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The India-China War



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Introduction

The Sino-Indian War also known as the Sino-Indian Border Conflict is a dispute commencing on the 20th of October 1962. Caused by a Himalayan border between India and China but this was not the only issue that played a role. This conflict was preceded by a series of violent border incidents after the 1959 Tibetan uprising after India had granted asylum to the Dalai Lama. Seemingly this is a conflict of sovereignty, meaning the main conflict parties felt as if they were being intruded on their territory, from the widely separated Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh border regions. Aksai Chin, claimed by India to belong to Kashmir and by China to be part of Xinjiang, contains an important road link that connects the Chinese regions of Tibet and Xinjiang.¹The greatest trigger of this conflict was potentially that of China building a road or pass along this border. China and India shared a long border, sectioned into three stretches by Nepal, Sikkim (then an Indian protectorate), and Bhutan, which follows the Himalayas between Burma and what was then West Pakistan. A number of disputed regions lie along this border. At its western end is the Aksai Chin region, an area the size of Switzerland, that sits between the Chinese autonomous region of Xinjiang and Tibet (which China declared as an autonomous region in 1965). The eastern border, between Burma and Bhutan, comprises the present Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh (formerly the North East Frontier Agency). Both of these regions were overrun by China in the 1962 conflict.

Most combat took place at high altitudes. The Aksai Chin region is a desert of salt flats around 5,000 metres above sea level, and Arunachal Pradesh is mountainous with a number of peaks exceeding 7,000 metres. The Chinese Army had possession of one of the highest ridges in the regions.



The high altitude and freezing conditions also cause logistical and welfare difficulties; in past similar conflicts (such as the Italian Campaign of World War I) harsh conditions have caused more casualties than have enemy action. The international community should take this conflict into account as being potentially very deadly and very much at risk of escalating.

Definition of Key Terms

Border Conflict

A territorial dispute is a disagreement over the possession/control of land between two or more territorial entities or over the possession or control of land, usually between a new state and the occupying power. The Sino-India conflict is that of the Aksai-chin regions and the Arunachal Pradesh regions, and at which time they belonged to which nation.

Key Regions:

Aksai Chin



A border area between China and India, and the main basis of the conflict due to the many definitions of established borders within the region, with either nation claiming it within their borders at a certain time, either in Kashmir by Indian definitions or Xinjiang by China's

A visual of the contested region of Aksai

Arunachal Pradesh

Is one of the 29 states of India and is the north-eastern-most state of the country. Arunachal Pradesh borders the states of Assam and Nagaland to the south and shares international borders with Bhutan in the west, Myanmar in the east and is separated from China in the north by the disputed McMahon Line.



McMahon Line

The McMahon Line is a demarcation line drawn on map referred to in the Simla Convention, a treaty between Britain and Tibet signed in 1914. Although its legal status is disputed, it is currently the effective boundary between China and India.

Background Information and Context

Colonialization and the Influence on Borders

Due to the British colonialization and later their defeat of the Sikhs in 1846 that resulted in the transfer of the Jammu and Kashmir regions which included Ladakh, a pass along the China-India border, to the British. Later, British commissioners contacted Chinese officials to negotiate the border, but the Chinese did not wish to come to the table. The British boundary commissioners fixed the southern end of the boundary at Pangong Lake, but regarded the area north of it till the Karakoram Pass as *terra incognita*, or unknown land. As time went on and the Soviets progressed into Central Asia the British became anxious to avoid a common border with the Soviets. After creating the Wakhan corridor as the buffer in the northwest of Kashmir, they wanted the Chinese to fill out the "no man's land" between the Karakoram and Kunlun ranges. Under British (and possibly Russian) encouragement, the Chinese occupied the area up to the Yarkand River valley (called Raskam), including Shahidulla, by 1890. They also erected a boundary pillar at the Karakoram Pass by about 1892. The hurried establishment of the "buffer-zone" in the east, similar, to the Johnson line, placed Aksai Chin in Kashmir territory. Here in lies the first precedent for confusion along this border.

