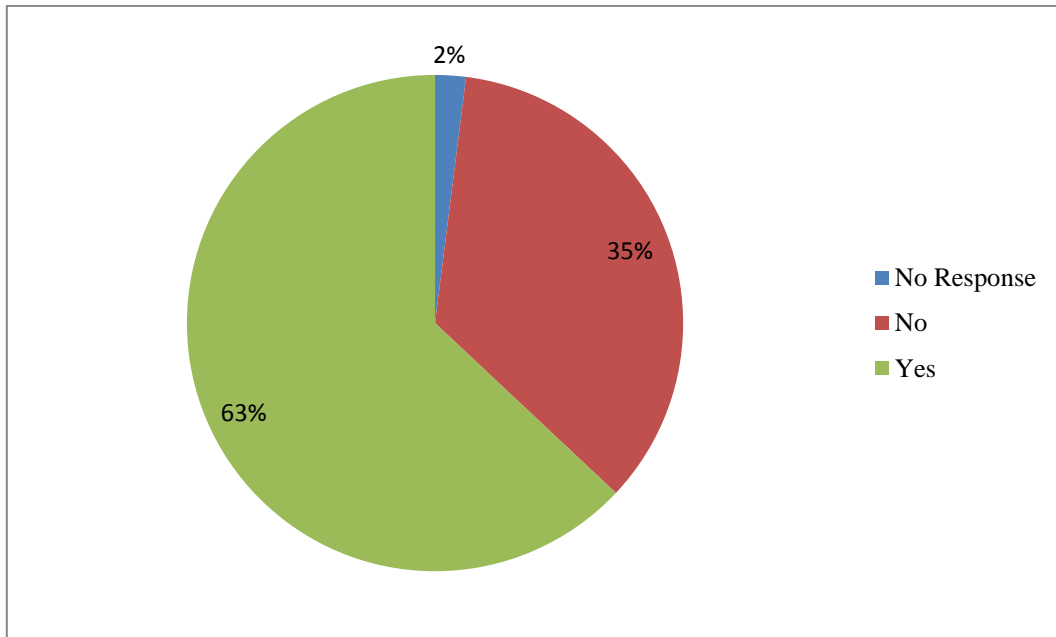
### ***The Role of the Himalayas as the Barrier: Perspective of the Locals***

An analysis of the responses reveal that reflect that although the mighty mountains could not guard the borders during the 1962 war, it still plays a crucial role in defending the borders as per the perceptions of the local stakeholders. The narratives highlight two strands of opinion and they are as follows

Firstly, one section believed in the invincibility of Himalayas that although can be crossed over, still acts as a barrier against any Chinese presence in the region. This is due to the harsh climatic conditions, and the snow clad mountains makes it difficult for any intruder to cross over very easily, especially during winters.

The second sets of opinion indicate that the modern means of warfare have reduced the importance of natural features of a region. Therefore, under such circumstances the Himalayas significance as a natural boundary has diminished. An analysis of the narratives indicate that the respondents used terms like ‘still a barrier’, ‘prevents intrusions’, ‘difficult terrain’, ‘modern warfare has reduced the role of Himalayas’. The total percentage of respondents who believed that the Himalayas are still a barrier was 63% and 35 % respondents believed that it does not act as a barrier between India and China, while 3% of the respondents chose not to answer the question. The figure below is a graphical representation of the responses on Himalayas as a barrier between India and China.

**Figure 5.4: The Role of the Himalayan Mountains as a Barrier between India and China**



*Source:* Compilation of data from field work, during a period from March 2017 to May 2017.

***Views on the Controversial McMahon line and Boundaries issues of India with China and other Countries***

The analyses of this section reflect two kinds of respondents. Firstly, the section of people who were aware of the McMahon line whose views was based on information through books, TV channels and newspapers. They have read and heard about the McMahon line but never seen it. The reactions of the people consisted of the following: ‘it was a British policy’; ‘I have seen it’. Some respondents have claimed that their visit to the border between India and China was enlightening. They clarified that was no definite border line such as the McMahon. The border comprised of scattered rocks and boulders.

Secondly, there were people who were not aware of the McMahon line. The responses of these people consisted of statements like ‘I do not about it’, ‘have not heard about’, ‘maybe there is something like that but I do not about it’.

A few of them, believed that the India-China border conflict is a matter that pertains to the bureaucracy and politicians. They felt that they have no role to play in the border

and territorial conflict. However, such views were shared by people who were local businessmen and mostly lacked any formal education. On the other hand as discussed the local people who had an opinion of the McMahon line showed curiosity in explaining their point of view with regard to dispute settlement of the borders. It comprised of young business man from Tawang often a graduate. Such views were also prominent among the higher officials of the Tawang and the Bomdila monastery. The educated Buddhist monk with important positions of authorities in both Tawang and Bomdila shared their perspectives on the McMahon line and the ways in which the border conflict between India-China could be negotiated.

### ***Views on Border Settlement Mechanisms: Views from the Local Stakeholders***

Many respondents were of the view that the border conflict should be resolved through ‘peace and dialogue’, ‘talks’ and ‘people to people contact like Bumla meetings’. Some respondents were of the opinion that India should enhance its military capabilities and act more assertive about its territorial claims.

Analyses of the responses indicate that a very small group of people were aware of the various official documents and papers that have been signed between the People’s Republic of China and the India. The people were asked if they were aware of any formal agreements that has been signed between India and People’s Republic of China with regard to the resolution and manning of the India-China border both along Aksai Chin(Line of Actual Control) and Arunachal Pradesh, mostly on McMahon line. They were specifically asked about their views on the Package Deal of 1981, The Peace and Tranquillity Agreement on Borders on 1993, the various confidence building mechanism (CBM’s) and Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question of 2005.

The respondents had no idea on the specifics of the above mentioned initiatives by the governments of both the state and any border dispute resolution mechanisms that have been constituted by both the countries. However, majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the issue of border settlement was a matter that is discussed at the official level and therefore they had no comments to share on it.

The India-China border conflict has been one of the most contracted border conflicts in the world. The border conflict has affected the national security discourse and

India's strategic thinking. As discussed the India- China war on 1962 has changed the attitude of the government towards China and also in terms of its policies orientation towards the frontier region. The frontier region of Arunachal Pradesh, constitutes a vital aspect of the India- China border conflict, similarly the stakes of the various local stakeholders is equally important in dealing with the India-China territorial dispute. One such stakeholder is the Monpa community who's location in the district of Tawang and places in Arunachal Pradesh holds immense significance in context of the border dispute with China. The next section discusses the views of various respondents from the Monpa community in context of the India-China territorial dispute.

### **The Monpa Community and the India- China Border Dispute**

Considering the significance of the role of the Monpa population in the region, this research devotes a section to the views of the Monpa community with reference to the territorial disputes between India and China. Verrier Elwin (1965: 42-43) says "The Monpa's occupy the valleys to the north of Bomdi La lying at the foot of a metre spur of the Thagla Ridge. They are Buddhist by religion with, perhaps an admixture of their original animist-shamanist beliefs. The cultural and religious life of the Monpa's centre around the Tawang Monastery." As stated, the narratives presented below are a reflection of the perceptions of the population of the border regions. Moreover most of the responses were from the Monpa community, which was based on a random sampling method.

The responses of the participants have been useful in understanding the views of the stake holders with regard to the following:

- The perceptions of the people with regard to their cultural and political history with Tibet. The narratives highlight the views of the Monpa community with regard to the Tibet factor as well.
- The position of the Monpa community with regard to their stand on the India-China territorial dispute

On the question of similarities between the Tibetans and the Monpa's, the participants were of the following opinion: Firstly, the respondents shared their views on the region's linkages with Tibet and China. Most respondents were of the opinion that although Arunachal Pradesh shared historical ties with Tibet, the region lacked any

cultural and political connections with China. They were of the view that the region of Arunachal Pradesh, especially the Tawang region was heavily under the influence of Tibetan culture which was distinct from Chinese influence. In fact, 100% respondents were of the opinion that the Monpa community share religious, social and cultural similarities with Tibet. The similarities lay in the fact that the people of both the communities are Buddhists, they have a common spiritual guru and common a religious head, which is the Dalai Lama. The respondents used words like ‘ we have common religion’, ‘we have one soul but two systems’, ‘ we are similar in terms of cultural and religious practices’, ‘His Holiness is our common guru’, Such commonality therefore is based on cultural and religious affinities.

Thirdly, although the Monpa’s shared common religious and cultural practices, the language of both the communities are different. People’s narratives underline such distinction in language. ‘Our language is different’, ‘language totally different’, ‘might have been similar during the days of great grand parents’, were the phrases used by respondents to convey their opinion on the same. They were of the opinion that it could have been that, both the communities had shared similar languages but it could have been centuries ago. But now the people of Monpa community have their own distinct language.

Fourthly, on the question of the position of Arunachal Pradesh the respondents stated that: a) the region is an integral part of Indian Territory. The responses clearly stated that the region of Arunachal Pradesh, although disputed between India and China for some time now, is an Indian territory. The usage of words like integral indicates that the people identified Arunachal Pradesh as a vital and a fundamental territory of India b) they are proud to be Indian citizens. The feeling of pride associated with their Indian identity indicates that the people profoundly identified themselves with the Indian state. Therefore, the position of the respondents on Arunachal Pradesh as an integral part of India stands stern. The narratives which were most commonly repeated which were: ‘Tawang and Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India’, ‘Arunachal Pradesh is Indian Territory’, ‘I am proud to be an Indian, ‘ I am a proud Monpa and Arunachal is India’s’.

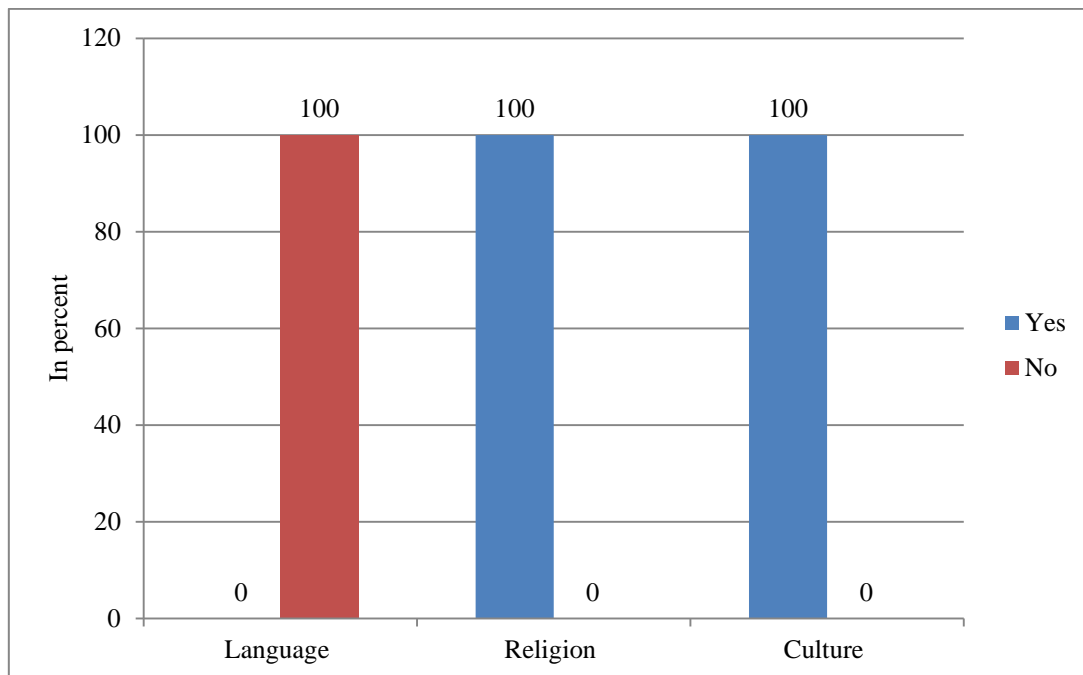
Lastly, the views of the Monpa community under two scenarios were an important aspect of the research objective:

In context of China's Claim over Arunachal Pradesh and Tawang: The commonly repeated statements were the following, 'Arunachal is a part of India', 'we are proud to be Indian's', 'Arunachal is an integral part of India'. These statements reflect that the Monpa community considers themselves as an integral part of India irrespective of the Chinese position on certain territories in the region. This could imply that the Monpa community would resist any Chinese designs to control the region and may not enough the local support whereas the Indian government is perceived as a legitimate political authority in the region.

Then, the responses on the position of the Monpa community in case of Tibet's greater autonomy were collected as well. The people claimed that they 'are Indian's' and 'would remain with India'. They also believe that even though the people of the region share religious and cultural similarities with Tibet, they constitute a vital component of Indian territory. Although the several people from the Monpa community, like local businessman, monks and students were of the opinion that the Tibetan were fighting for a just cause by fighting for greater autonomy, they made it a point to clarify that they did not have other association with the Tibetan cause. They said that they have no idea about any other details or information about the Tibetans who are in other parts of India like Dharamshala or the Tibetans in the Shyok basti (Tibetan refugee colony in Tawang) in Tawang.

The figure below represents various responses of the participants from the Monpa community with regard to their views on religious, cultural, social and linguistic similarities with the Tibetan culture.

**Figure 5.5: Responses on the similarities of the Monpa Community with the Tibetans**



*Source:* Compilation of data from field work, during a period from March 2017 to May 2017.

The analysis of the responses leads to certain inferences. It can be argued that the analysis of the narratives indicate that the Chinese claim over the region of Arunachal Pradesh, Tawang and West Kameng in particular have been rejected by the local population. The approval of the local people with regard to the presence and the consolidation of the Indian state have played a crucial role in ensuring national security of the Indian state. Firstly, perception of the local people on China as the aggressor has kept a bay any active participation by the locals in aiding the China's territorial ambitions. Secondly, people's identification with India has acted as a counter weight to territorial claims over Arunachal Pradesh. The fact the people of the region identify with India has bestowed legitimacy to the Indian state. Therefore any attempt by the Chinese government to interfere across the border into the Indian territory will be perceived as an act of aggression and therefore revisited. Also, the support of the local people towards the presence of the Indian army is also an indication on how China is perceived. The responses reveal that the Indian army is a source of security and help for the people in the frontier region. The absence of resistance towards the presence of the Indian army reflects an interesting discourse in



Tawang and West Kameng unlike others parts of North Eastern state and Jammu and Kashmir. The local population's approval and praise of the military has gone a long way in ensuring the local people's participation in the consolidation of the state in the frontier state. However, the question of how the Indian state have managed to gain the approval and desired responses of the people is another subject matter of inquiry.

Therefore, legitimacy has played an important role in state consolidation and an analysis of the narratives indicate that the people of the region identify themselves with the Indian state as opposed to the Chinese territorial claims in the region. Legitimacy and political support constitutes an important aspect of political authority especially in a democracy. It demonstrates the success of the Indian state in instilling its authority in the frontiers of Arunachal Pradesh.

### **The Buddhist Institutions: Role of Dalai Lama, Tibet and the Indian state**

The Tawang monastery has occupied an important position in the daily lives of the people in the region over the years. It has a powerful influence in the everyday affairs of the people. Therefore, as discussed the important position of the monastery and people's dependence on the monastery over the centuries has led to the development of a patron-client relationship between the monastery and the local population.

The interaction between the Tawang monastery and Indian state exemplifies a situation in which both the entities have negotiated with the role and presence of each other in the region. The ability of the Indian state to deliver welfare services, build infrastructure in the region and grant political rights to the people of the region have ensured the presence of the Indian is not looked upon with resistance. On the other had the significance of the monastery in the region could not ignored by the Indian state. The Tawang monastery and the Indian state are the two most important institutions of authority in the region. Earlier the Tawang monastery constituted one of the major sources of authority in the region which was under the Tibetan authority. The Tawang monastery had the right to collect taxes and it also played a crucial role in the day to day cultural and social lives of the people (Dorjee 2017: 6). The gradual penetration of the Indian state in the affairs of the monastery has led to the Indian state acquiring a stronghold in the region. The Indian state gradually subverted the traditional authority of the Buddhist institutions in the region by assuming some of the vital functions of the monastery in various ways argue Gohain (2017). For instance,

the abbot of the Tawang monastery was the sole authority responsible for appointing monks for these monasteries. However, Dalai Lama's exile into India and the involvement of the Indian state in the affairs of the monastery have increased the influence of the Indian state in the region. Dorjee (2017: 6-7), argues that it was the Simla conference that had altered the power dynamics and the Tibetan influence over Tawang. It was the agreement that demarcated a boundary between Tibet and India, by which Tawang was ceded to India.

It was the 1962 war that changed the dynamics between the monastery and the people of the region. There has been a shift in the policies of the Indian state, i.e. from a policy of non-intervention to policy of deliberate intervention in the affairs of the monastery. This included providing financial support, influencing the appointments in the monastery as strategies that enhanced the role of the Indian state in the region.

The frontier, after the 1962 war had to be consolidated and brought within the standardized nationalist discourse without antagonising the locals of the region. The project of incorporating the frontiers included the following: Firstly, by reducing the role of alternative sources of authority. Gohain (2017), argues that the Indian state was involved in a process of negotiation with the Buddhist institutions in the region in order to penetrate its rule in the frontier region. For instance, the Tawang monastery has subsidiary monasteries, around thirteen of them and also has two nunneries in the same region. The Nehru Gompa was added as the 12<sup>th</sup> monastery under the Tawang monastery. The incorporation of the Nehru Gompa as the 12<sup>th</sup> subsidiary monastery in 1964, was a way to incorporate the mainstream Indian nationalist into the region. As, discussed naming places involves a political statement, it reflects the significance of the place and its association with history and politics.

Therefore, incorporation of the Nehru Gompa as a subsidiary monastery was a strategy by the Indian state to ensure its legitimacy in the region, this was because the monastery symbolised a source of power and authority. Secondly, the monastery stood as the symbol of cultural identity of the people and any identification with the monastery would enable the local people to relate with the Indian state as a familiar institution in the region. As, discussed in the previous sections, people's responses varied from 'feeling good' to 'no idea why a monastery should be named after Nehru', indicates a mixed response. A section of people also expressed their acceptance of the

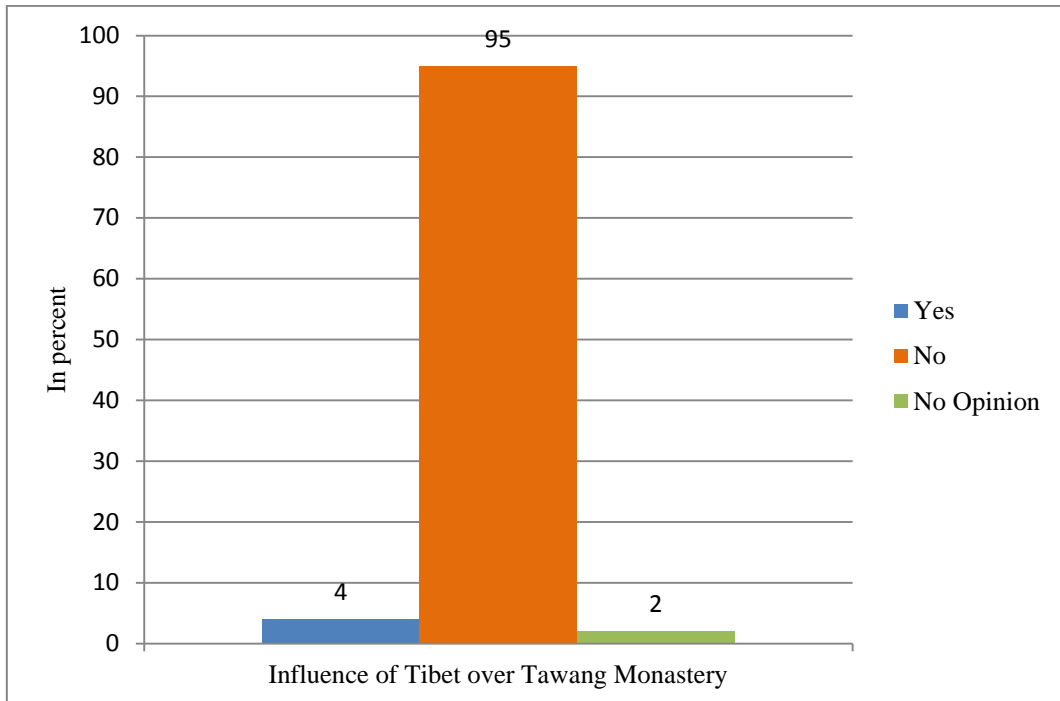
Nehru Gumpa while a few expressed their reservations on the same. However, the responses on the war memorial were associated with a feeling of acceptance and pride. The responses of the people constituted of statements like, 'feels proud', 'feel patriotic' (desh bhakt lagta hai', 'it is a symbol of national pride', 'it is dedicated to the soldiers who fought for this land'.