By 1892, the British settled on the policy that their preferred boundary for Kashmir was the "Indus watershed", a natural water-parting. In the north, this water-parting was along the Karakoram range. In the east, it was more complicated because many rivers split up this area. The British government proposed it to China in 1899. This boundary, which came to be called the Macartney–MacDonald Line, ceded to China the Aksai Chin plains in the northeast, and the Trans-Karakoram Tract in the north. In return, the British wanted China to cede the Hunza. In



1911, the Xinhai Revolution resulted in power shifts in China, and by the end of World War I, the British officially used the Johnson Line. They took no steps to establish outposts or assert control on the ground. According to Neville Maxwell, the British had used as many as 11 different boundary lines in the region, as their claims shifted with the political situation. From 1917 to 1933, the "Postal Atlas of China", published by the Government of China in Peking had shown the boundary in Aksai Chin as per the Johnson line, which runs along the Kunlun mountains. The "Peking University Atlas", published in 1925, also put the Aksai Chin in India. Upon independence in 1947, the government of India used the Johnson Line as the basis for its official boundary in the west, which included the Aksai Chin. On 1 July 1954, India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru definitively stated the Indian position, claiming that Aksai Chin had been part of the Indian Ladakh region for centuries, and that the border (as defined by the Johnson Line) was non-negotiable. According to George N. Patterson, when the Indian government finally produced a report detailing the alleged proof of India's claims to the disputed area, "the quality of the Indian evidence was very poor, including some very dubious sources".

In 1956–57, China constructed a road through Aksai Chin, connecting Xinjiang and Tibet, which ran south of the Johnson Line in many places. Aksai Chin was easily accessible to the Chinese, but access from India, which meant negotiating the Karakoram mountains, was much more difficult. Post the 1959 Tibetan uprising, many much smaller outbreaks than the current conflict occurred. These conflicts did however establish strategies and coping mechanisms to the difficulties of conflict in mountainous regions with unstable and harsh terrains.

The McMahon Line

In 1826, British India gained a common border with China after the British wrestled control of Manipur and Assam from the Burmese, following the First Anglo-Burmese War of 1824–1826. In 1847, Major J. Jenkins, agent for the North East Frontier, reported that the Tawang was part of Tibet. In 1872, four monastic officials from Tibet arrived in Tawang and supervised a boundary settlement with Major R. Graham, NEFA official, which included the Tawang Tract as part of Tibet. Thus, in the last half of the 19th century, it was clear that the British treated the Tawang

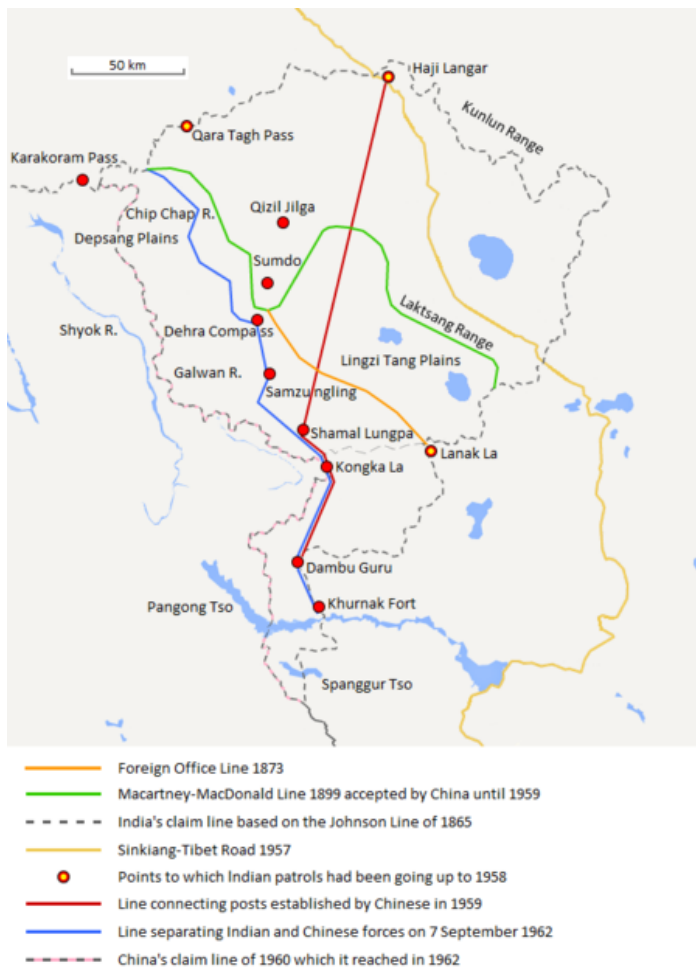


Tract as part of Tibet. This boundary was confirmed in a 1 June 1912 note from the British General Staff in India, stating that the "present boundary (demarcated) is south of Tawang, running westwards along the foothills from near Ugalguri to the southern Bhutanese border." A 1908 map of The Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam prepared for the Foreign Department of the Government of India, showed the international boundary from Bhutan continuing to the Baroi River, following the Himalayas foothill alignment. In 1913, representatives of Great Britain, China and Tibet attended a conference in Simla regarding the borders between Tibet, China and British India.