Another factor that has impacted the discourse around the Tawang monastery and the involvement of the Indian state in the affairs of the region is Dalai Lama's exile into India. Dalai Lama's presence in India has influenced the appointments in the Tawang Monastery. As discussed in the previous chapters, the appointments in the monastery and Dalai Lama's presence in India has shaped the politics of the region in context of the India-China territorial disputes. For, instance the officials of the monastery, including the abbot, who is the highest representative of the monastery, is now appointed by the Tibetan government in exile located in India, in consultation with the Indian Government. Most people who chose to share their views consider Dalai Lama as their spiritual head and agree with his views on spirituality. They agree with his spiritual teachings and did not concern themselves with his political views.

As far as the support to Dalai Lama's political views are concerned, many people clarified that their support to Dalai Lama pertains to his religious and spiritual teachings. However, some respondents claimed to support his political views as well. For instance, the responses of the people consisted of statements such as ' yes, he is our Dharm guru, we agree with all his views', 'yes, we agree', 'he is a peace loving person and we agree with His Holiness views'.

However, during, the course of the interview when people were asked about Tibet's influence over the appointment of the representatives in the Tawang Monastery, it was denied by the people. The respondents were of the view that appointments in the monastery is devoid of any political considerations. The widely held narrative is that politics has nothing to do with the appointments in the Monastery. Almost 93% of the people interview believed that the Tawang Monastery is independent of political interference while 3% were of the opinion that it is influenced by the politics of the day.

**Figure 5.6: People’s opinion on Tibet’s Political interference in the Tawang Monastery.**



*Source:* Compilation of data from field work, during a period from March 2017 to May 2017.

The position of the Indian government on the Tawang Monastery has received support and respect. The Indian state has demonstrated its support for the Buddhist institutions. For instance, during the Tibetan uprising at Lhasa, Indian government had given refuge to the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetan refugees and this has gone well with the Buddhist population in the region. As the commonly gathered narratives indicate, people’s perception of the Indian state as a supporter of the Dalai Lama and Buddhist institutions have been a reason for inducing a sense of security in the minds of the local people. The responses consisted of words like ‘India is democracy’, ‘we can practice our religion’, ‘India respects our Guru’ indicate people’s identification with the Indian state and its support for their religion.

The Indian state has very tactically represented and safeguarded the religious views of the Monpa community in Tawang and West Kameng region. The Indian state in the view of the Monpa community is not antithetical to the aspirations of the Buddhist of Tawang. In fact, it has been perceived as a guardian of their religious, customs and traditions. A positive perception of the state has enabled the state to gain legitimacy

and therefore consolidate its presence in the frontier region. The legitimacy has given way to a growing political authority of the Indian state.

This throws light on the notion of sovereignty in the frontier region. As much as the people had to adapt and negotiate with the state apparatus, the state too had to negotiate with the traditional ties of authority. The legitimacy of the people is one of the fundamental factors that have enabled the Indian state to make its presence in the frontiers. In contested border regions, the sovereignty of the state is not supreme as the region may be susceptible to various other sources of authority due to the lack of state's presence in these regions. Also, legitimacy has been a necessary condition for a peaceful relationship between the state and the people of the region. This is testified by the fact that despite the administrative reach in several parts of the North Eastern states of India, like Assam, Nagaland and Manipur, these places had witnessed the birth and rise of more than 105 militias in the region. Baurah (2005), argues that regions in the North East India had to struggle with the need to fulfil the space that was marked by the absence of an overarching authority. Therefore, there was a rise in insurgency groups which attempted to fill the vacuum. In the course of time, negotiations and talks have enabled the Indian Government to make peace in the region. The Assam Accord (1985), the Naga Accord (2015) are some of the agreements that were signed to bring peace and stability in the region. These accords have played an important role in bringing down the volatility of the region.

### **The Nehru Gumpa, War Memorial and the Military**

The Nehru Gumpa and the war memorial in Tawang embodied symbols that signified the presence of the Indian state. The incorporation of the Nehru Gumpa as the 12<sup>th</sup> subsidiary monastery under the Tawang monastery signifies a relationship in which both the state and the monastery have co-opted each other.

The war memorial, which is located in town of Tawang is another symbol of national pride and memory of the 1962 war which signifies the relationship between the state and the local population in the region.

An analysis of the narratives indicate that the presence of the two institutions in the region have been welcomed by the respondents. As the commonly gathered narrative like 'feels good', 'feels proud when a distant place like Tawang is named after eminent persons', 'Nehru visited Tawang that's why it was named, feels good', were

some of the responses. These responses highlight that the Nehru Gompa stood as a symbol of pride and instilled a sense of connection with the history of India's political establishment. However, some respondents did express their objections on a Buddhist Gompa being named after a political leader. They were of the opinion that a Gompa should not have been named after a leader, just because of his/her political position or visit to a place. People's disapproval is documented in the following statement, 'why a Gompa should be named after Nehru', 'Just because Nehru visited a place, why should it be named after him'. These responses reflect that although the Indian state could co-opt the monastery and other Buddhist institutions within its official discourse, it does not indicate an absence of resistance. Such views of the people reflect that Buddhist institutions are sacred to them and therefore any interference in the culture and identity of the people is not welcomed.

On the other hand the war memorial which was dedicated to the martyrs of the 1962 war, has been welcomed by the local people wholeheartedly, as for them it stands as a symbol of national pride and patriotism. The commonly heard narratives comprised of 'Pride', 'Sacrifice', 'Patriotism'. "Salute to Indian soldiers". Such responses indicate that despite the loss in the 1962 war, the people of the region accept the contribution and the Indian soldiers who fought in Arunachal Pradesh defending the country from the aggressor. Besides, it indicates that the military was seen as a necessary force to resist the aggressor, which according to the perspective of the people was China.

Interestingly, unlike some other parts of the North-Eastern states, even for that matter in Arunachal Pradesh where the presence of military forces has been perceived negatively, the reactions of the respondents in this area were different. The presence of military in Tawang and West Kameng have not been opposed or seen in a negative light by the people until now. The narratives collected from the field indicate that the local population of the region have a cordial relationship with the military and hence there is an absence of clash between the military and the local population.

The commonly repeated narratives indicate that the local people respect the institution due to two factors: Firstly, the image of the military stands as a defender of the region, especially considering the attack of the Chinese troops in 1962 India-China war. Secondly, the military is seen as a source of help to the local population. For instance,

the availability of the army at the time of emergency has been appreciated by the people. Involvement of the Indian army in the evacuation operations and rescue missions to save tourist and the locals due to harsh climatic regions has been a regular contribution of the forces. For, instance the role of the army in clearing the road could be seen during the visit to Tawang for field work 21 of March 2017. The role of the military, along with local herders has been crucial during critical weather conditions. They have been instrumental in carrying messages, and supplying basic amenities during harsh weather conditions. The narratives of the people of the people such as 'army helps a lot', 'they clear the road', 'they help when vehicles break down', 'they get medicines', reflect the perception on the Indian army in Tawang.

Therefore, the people of Tawang and West Kameng have used words such as 'secure', 'helps us' and 'brings medicines', 'security' to describe the presence of the military of the region. However some people did sound a note of caution by noting that the presence of military may create a problem if the military encroaches upon the local lands and populations. Therefore, it would in the best interest of the military to exercise restraints over its constructions activities in the pastoral lands. However, the Indian government has been careful not to antagonise the locals when their lands have been diverted for the states security and defence needs. For instance, thirty one families in Tawang have been paid cheques worth 40.8 crore when their lands were taken for the construction of Tawang garrison in 2018. The Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh Pema Kandu handed the cheques to the heads of 31 families, who were based in Bomja. The village of Bomja was inhabited by Monpa's. The village is located 20kilometres to the west of Tawang headquarters (Karmakar 2018).

It is interesting to observe that such dynamics reveals a cordial relationship between the military and the civilians in the region, especially in a country where the presence of military has often been debated in sensitive spaces. Unlike some other parts of India e. g. Jammu and Kashmir, or sensitive parts of North-East where AFSPA is applicable, frequent clashes between the military and the local population, human rights violations, insurgency and the provisions of Arms Forces Special Powers Act, (AFSPA), has been a constant source of tension between the local population and the military in some of these regions. However, the people in West Kameng district do not view army in the negative light or are opposed to the presence of the army.

The frontiers have been always open to cultural, political and economic influences. The frontiers of the state, which have often acted as the buffer states historically, have been transition zones. However, with the contingencies of time and political requirements the frontier or the buffer regions have begun to be defined. This has been the case with the region of NEFA, which has undergone immense transformation from the colonial to the post-colonial period. Understating the beliefs and the views of the local population has enabled us to explore the ways in which people's identification with the Indian state and the people across the borders has evolved over a period of time. This has been done through various socialising mechanisms which has established political authority of the Indian state along the frontier regions under study.

The narratives of the people along this region do indicate a gradual and steady process of negotiations done by the Indian state with the population of the region. Tawang represents a good example of a steady construction and consolidation of national identity through creative instruments. The place remains peaceful despite its proximity to China and heavy presence of the army. The creation of national identity here has been a dialogical process and has not been only a top down process as the locals of the region were actively involved in defining their loyalties and expectations from the state or the monastery (Gohain 2017: 92). The monastery too was instrumental in negotiating and determining the relations of hierarchy in this region.

The role of state institutions like the military, district collector's office, schools and hospitals have played a crucial role in ensuring the presence of the state in the region. The role of the institutions has definitely played an important role in consolidating the Indian state. This has been achieved through a tactical balance between the role of the traditional institutions and sources of authority like the Tawang Monastery. The frontier of Arunachal Pradesh is no longer a frontier that awaits to be Indianised, or different from the rest of the country in its expectations from the Indian state on developmental and security goals.



## **Perspective of the People on the Indian State and its Institutions**

### ***Culture and Identity: Inner Line Permit***

Arunachal Pradesh has a distinct cultural identity. Historically the region shared cultural and religious similarities with Tibet and therefore the region has been influenced by Buddhism profoundly. The presence of Buddhism has given a distinct character to the region.