Whilst all three representatives initialled the agreement, Beijing later objected to the proposed boundary between the regions of Outer Tibet and Inner Tibet and did not ratify it. The details of the Indo-Tibetan boundary was not revealed to China at the time.[11] The foreign secretary of the British Indian government, Henry McMahon, who had drawn up the proposal, decided to bypass the Chinese (although instructed not to by his superiors) and settle the border bilaterally by negotiating directly with Tibet. According to later Indian claims, this border was intended to run through the highest ridges of the Himalayas, as the areas south of the Himalayas were traditionally Indian. The McMahon Line lay south of the boundary India claims. India's government held the view that the Himalayas were the ancient boundaries of the Indian subcontinent, and thus should be the modern boundaries of India, while it is the position of the Chinese government that the disputed area in the Himalayas have been geographically and culturally part of Tibet since ancient times. Months after the Simla agreement, China set up boundary markers south of the McMahon Line. T. O'Callaghan, an official in the Eastern Sector of the North East Frontier, relocated all these markers to a location slightly south of the McMahon Line, and then visited Rima to confirm with Tibetan officials that there was no Chinese influence in the area.

The British-run Government of India initially rejected the Simla Agreement as incompatible with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which stipulated that neither party was to negotiate with Tibet "except through the intermediary of the Chinese government" The British and Russians cancelled the 1907 agreement by joint consent in 1921. It was not until the late





1930s that the British started to use the McMahon Line on official maps of the region. China took the position that the Tibetan government should not have been allowed to make such a treaty, rejecting Tibet's claims of independent rule. For its part, Tibet did not object to any section of the McMahon Line excepting the demarcation of the trading town of Tawang, which the Line placed under British-Indian jurisdiction. Up until World War II, Tibetan officials were allowed to administer Tawang with complete authority. Due to the increased threat of Japanese and Chinese

expansion during this period, British Indian troops secured the town as part of the defence of India's eastern border. In the 1950s, India began patrolling the region. It found that, at multiple locations, the highest ridges actually fell north of the McMahon Line. Given India's historic position that the original intent of the line was to separate the two nations by the highest mountains in the world, in these locations India extended its forward posts northward to the ridges, regarding this move as compliant with the original border proposal, although the Simla Convention did not explicitly state this intention.

Major Parties Involved

China

China is one half of the major nations primarily affected by this conflict. China's concern is mostly that of sovereignty and how best to establish the Aksai Chin as within Xinjiang, in order to establish trade routes between this region and Tibet.

India

The other half of this border conflict, again their concern is sovereignty and how best to establish the Aksai Chin with Kashmir. And, later to take advantage of the pass that China built. After China attacked India, the infringement on sovereignty was clear to India.

USA/USSR

During this conflict, the American's were predisposed by the Cuban missile crisis and hence could not support India's ask for aid. The USSR then took up the aid that India had asked for (under their terms). This left a convoluted alliance between India and either nation.

Tibet

Due Tibet's position it was an often the middle partisan of Chinese-Indian relations and after the uprising in 1959. This then lead to the question of India undermining China's rule over Tibet, India then argues China overlooks Tibet's autonomy and thus laying the foundation for the tensions between the major nations of this territorial conflict.



Relevant UN Treaties & Resolutions

(Previous attempts to solve to issue)

The Forward Policy

In relation to border areas between Ladakh and Bhutan (the Aksai Chin). Notably, the Indians built army outposts behind Chinese border posts with a view to preventing supplies to the Chinese and forcing their withdrawal from disputed territory.

There are no existing documents or treaties currently derived from the UN, in any council. Therefore it is imperative that the response of the current security council meeting is non-biased and effective.

Possible Solutions

In the case of this conflict the most important thing to consider is to ease tensions between both nations. The best possible way to do this would be to initiate a ceasefire, a agreed upon stop to the violence in order to or rather while this was in action, ensure both nations open an extensive dialogue of negotiation on the topic of the border. It may also be the case to open an in-depth investigation into the ownership of the contested regions by a non-biased body, perhaps one setup by the united nations. Furthermore, it is important that we consider the greatest risk in this conflict is not that of bloodshed and violence but of relief, terrain and temperature, in this case as delegates of the Security Council you must consider the best way to overcome these factors, to ensure the conflict does not become as deadly as it has the potential to be. Perhaps the utilisation of aid convoys, sending in food and blankets, or the un peace keepers to maintain a buffer-zone or no-man's land where these supplies are accessible is a valid way to overcome these hazards. Overall, we must consider the best ways to lead these two industrialising nations into the future. Consider peace. Reflect on the impacts of Trade. Think of the consequences of Alliances. We do not know to what extent this conflict will rise to but we must ensure the Security Council is fair to both nations and imposes sanctions when necessary.



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Appendix

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