In addition, the unique cultural identity of the state lies in the fact that it's a home to a wide range of tribes and each tribe has with own language and culture and social customs. It is inhabited by the Monpa's, Lishpa, Aka, Khoa, Nishi's, Apatani's, Galo, Khaos, Tagin, Khatmi, Adi, Wancho, Nocte, Tangsa and others. The Monpa's who reside in the Tawang and West Kameng district practice Buddhism of Mahayana sect, the Noctes in the Tirap region Animism and Theravada Buddhism, the Nishis in several other districts in the region such as in Papumpare, lower and upper Subansari , East Kameng , Kurung Kamey have different lifestyle and practices.

The Indian state has bestowed special provisions for the administration of tribal areas, which includes Arunachal Pradesh as well. It is the provision of the inner line permit that has enabled the state to maintain its distinct identity. The inner line was an initiative of the colonial administration to regulate the movement of the non-tribal's into the tribal regions. The origin of the inner line can be traced to the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations of 1873 which was created to restrict the movements of the British subject into the restricted tribal areas (Singh 2018). The implementation of the inner line can however be traced back to the colonial period when the tribal people of the North-Eastern states felt that the needs and resources of the people had to be protected from the people of the Indian mainland and the colonial exploiters. Therefore the presence of inner line was continued in the independent India as a continuation of colonial policy. Currently, the inner line permit, which is a travel document issued for a limited period of time, by the government to travel to Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. One of the advantages of the inner line permit has been the prevention of the the percolation of non-tribal into the region and thereby helping the tribals to secure their land rights without alienating them in their own land. The issue of tribal alienation has been common in several parts of India like Odhisa,

Jharkand, Andhra Pradesh, but the provision of inner line certain states of north east India have been welcomed by the local population.

The views of the local people in the Tawang and West Kameng region have laid a special emphasis on the need for the inner line permit. The respondents were of the opinion that the inner line permit is required to maintain the distinct identity and culture of the place. The interviews reflect that the respondents had given statements like 'it 'protects indigenous population', 'it is important to avoid bad culture', 'avoid modern culture', 'it's a small place so no mix culture should be allowed', 'loss of culture is loss of identity', 'it is for security'. These remarks suggest that the people of the region strongly value their culture and customs. Also, many local respondents were of the opinion that inner line permit has enabled the region to maintain its cultural identity as they believe that with population influx and immigration comes new ideas and cultural values. Many at times these new values and ideas have been shaped by western cultural values and they also believe that modern or the western culture may pose a threat to their traditional ways of living and their world view in general. For instance, behavioural traits like impatience, consumerism, disregard for nature are some of the negative aspects of the modern life and people of the region believe that if too many people from other parts of the country are allowed to enter the state, it may change the demography of the region and therefore the cultural beliefs and attitudes of the people. Therefore, the inner line permit is regarded as a necessity not just for the protection of land and property rights but also as a measure against social and cultural alienation of the people in their territory. They believe that in order to maintain the sanctity of their culture the inner line permit is crucial. For instance, the people of Tawang want to preserve the Buddhist tradition of the place and the inner line permit is seen as a necessary measure to avoid interferences with local way of life and culture.

Also, most of the North-Eastern states have been affected by terrorism and insurgency and the inner line permit has been considered an essential instrument to check the entry of terrorists and insurgents in the region. This has given a sense of security and assurance to the people of Arunachal Pradesh that their resources and identity would not be disturbed. A loss of culture would mean a loss of identity, as some of the respondents had claimed. Therefore, the practice of the Indian government to preserve and support the cultural identity of the people in the region has also played a crucial

role in garnering the support of the people in the frontier region. The locals were wary of the Chinese presence as they believed that the Chinese government would be a threat to their religion as it does not support Buddhism. The commonly heard narrative is that ‘China suppressed Buddhism, ‘Dalai Lama who is the King of the Tibet had to flee’. The people from Tawang and Monpa community regard Dalai Lama as their spiritual head, which they refer to as the ‘Dharm Guru’; regard him as their ‘God’ and the ‘spiritual head of Buddhism all over the world’, who is ‘compassionate and peace loving’. Under such circumstances, the support of the Indian government to the Dalai Lama in India and the support to the Tibetan government in exile in Dharamshala, has been viewed in the positive light of India’s attitude towards Buddhism, which is a major cultural component of the region.

However, the people of Arunachal Pradesh have certain grievances with the Indian state over certain issues. The increasing number of Christian population in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, the settlement of the Chakma and Hojongs population has been a concern for the residents of the state in general. The settlement of the Chakma population in the Changlang, Lohit, Subansiri and Tirap districts of the region has been a matter of serious contestation in the region. The issue of these two communities have been linked with the politics of citizenship, land ownership and state consolidation. For instance, the Hajongs who are Hindus and the Chakmas who are majorly Buddhist have been facing the persecution threats from Bangladesh and Myanmar. The issue of these two communities have been dealt through the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, which fits into “Bharatiya Janata Party’s project to grant citizenship to non-Muslim minorities fleeing persecution in neighbouring countries” (Scroll.in 8 May 2018). Such actions on the part of the central government have led to anxieties amongst the local population. The process of homogenisation has often accompanied the state making and nation building projects. Imposition of a uniform culture, language or favouring one particular religion has accompanied nation building and has been responsible for creating volatile situations.

Therefore, the government has often clarified its position stating that the two communities i.e. the Chakmas and Hajongs will be granted only limited citizenship rights, in which they would have no land rights, so that the land rights of the tribal population will remain guarded.

The narratives from the region indicate that the cultural identity and the preservation of indigenous culture remains a crucial concern for the people of the region. The Indian state's support in maintaining and preserving the culture and identity of the state has enabled the state to acquire the confidence of the people as loyal subjects. However, an exploratory research in the non-Buddhist regions and other parts of the state may indicate divergent responses. However, the scope of this study is limited to the West Kameng and the Tawang region, and indeed constitutes one of the limitations of the study.

### **Role of Public Institutions in Delivering Public Goods and Services**

The role of the bureaucracy has been instrumental in the region through a series of bureaucratic exercises. Gohain (2017: 89-90), argues The Indian state was able to extract recognition in Tawang and extended its jurisdiction through bureaucratic procedures and documentation. For, instance petitions by local monks requesting delivery of goods and services has entrenched the image of the Indian state as the sovereign. Secondly, the practice of border management has led to the production of the India-China border along the McMahon line. The practice of border management began from the time of colonial period, when frontier region was used as a buffer state. Eventually, with India's independence, and after the 1962 war, several practices along the region have reinforced the border between India and China. For instance, several bureaucratic process like a mandatory application process seeking approval from the Districts Collectors office at Tawang to visit Bumla, and military process like the setting up of military posts, camps, demarcating no man's territory have contributed in producing the India-China border.

During the field visit, it was noted that state consolidating and state building have informed some of the major policy orientations of the Indian state in the frontier space. In other words, Indian state has emerged as one of the most important sources of power and authority. It is the powerful agent delivering services and goods not just to the people but also to the Buddhist institutions. People's narratives considered the role of the Indian state as welfare state. Such commonly heard narratives is encapsulated in statements such as 'India is God', 'it has given us resources and freedom' and schemes by central government for the betterment of the region These views pertained to the older generation in particular. Tashi Shring, who is an 80 year

old Monpa from Tawang said India ‘Bhagvan Hai’, meaning India is God. His praise of the Indian state was based on his opinion about how the state has been helpful in providing the basic necessities of life. Tashi Shiring has a ration card and he uses this official government document for availing welfare services. The older generation have particularly high degree of reverence for the Indian state as they believe that earlier the people of the region had to go to immense hardships in terms of access to food, resources and transportation while now they feel that their conditions are better. The people perceive the Indian state as an institution that has delivered basic amenities to the people.

Some people did talk about the extractive and harsh taxation regulations that existed during the Tibetan regime. Therefore, the modes of functioning and the techniques used by the state institutions to garner allegiance of the people has been a major factor influencing the position of the Indian state in the region. The recognition of the locals had enabled the establishment of the new administration apparatus in the region.

The people who complained about the poor state of affairs in the region were mostly respondents from the younger generation who had more expectations from the state, as they would often end by saying that ‘we hope so that the new government looks into the issues of our state<sup>24</sup>’. An analysis of the narratives highlights that the middle and the younger generation identifies themselves very strongly with the Indian and yet they have been disappointed by the lack of economic and educational avenues in the region. They have often complained about the backwardness of the region. They point out that even for basic requirements they have to travel to Tezpur in Assam, crossing Sela pass and this leads to wastage of time and money due to high transportation cost. It is not just transportation that has created problems for the locals but the harsh and risky roads across the Sela pass at an altitude of 13000 feet above sea level has been a major communication hurdle. The narrow roads and slippery roads caused by a sudden and extremely heavy snow fall make’s basic commutation very difficult.

On the role of the central government in ensuring the basic provisions in the state and also on their expectations from the Narendra Modi led BJP government at the centre 93% of the people were optimistic about the newly elected BJP government’s developmental initiatives in the region. Also, when the respondents were asked about

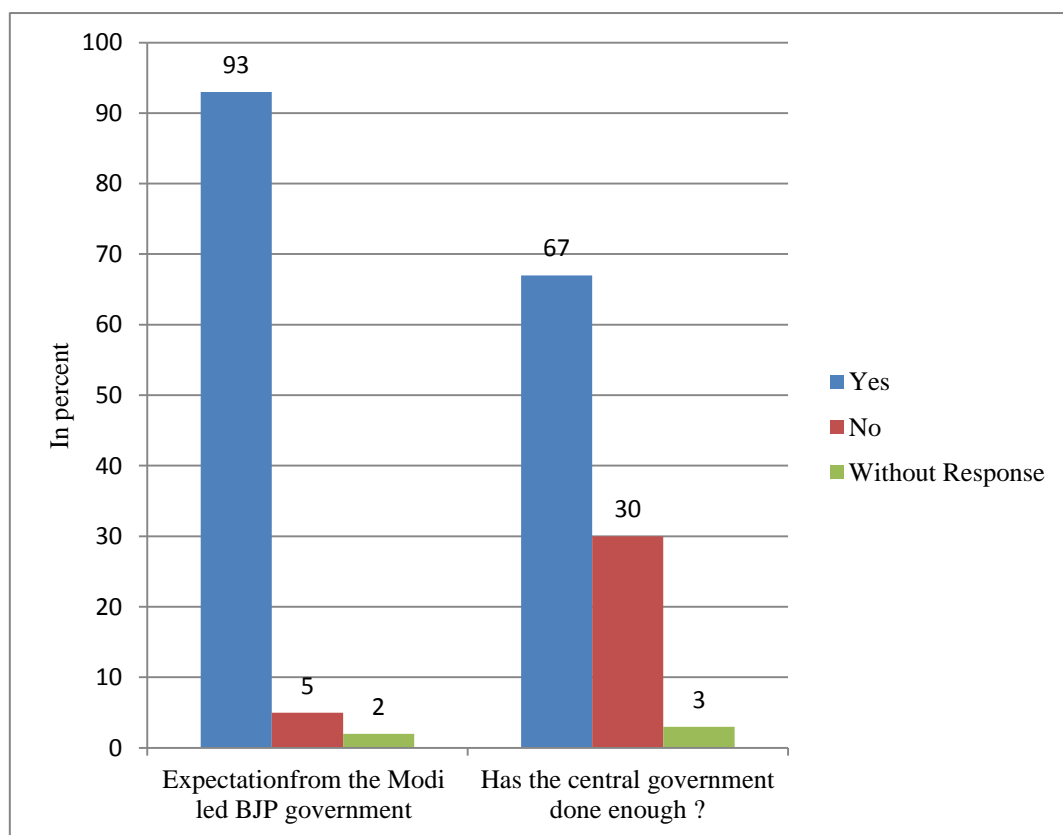
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<sup>24</sup> New government referred to the BJP led government central government in the Indian state

their views on the role of central government in ensuring developmental initiatives in the region, 67% were of the opinion that the central government has done enough, while 30% were of the opinion that the central government has not done enough. This statement referred to the general attitude of the people towards the central government over a period of time.

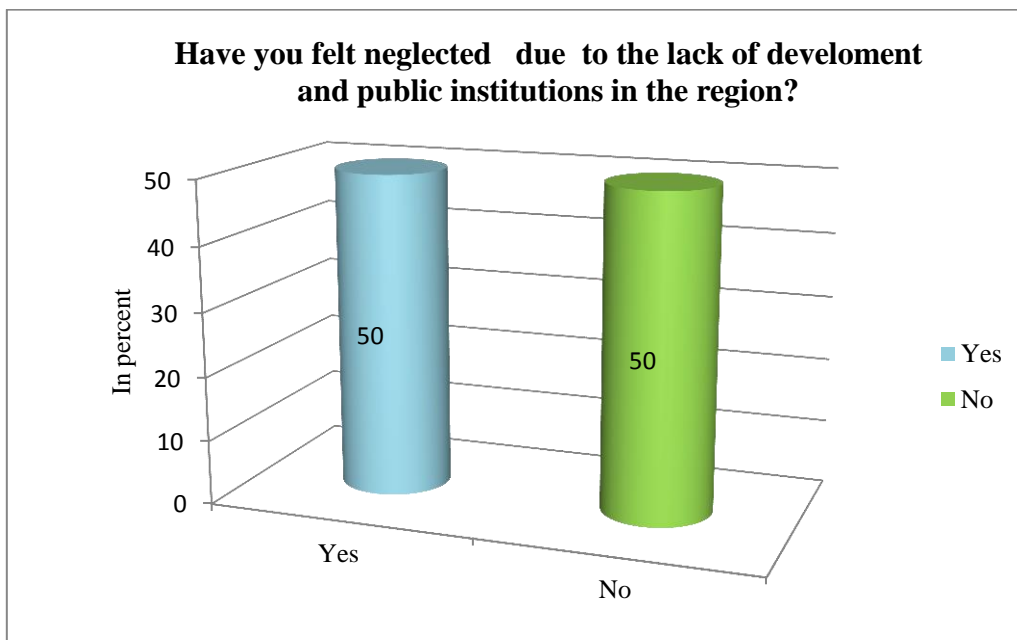
Also when asked if they felt neglected due to the lack of public institutions like schools, hospitals, universities in the region, the responses appear equally divided between a yes and a no .

**Figure 5.7: People’s Opinion on the Central Government**



*Source:* Compilation of data from field work, during a period from March 2017 to May 2017

**Figure 5.8: Perspectives on the developmental activities in the region**



*Source:* Compilation of data from field work, during a period from March 2017 to May 2017

The delivery of essential services in lieu of obligation comprises the fundamentals of the social contract. However, in scenarios where the state has failed to fulfil its obligations to look after the needs of the society, it has often led to the rise of parallel structures of authorities. For instance, the inability of the state to reach and gain legitimacy from certain sections in the North East India, has led to the rise of several secessionist and insurgent groups in the region.

It is noticeable that the Indian state has been careful not to alienate people of the region under study due to lack of its developmental and welfare role. Implementation of schemes under *Ministry* of Development of North Eastern Region (DONER) , Border Area Development Programme (*BADP*) and Border Roads Organisation(*BRO*) has been instrumental in ensuring development in the region. However, the responses of the people do not indicate that the people of the region are completely satisfied with the pace and degree of developmental activities in the region. An analysis of the narratives considered corruption as one of the major reasons for under developmental. Most importantly, the local people believed that corruption at the local and state level has been responsible for siphoning off the funds which were meant for developmental activities. The comments of the local people consisted of ‘we get funds but it is

because of corruption we are not able to develop the region’, ‘the central government of India sends lot of funds but the corruption by our politicians is a major problem of the region’, ‘it is corruption which is the cause of underdevelopment in the region’, ‘corruption needs to be checked’.

Moreover, in cases where the state is not able to reach itself, one finds that it uses many other instruments such as schools . For instance in Tawang and many parts of Arunachal Pradesh, the Vivekanda Kendra Vidyalaya has been promoting Hindi in the region. The Vivekanda Kendra Vidyalaya has been established in different parts of Arunachal Pradesh with one of them being in Tawang too. The core value of the of institution is patriotism, selfless service, permeate the educational experience character-building, and nation-building (VKV Kipti, Tawang). As Gohain (2017:93), points out that the “mushrooming of Vivekananda schools in Arunachal Pradesh, which adopts a culture curriculum, that emphasise a blend of Buddhist cultural preservation, nationalism, and patriotism, is just one attempt to seamlessly assimilate Hinduism, Buddhism, and Indian nationalism”.

### **Language as a factor for State Consolidation in Frontier Regions**

Language and politics of language has been a crucial factor in ensuring state consolidation and nationalism. Therefore, the challenge the awaited the Indian state in the frontier region of Arunachal Pradesh was to create a consolidated political community in the wake of an immensely linguistically divided political community.

The issue of language has been a sensitive issue within the annals of Indian politics as it is intertwined with the question of cultural hegemony. Imposition of Hindi has been resisted at various occasions in the country. The rejection of Hindi can be understood in the light of a struggle to resist the cultural hegemony of the Central North Indian states. However, Arunachal Pradesh presents an interesting case study where Hindi has emerged as a major *Lingua Franca*. The acceptance of Hindi by the locals of the region, without any resistance is major departure from rejection to acceptance of the language unlike the responses in other parts of the country.

There are many languages spoken in Arunachal Pradesh. However, the number of languages is exactly not known. The number of dialects and sub-dialects are not known. A survey conducted by People’s Linguistic Survey of India, cited that



Arunachal Pradesh has 90 languages (Singh 2013). The survey conducted stated that the North-Eastern states of India have the highest per capita density of languages in the world. The reason was attributed to the topography and the rough terrain of the region that have favoured the development of these languages.

The website of the Ministry of Development North-Eastern region states that there are around 30 to 50 spoken languages in the region. Some of the languages in the region are Tagin, Mishui, Nyishi, Dafla, Gallong, Wancho, Khamti, Nocte, Monpa, Adi, Miji, Tangsa. These languages belong to the Tibeto-Burman language group.

Hindi had managed to become the Lingua Franca of the region as a result of the presence of Indian army in the region. The army in Arunachal Pradesh needed porters and therefore the people had to communicate in a common language in the 1960's. These porters who carried arms and ammunitions in the region started spreading the language to their families and neighbourhood. The government of India have also followed a conscious policy of promoting Hindi language in the region. The government of India have introduced Hindi as a school language in the schools in Arunachal Pradesh. The schools in Arunachal Pradesh are an important institution where people have been imparted Hindi. The schools follow the three language formula whereby the school can give a compulsory instruction in English and then Hindi and a third language. Also, the reason why Hindi could possibly emerge as the common language is because it has served the purpose of being a linking language amongst the various tribes in Arunachal Pradesh (Chandra 2014). It was observed that the people of Tawang and West Kameng used Hindi extensively, with people's inclinations towards songs and movies from the Hindi movie industry (Bollywood) being evident. Hindi songs are regularly played in the local shops, transport vehicles and even celebrations. Many respondents could easily answer in Hindi and showed the familiarity and comfort with the language.

The role of Hindi has been crucial due to the following reasons: Firstly, Hindi has been used as a tool for development of the region. This is because Hindi has emerged as a linking language and it has made the prospects of communication easier in the region considering the huge number of local dialects and languages that is prevalent in the region. It has been instrumental in ease of doing business and trade in the region and attracts many business and traders in the region. As earlier, due to the language

barrier there was no medium of communication. This region has the highest density of language in the country and hence communication obstacles were a major issue in integrating the region for developmental and administrative purposes. The introduction of Hindi in the region, through various sources like the schools, military camps and a few traders from outside has made the prospects of communication possible in the region.

Secondly, Hindi has been used as a tool to promote a standardised national identity. Since Hindi has evolved as a meditative language amongst the people of the region, it has incorporated the frontier population within the standardised linguistic practices of the Indian state.

Most importantly, the Indian state has been careful in not antagonising the people of the region through the imposition of any alien cultural norms. The state's support to the Buddhist institutions and cultural traditions has contributed towards strengthening the state's position in the region.

The endeavour of the state has been to maintain a fine balance between a standardised nationalist discourse while at the same time entrench its reputation as the custodian of indigenous culture and Buddhism. For instance, the town of Tawang was hosting the Rashtriya Sanskriti Sammelan in March 2017. This event was an initiative of the central government with a purpose to showcase and bring India's cultural heritage and values, closer to the people of Tawang. There were stalls and artists from the various parts of the country showing India's diverse cultural heritage. This event was attended by the Chief Minister Mr. Pema Kandu and other important delegates. The responsibility to organise the event was entrusted to the students from Arunachal Pradesh students union, thereby ensuring the participation of the younger generation and exposing them to the standardised Indian discourse on unity in diversity.

The Indian-state had to ensure its presence and sovereignty in the disputed region and bring the loosely administered region and its people within a well kit ambit of Indian state's authority. The Indian state had to embark on the process of state consolidation in the loosely administered region. The consolidation of the state in the space was done through setting up government institutions and structures either as a symbolic activity (like the Nehru Gompa and the War Memorial) or institutions that would enhance states surveillance through bureaucratic processes.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

This study looks into the notion of sovereignty in contested spaces. The borders perform a crucial role in delimiting the scope of political authority of the state and its exclusive control over a demarcated territory. However, the notion of political authority may differ in spaces which belong to contested zones, marked by boundary and territorial disputes. Therefore, this study was an attempt to understand the notion of political authority in spaces that are contested along the borders. It explores the role of state institutions in entrenching the political authority of the state along contested frontiers.

This study focussed on the regions around the McMahon Line. The McMahon Line was the suggested boundary line between India, Tibet and China during the colonial period. This line was named after Sir Arthur Henry McMahon, who played a major role in negotiating the boundary line between India, Tibet and China<sup>25</sup>. This line was an outcome of the Simla Conference 1913, which proposed the McMahon line as the effective boundary between India and Tibet in the Eastern sector. However, as discussed in detail in the previous chapters this boundary line was rejected by China. Although, India considered the McMahon line as the effective India-China boundary, China rejects this line as the boundary between the two states. Therefore, the McMahon line remains a major source of border dispute between India and China. This study is based on an extensive fieldwork, which was conducted along the McMahon line in Tawang and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh. This study argues that state institutions strengthen sovereignty in the frontier spaces provided adequate attention is paid to the local sensibilities. The legitimacy and the approval of the people plays an important role how the state institutions are perceived in the frontiers It also states that the notion of sovereignty differs from the centre/seat of power to the periphery of the state.

The first chapter is an introductory chapter explaining the research design of this study. The second chapter presented a theoretical background of the concepts of

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<sup>25</sup> The exact location of McMahon line has never been clear. Even during the war of 1962 , the precise location and extent of the McMahon line was never exactly known (Arpi 2015).

sovereignty and the role of borders in International Relations. The third chapter located the India-China border dispute in its historical context. Drawing theoretical underpinnings and insights from the previous chapters, the fourth chapter offers a detailed discussion of the field work, based on narratives of the people and relevant political and religious authorities. The fifth chapter is a quantitative assessment of the data from the fieldwork. The sixth chapter offers a concluding analysis on some of the issues that this research focussed upon.

As, mentioned this study is based on extensive field work in Tawang and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The objective of the narratives is to understand how the people in these contested spaces have responded to the various governmental policies. The government policies in the contested regions are formulated often with a view to integrate the region within the mainstream nationalist discourse.

An analysis of the narratives is one of the fundamental aspects of this research. The primary objective of analysing the narratives has been to address the perception of the people towards the Indian state, in the backdrop of the 1962 India-China border dispute. The analysis of the narratives throws light on the relationship with state institutions and political authority of the state in the contested frontier regions. It also throws light on how the political authority of the state in the frontiers has been constructed over a period of time, which involved negotiations with the traditional authorities of power, such as the monastery.

The analysis of the narratives reflect that state institutions have strengthen sovereignty in the contested India-China border along the Tawang region due to accommodation of the local sensibilities by the government since independence. As a result, the frontier of Arunachal Pradesh, along the Tawang region has been eventually brought under the standardised nationalist discourse through various policies of the Indian government.

An assessment of the narratives suggest that governmental policies such as infrastructure development, protection of cultural life and religion, delivery of essential welfare services by the Indian government have been a crucial factors that have enabled the state to consolidate its rule in the frontier region.

The people's responses on various issues such as 'perception on China', 'Chinese claims on Arunachal Pradesh', 'the role of the Tibetan angle and Dalai Lama on the India-China territorial dispute', 'views on the military', 'Perceptions on Nehru Gumpa and War memorial', 'Views on the developmental and welfare services of the Indian state'; sheds light on how the local communities perceive the Indian state, its views on their identity as Indian and most importantly it sheds light on how the people have interacted and negotiated with the various state institutions in the region.

The responses of the people indicate that the people identified Arunachal Pradesh as an integral part of the territory of India and they profoundly identify with India, as Indian citizens. Although, the sense of China's presence as a neighbour is a matter of concern for the local community, the India's stronger military and economic capabilities have been cited as reasons that would deter Chinese aggression in the region. Moreover, the presence of military has been perceived as a sense of security due to China's presence. The narratives indicate that the local people of the region regard the military as a supportive institution especially due to the humanitarian and emergency services it offers due to the harsh weather conditions in the Tawang region. However, such a view of the military may not be prevalent in other parts of Arunachal Pradesh, due to the imposition Arms Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA).

On the issue of Dalai Lama and the Tibetan angle many of them believed that, India's decision to give asylum to Dalai Lama has been a cause of tension and a reason for the 1962 India-China war. Assessment of the narratives reveals that although the people share sympathy for the Tibetan cause; and share cultural and religious similarities with Tibet, the people of the region strongly claim their identity distinct from Tibetans. However, the role of Buddhism and the Tawang monastery plays a profound role in the lives of the people. Therefore, it has been the imperative of the Indian government to look into the needs of the monastery and take adequate efforts to preserve the culture of the region. Considering, the importance of the monastery in the region, the Indian state have been attentive about it.

The narratives also reflect the predisposition of the people in the region to resolve the India-China border dispute through talks, while also stressing the need for India to enhance its military capabilities and be assertive about its territorial claims with China. Also, people's responses indicate disconnect between how matters of national

security keep the people in the frontiers in the margins. For, instance most of the people were not aware of any India-China border settlement mechanisms and they were often of the view that the India-China border issue pertained to high level talks about which they did not have any knowledge or any idea.

This research makes certain inferences about the dynamics of contested spaces and its implications for the notion of sovereignty.

Firstly, this research argues that legitimacy is a crucial component of sovereignty. Legitimacy plays an important role in strengthening the political authority of the state. This study suggests that the notion of legitimacy has played a vital role in enabling the Indian state to establish its authority in the contested spaces. Acquiring legitimacy in the contested spaces, *viz.* NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh), has been a challenge for the Indian state, both before and after independence. However, a carefully thought out policy of non-intervention and accommodation have enabled the Indian state to gradually entrench its rule in the region, particularly Tawang. The policy of non-interference appertained to the protection of cultural and religious affairs of the local people in the region. The narratives gathered during the field work suggest that people's identification with the Indian state have developed over a time, especially in context of the state's initiatives in protecting Buddhism and religious freedom of the people. The narratives and the available literature on the region suggest that the freedom from harsh taxation policies, which were earlier pursued by the Tibetans in the region, was a vital factor in welcoming the initial expeditions to the region by the British colonial government and, later, the Indian state.

This study recognises the instrumental role played by the local people in determining the scope and extent of political rule of the state in the contested frontiers along India-China border (McMahon line) in Arunachal Pradesh. The traditional institutions and the local people have constantly negotiated with the Indian state and its agencies to co-opt each other. Therefore, establishing the political authority of the state in contested border spaces is often a function of various factors such as the acceptance by the local people, willingness of the frontier population to negotiate and most importantly the political will of the people in accepting the state's presence. This study suggests that although territorial control has been considered as one of the most fundamental factors for ensuring the political authority of the state; the political

authority of the state can be exercised even without exclusive territorial control of state, given the state has managed to acquire the element of legitimacy by the people. Legitimacy is an integral aspect of sovereignty.

The legitimacy of the people strengthens the sovereignty of the state in the frontier spaces. It makes the people's sense of identity with the state profound. Hence, one can also argue that recognition of sovereignty is not necessarily a top-down approach but a process which can be bottom up as well. A forceful presence of the Indian state would complicate the security challenges and national integrity of the state as it would blur the difference between the intruder and defender for the people in the region. Territorial acquisition through force or war, unacceptable taxation and economic policies, suppression of cultural and political freedom may challenge the sovereignty of the state in the contested spaces. Therefore, the Indian state has to take necessary steps to avoid any confrontation with the local people while introducing its policies in the region, which may affect the tribal culture and way of life in the region. As it has been the case in Tawang, the state had to accommodate and consider the expectations of the people and the local authorities in as much as the people had to adapt to the new ways of governance, implemented through bureaucratic apparatus and processes, which was different from the forms of governance exercised by the Tawang monastery.

Secondly, state institutions play a significant role in reinforcing sovereignty of the state in contested spaces. As this study suggests, the presence of state institutions along the disputed India-China border region in the Tawang and West Kameng district have been significant due to certain reasons. One, it has altered the role of traditional authorities, as the Indian state now performs the juridical and political functions which was earlier performed by the traditional authority, i.e. the monastery. Two, the presence of state institutions has brought the frontier region along with its population, within the formal governance structure, thereby, further entrenching its rule in the region. Also, the presence of state and government institutions such as schools, hospitals and offices strengthens the public service delivery system. A strong public service delivery system is instrumental in garnering people's support for the state and its policies. The narratives from this study indicate that provision of public goods and services by the state have created a positive image about the Indian state in the frontier region. The welfare services such as food distribution through the public distribution

system, pension for government employees and government schools by the state, especially in the far-flung areas of Tawang have been appreciated by the people in the region. However, the lack of adequate infrastructure and public facilities like schools, roads, transportation and hospitals have been resented by the people – it is a sign of negligence towards the frontier region.

Thirdly, the notion of sovereignty varies in the frontiers. This study inferred that the state had to gradually co-opt the local traditional sources of authority to garner confidence of the people (Gohain 2017). A careful planning and cautious implementation of government policies in the region was a major move to incorporate the frontier within the standardised national discourse.

### **The Socialising Mechanism of the State**

It is observed that the state can employ various instruments in spreading its influence across the regions that are untouched by its presence.

*Role of Governance:* Governance mechanisms play a fundamental role in ensuring state's presence over its citizen and territory and have been one of the major ways through which the state exercises effective control over the people. The process of governance includes mechanisms like issuing of passport, ration card, driving licence, voters identification card,; in addition to providing a range of public goods such as education, roads, bridges, hospitals, etc.

Delivery of essential public goods to the subjects of the state includes a process that involves identification of citizens and non-citizens. It delineates citizenship rights and correspondingly the political rights as well as property rights, taxes and duties (Torpey 2000:1). The role of state institutions becomes crucial in delivering a range of welfare services by the state. This study observes that the presence of state institutions have impacted the politics of space, territory and citizenship in the contested regions of the McMahon line in Tawang and West Kameng region. The presence of state institutions have influenced the limits and the scope of the Indian state, unlike prior to 1962 when the people of the region were not accustomed to the presence of the Indian state, especially the army. The state institutions have been instrumental in impacting the presence of the Indian state in the frontier which has been contested by both India and China. However, as this study suggests it's not just state institutions which can be a sufficient condition for establishing sovereignty of the state in the contested regions. It



is the legitimacy of the people and the accommodation of the local sensibilities which plays a crucial role in garnering the support for the state. Consideration of the local sensibilities through various ways such as respecting Buddhist institutions and culture of the region have bestowed a sense of legitimacy to the Indian state, as indicated by the narratives. However, this study does not suggest that the penetration of the Indian state in the frontiers of the Tawang and West Kameng did not face challenges or was marked by complete absence of resistance.

The interview with the participants revealed that almost every participant had more than two government documents as their identity proof, such as voter's identification card, Aadhar card, driving license and ration cards. The government documents act as a means of surveillance since some of these documents consist of the most crucial personal data of the population and, most importantly, it determines the privileges of the people. Hence, documents act as a mechanism to ensure economic, social and cultural influence of the state over its subjects by determining their identity, rights, duties and privileges. It was in this context that China had refused to issue visa to a few officers serving in the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) from Arunachal Pradesh for their visit to China. The passport was denied on the grounds that Arunachal forms a part of South Tibet and the people from the same nation state do not require passports to travel within their own country. China also objected to Indian leader's visiting Arunachal Pradesh. However, despite China's claim over Arunachal Pradesh, the official position of the Indian government on Arunachal Pradesh has been that "Arunachal Pradesh is an integral and inalienable part of India. Indian leaders visit Arunachal Pradesh as and when they wish, just as they visit other parts of India", (MEA 2017c.).

The monopoly over territorial spaces gives states the power to regulate the movements and identity of its citizens. Therefore, it leads the way for the homogenising process for the creation of a standardised nationalist discourse. Therefore, governance through state's control over identification documents – by providing/ denying or withdrawing these documents exercises overwhelming control.

Gohain (2017), has argued that documentary exercises have been one of the most important instruments of socialisation employed by the Indian state to strengthen its

political authority in the contested frontier region for which the role of bureaucracy becomes instrumental.

*Deployment of the Army:* Almost every nation state has a physical boundary to demarcate their exclusive territorial spaces. However, these physical demarcations are not free of contentions by competing parties and have often become the cause of major wars and conflicts in the international arena. Therefore, in order to maintain the security and status-quo of the border regions, the most pivotal role has been played by the armed forces of various countries, which have been constituted for the purposes of defending the borders of the country. Likewise, the role of military in India-China border along Tawang and West Kameng has been significant in shaping the security of the region and also the perception of the people towards the Indian and the Chinese states. The army has not only acted as a source of security but an integral symbol representing the presence of the Indian state in the contested space. The location of the war memorial, military hospitals, camps and cantonments all along the way to Bumla in Arunachal Pradesh, reflects the security and strategic concerns of the Indian state due to the presence of China. People's positive response towards the army during the course of the interviews, indicates the legitimacy of the state<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, this study also underlines that the deployment of army has been an instrumental step taken by the Indian state to enhance its reach in the frontier region, but through the policy of accommodation with the local people of the region. The acceptance of the people is a crucial condition to maintain stable and peaceful civil-military relations. This study finds that a cordial civil-military region in the frontiers of Tawang have added to a stable rule of the Indian state as it reduces the number of security challenges to the state and helps in state consolidation and strengthen sovereignty. The army has been viewed as a helpful institution by the local people who enable them to deal with natural calamities and difficulties created by harsh weather conditions. It also gives the people of the border region a sense of security against Chinese presence.

*Politics of Symbolism:* Political authority is exercised not just through coercion but also deployment of various symbols of state. Naming places and buildings have constituted one such component of the state building project. Naming of places is not

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<sup>26</sup> As mentioned in the first chapter, the response of the people towards the Indian army in the region is confined to Tawang and West Kameng district. The attitude of the people towards the Indian army in other places of Arunachal Pradesh may differ due to various reasons, one of them being the implementation of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Acts in the region.

just about assigning a name to a place but it is also about making political statements. Naming a place attributes a place its sense of identity and locates its significance within a historical context. Most importantly, it assists in creating ownership and legitimacy of the state.

The act of naming several places en route to Bumla has been a major move by the Indian state to mark its historical claim to the contested region. The 'Nehru Gompa', the 'Nehru Market', the establishment of 'war memorial', has been instrumental in instilling a sense of ownership and belonging to the Indian state within the local people. It has evoked a sense of pride and belonging to the Indian state. The narratives reflect that the people of the region have expressed a sense of patriotism by identifying with these places. However, some people were unhappy with the naming of a Buddhist monastery after Nehru, because naming a religious institution after a political leader was of no significance to them. It throws light on the position of the leader and monastery in the lives and culture of the people of the region and the limits of symbolism. However, as discussed in case of Tawang although the local community was proud to have the war memorial in their region a few respondents did express their dissatisfaction on naming the Buddhist Gompa at Tawang after Nehru. Even the Monpa tribe in Arunachal Pradesh has been renaming places across the places in Sela pass. It was an attempt by the locals to assert their identity and also resist the naming of the places by the Indian army, for instance, the Shongster lake, is popularly known as Madhuri Lake, but as some locals claimed these places should retain their original names and not any other name Barooah (2018).

Nonetheless, this study gathers that politics of naming and creating public spaces and institutions has played a symbolic role in consolidating the presence of the Indian state along the border region.

*Language and the Construction of the Nation:* Using language as an instrument to instil national consciousness is not new to nation building projects across the world. The role of language has been instrumental in creating a sense of common identity in the frontier region. The people of the frontier in Tawang and West Kameng have used Hindi as the language of communication. It has emerged as the *Lingua Franca* of the region. Therefore, it has become a unifying factor in the region. The central

government, too, has introduced Hindi in the school syllabus as a subject in the region apart from the local languages such as Bhoti and English.

The challenge that always awaited the Indian state since the time of the British rule was the challenge to penetrate the NEFA region. Even after independence the task that awaited the Indian state was to create a consolidated political community in the region considering the fact that the region had numerous linguistically divided political communities. One of the major reasons why Hindi could emerge as a major language is due to the fact that it became a connecting language amongst the various tribes and people in the region. Moreover, the presence of Indian army has also contributed to the spread of the language as it became a connecting language between the local people to acted as porters and informers for the army. Therefore, language has become a one of the major sources of common ground that could connect the Indian mainland and the periphery in the contested regions.

This study argues that the role of the local people in the border regions is a crucial factor in consolidating sovereignty and reinforcing territoriality of the state. The people in the Tawang and West Kameng have played a major role in impacting the functioning of the Indian state.

This study underlines that the role of the local people in managing the security of the borders is as crucial as the presence of armed forces in the contested regions. The awareness among the local communities, especially the cattle grazers and herders, play an important role due to their familiarity with the region, the mountain passes, the frozen lakes. They can play an important role in reporting intrusions by foreign forces in the border regions and provide information about accessing the difficult terrain. The role of the border community is therefore vital as informers and messengers. The India-China border is a high altitude border. The harsh climate and lack of infrastructure often poses a severe challenge in guarding the border region. In light of the above, it becomes a crucial necessity that the needs of the army and the local population in case of basic amenities and services are not compromised. The unavailability of basic amenities for the soldiers was one of the major logistical hurdles faced by the Indian military during the 1962 war. Apart from factors such as availability of essential technology and amenities, the role of the local communities as informers and their vigilance can contribute towards the security of the frontier. The

narratives collected during the course of this study, underline the point that the awareness about the territorial spaces among the border community is crucial to deflect any misadventure on the part of the intruders. This is documented while reading through the peoples' narratives on 1962 India-China war when the lack of state presence was one of the reasons that created confusion in the minds of the local people in comprehending the presence of the Chinese troops in the region during the 1962 war.

However, respect for local tradition, culture and language is a vital element for the Indian state to ensure its acceptance in the region. The region of Arunachal Pradesh has unique culture and tradition. It is important that the government is more responsive to the needs and requirements of this region. Understanding the language and the custom of the region will connect the bureaucratic apparatus with the locals, and also serve as a connection between the security forces and the locals.

For instance, the McMahon Line was an outcome of a policy by the British India in 1913, the Simla conference. The McMahon line was not accepted by China, since China had always refused to recognise Tibet as an equal sovereign entity which could conclude treaties. Most importantly, China considered the McMahon as illegal and rejected the line as a product of colonial legacy, (Richards 2015:4). Therefore, the colonial legacy of territorial disputes and the McMahon line still continues to be an irritant in India-China relations.

This study documents that the notion of sovereignty is not a top down approach. The role of the local people and communities plays an important role in determining the extent and scope of political authority of the state in the contested regions. The role of legitimacy is crucial in this regard. The state has to actively work to achieve legitimacy in the frontier regions where the presence of state may not be as strong as in the centre or seat of power. However, with time, the Indian state has managed to evolve as the most powerful institution capable of delivering goods and resources in the areas under study.

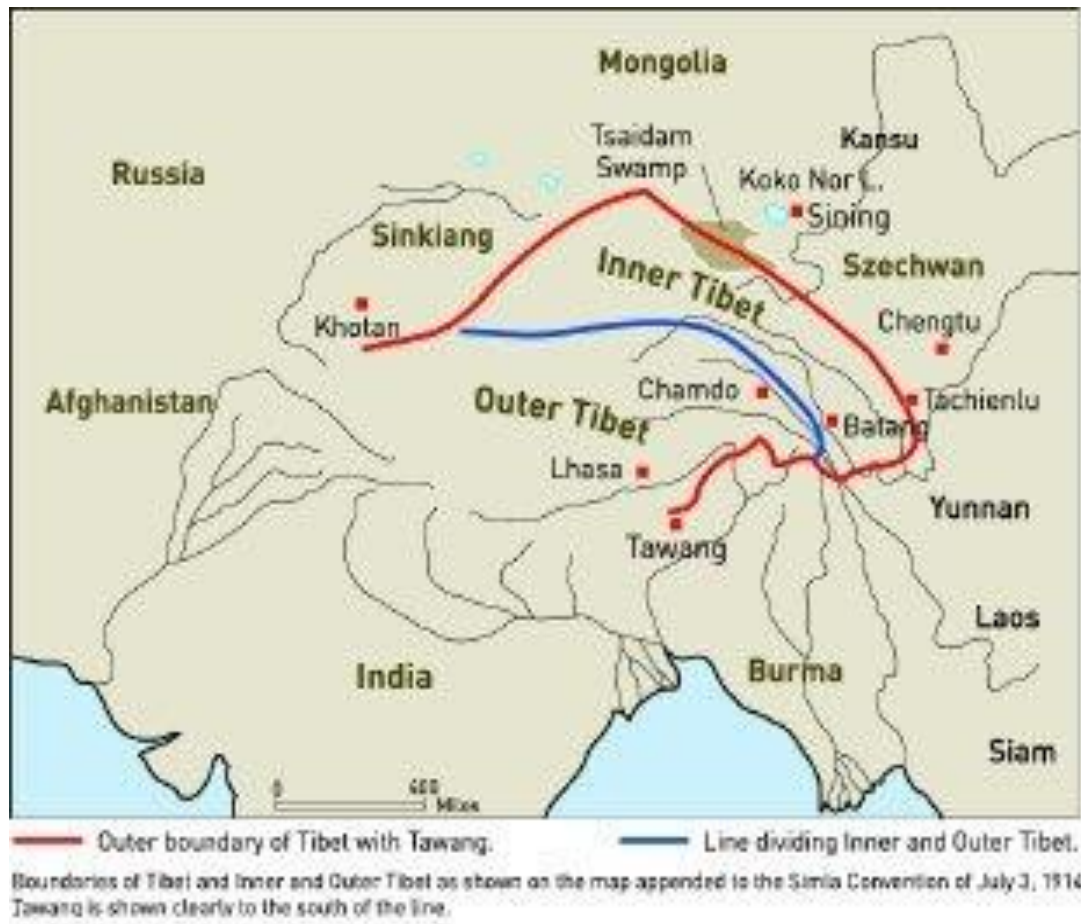
This research focussing on understanding the interface between sovereignty, territoriality and border disputes through the lens of people's narratives offers insights into the ways post-colonial states like India have engaged with their border areas along the contested spaces. While India has witnessed its own challenges of state

building project, particularly in some border regions, the narratives from the field point to constant negotiations that take place between the centre and the periphery; therefore, making sovereignty a matter of legitimacy not of coercion.

## ANNEXURES

### Annexure: 1

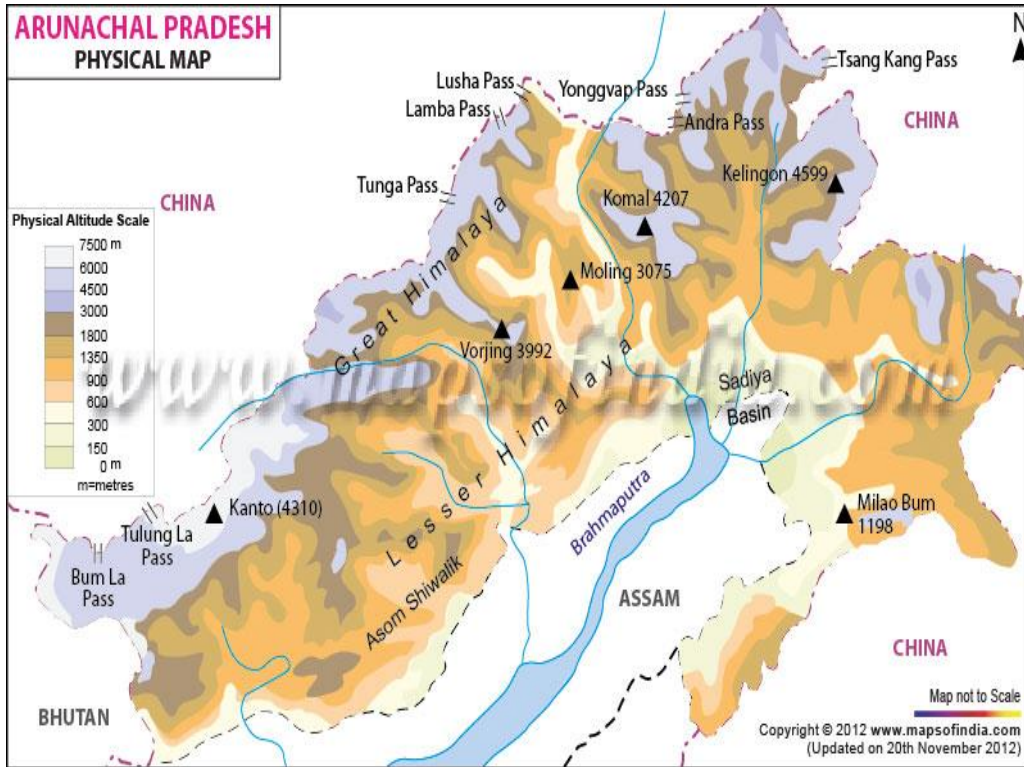
Map showing Inner and Outer Tibet



Source: Frontline, Volume 25 - Issue 26: Dec. 20, 2008-Jan. 02, 2009

Courtesy: A. G Noorani

## Annexure 2: Physical Map of Arunachal Pradesh



Source: Google Images (4).



**Annexure 3: The espace of the Dalai Lama in 1959 at Dhirang.**



*Source* : Pictute taken during field work in the libaray of the Tawang monastery on 24.03.2017.

**Annexure 4: The war memorial at Tawang**



*Source:* Picture taken during field work on 24.03.2017 at Tawang

**Annexure 5: The India-China border area at Bumla**



Picture taken during field work on 24.03.2017 at Tawang

**Annexure 6: Message on way to Bumla**



*Source:* Picture taken during field on 25.03.2017



**Annexure 7: Roads and the terrain on way to India-China border at Bumla**



*Source:* Picture taken during field work on 25.03.2018.

## Annuxure 8: Participant Information Sheet

### Informed Consent Form

My name is Junjun Sharma Pathak and I am a PhD research scholar from Jawaharlal Nehru University. I am working on ‘Contested Borders and Sovereignty: Indian Narratives on the India-China Border. I am conducting filed work in order to collect data on peoples understanding on the territorial and border dispute between the two countries. The objective of the interviews, survey, and Focused Group Discussion is to gather data on the same.

For this purpose we would like to have a discussion with you for approximately 45 minutes to an hour. This discussion will be may or may not be recorded as per your permission. The information gathered from you will be confidential if you desire. However I intend to use your views for my research work.

Your participation is voluntary. If you wish not to answer any questions, it will be respected and the question will be left unanswered. If you wish to withdraw from the interview at any stage, the same will be respected and no questions will be asked thereafter.

At any point, if you have questions about the survey, you can ask the interviewer.

#### **Signature of Interviewee:**

I have received the explanation about the interaction and give my consent to participate.

Signature/Thumb Impression of Respondent----- Date -  
-----Place -----

### Annexure 9: Participant respondent Sheet

S. No.	Theme	Particulars
1.	Name	
2.	Sex	
3.	Age	
4.	Religion	
5.	Tribe	
6.	Village	
7.	State	
8.	Level of education	
9.	Occupation (Paid Work)	
10.	Which Government document do you have?	

### Annexure 10: General Questionnaire

S.No.	Questions	Yes	No	Other Comments
1.	Do you feel Chinas claim over Arunachal is justified?			
2.	Do you think the Indian state has capacity to defend in case of aggression again by China?			
3.	Do think our borders are secure around Arunachal?			
4.	Do you think that the Himalayas still as a barrier from the Chinese entering Arunachal?			
5.	Do you think our international borders are secured along the Pakistan front?			
6.	Do you feel very distant from the New Delhi due to the terrain?			
7.	Will P. M Modi's government look into the concerns of Arunanchal?			
8.	Has the central government done enough for your community over the years?			
9.	Do you think that the views of the local stakeholders in Arunachal Pradesh have been adequately incorporated in dealing with the India-China border issue?			
10.	Are you aware of the Tibetan crises?			
11.	Do you consider His Holiness Dalia Lama as the representative of the Buddhism?			
12.	Do you agree with His Holiness Dalai Lama political views?			
13.	Have you heard about Askai Chin?			
14.	Do you that you are not connected to the Indian mainland due absence of certain public institutions, like colleges?			



## Annexure 11: Questions for Personal Interviews

### Section A: India –China 1962 war

1	Are you aware of the India-China 1962 War? What do you feel about the India-China 1962 war?
2	Do you feel that China can attack India again? Give your reasons?
3	Do you feel for the Chinese claim over Indian territory? Is it viable?
4	What all do you think should be done in order to strengthen our international borders with China

### Section B: The role of Borders

1.	Have you heard about the Mc. Mahon line/LAC? What do you know about it? Also do you have any views on the LoC along India- Pakistan border? Or any other idea on boundaries between India and its neighbours
2.	How have you felt about the presence of China so close to your place?
3.	Do you fully support the current mechanism of border dispute settlement by both the India and Chinese governments? Give reasons?
4.	If applicable, in what ways have you felt alienated by the Indian state or felt distinct from the Indian state from you are located so far away from New Delhi?
5.	Why do you think is the inner line permit essential while entering Arunachal?

### Section C:

#### Views on Indian Government and its institutions

1.	What makes you feel proud to be an Indian?
2.	What do you feel about the presence of so many military camps in and around Arunachal?
3.	Do you think the Indian government has done enough to look into the issues of the state considering it is a border state?

Section D: Stake of different Tribes of Arunachal?

1.	Are you aware of the Tibetan issue? What do you know about Dalai Lama?
2.	Arunachal is claimed as a part of Tibet or even China, what do you think about the issue?
3.	In a scenario of Tibet securing Independence from China, what in your opinion should be the stake of your community? Who should represent the claims of your community?
4.	Does your community share any similarities with the Tibetans with regard to social, cultural and religious practices?

## Annexure 12: Questions for the Focussed Group Discussion

1.	How do you perceive the border dispute between India and China over Arunachal Pradesh?
2.	Do you know about the McMahon Line?
3.	What do you think about the Military camps, War memorial and Nehru Gompa?
4.	In what ways Monpa share similarities with the Tibetans in terms of social, cultural and religious practices? What do you feel about the Tibetan issue raised by the Tibetan Government in Exile?
5.	How should Indian government resolve the border dispute with China?

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