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The Eastern Sector of India-China Border: Chinese Arguments, Probabilities and Possibilities of Resolution



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Introduction and Strategic Context

India and China agreed to resume the Special Representatives' (SR) talks after the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping at Kazan in Oct 2024. The meeting came after 21 rounds of Corps Commander-level talks and the 31st meeting of the Working Mechanism of Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China Border Affairs agreed on the final disengagement of troops and resumption of patrolling at the Depsang and Demchok areas. The de-escalation and de-induction of troops remain pending as of now, while demarcation of border and/or complete settlement is nowhere in sight.

As various levels of talks progress, there is an inevitable need to assess the Chinese position and demands on finding an amicable and mutually acceptable solution to the border, even though the broader approach of both sides seems to have huge gaps. India wants to approach the border problem sector-by-sector, while China has been insistent on a comprehensive approach. This was also the main proposition of China in 1959, when the then-President of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Mao Zedong proposed to "Withdraw 10 or even 20 kms" and establish a "Gun-free Zone" (Demilitarised Zone) that was not acceptable to India.¹

In present circumstances, a lot has changed in Chinese attitude and approaches. This monograph looks at the Eastern Sector where the Chinese claims seem to be more hardened, and there are positions and places that China deems as 'Non-negotiable'. It is worth pointing out that the 'Package Solution' proposed during the 1980s had stated that China would accept an alignment in the Eastern Sector in general, conforming to the McMahon line for the acceptance of status quo in the Western Sector. However, there have been significant changes in Chinese demands from then on, whereby they later proposed that Tawang is 'Indispensable' to any boundary settlement.² Therefore, a deeper analysis of the issues in the Eastern Sector and the problems in the current situation need a reassessment.

The monograph highlights the arguments by China regarding the Eastern Sector from various local sources and presents a plausible and feasible option for India. It posits that a comprehensive solution is only possible if certain core interests and strategic positions of India are given due consideration by China, as after the 1962 conflict, Beijing has a greater control on the position claimed by New Delhi. Their strategic gains on the ground have little or no scope for India to offer greater concessions. Further, it is argued that a sector-by-sector approach is essential to re-negotiate complete settlement.

Chapter 1

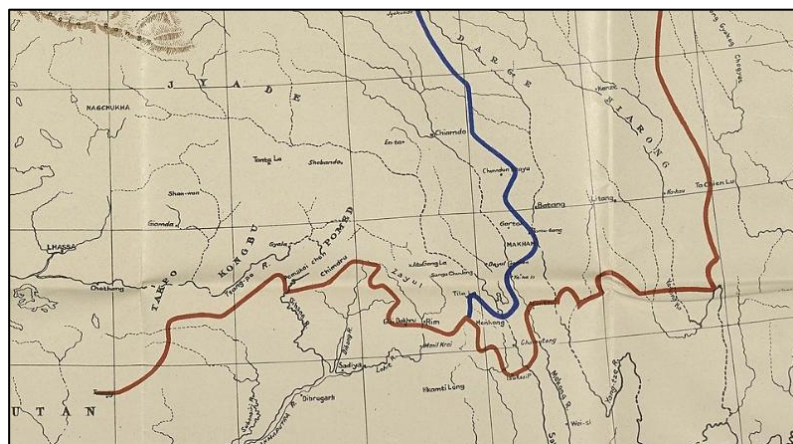
Historical Roots of the Dispute

Origins and Contradictions on the Eastern Sector

The Eastern Sector of the India-China border begins from the tri-junction of India-China-Bhutan and extends to the tri-junction of India-China-Myanmar. In the 1954 map of the Republic of India, there is a land area of 81,424 sq kms in the eastern part, which was called the North-Eastern Frontier Agency (now Arunachal Pradesh), which is an integral part of India.³ China claims a land area in this sector, which is different from the entire area of Arunachal Pradesh. This is because it claims the land area north of their perception of ‘Traditional Customary Line’ and calls it ‘Southern Tibet’. As per the Chinese claims, the Southern Tibet area, controlled by India, is basically 67,000 sq kms, which accounts for roughly 80 per cent of the entire Arunachal Pradesh.⁴ Hence, there seems to be a gap between China’s differing perceptions and claims.

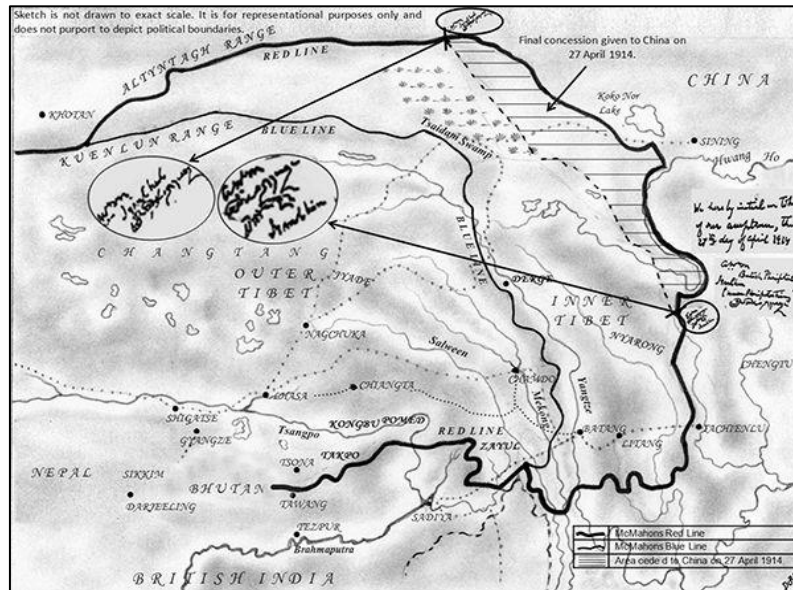
According to the Chinese division, there are four counties or county-level cities that are a part of the territory in Southern Tibet—namely Cona, Lhuntse, Medog, and Zayu—which have a total administrative jurisdiction of 1,08,000 sq kms. However, China claims that India occupies 67,000 sq kms of the total area under dispute. Within this, Cona covers approximately 35,000 sq kms, of which China controls about 6,600 sq kms, while India holds around 28,400 sq kms. Lhuntse spans nearly 10,000 sq kms, with China controlling 7,000 sq kms and India holding control over the remaining 3,000 sq kms. In Medog, which is about 31,000 sq kms in size, China controls 6,500 sq kms, and India holds 24,500 sq kms. Lastly, Zayu also covers approximately 31,000 sq kms, of which China controls 20,000 sq kms and India controls 11,000 sq kms.⁵

In addition, there are contradictory and overlapping claims over the demarcation of the border between India and China. Indian position, as mentioned in former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s letter to Zhou Enlai, the first Premier of the PRC, on 22 Mar 1959, states that from 1913 to 1914, plenipotentiary of the Government of China, the Tibetan representative, and the British government held a meeting in Shimla, where a boundary between ‘Inner Tibet’—controlled by the Beiyang government of China—and ‘Outer Tibet’—controlled by the Lhasa Kashag—as well as a boundary between ‘British India’ and ‘Tibet’ were to be demarcated. The outcome of the Shimla Treaty was that a boundary between British India and Tibet was demarcated, which was named after the British representative, Sir Henry McMahon, as the ‘McMahon Line’⁶, while the decision was inconclusive over demarcating the Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet (See Map 1 and 2).



Map 1: Proposed division of Outer Tibet (Area on the Left Until Blue Line) and Inner Tibet (Area Between Blue and Red Line)⁷

Source: McMahon Line in Wikivand

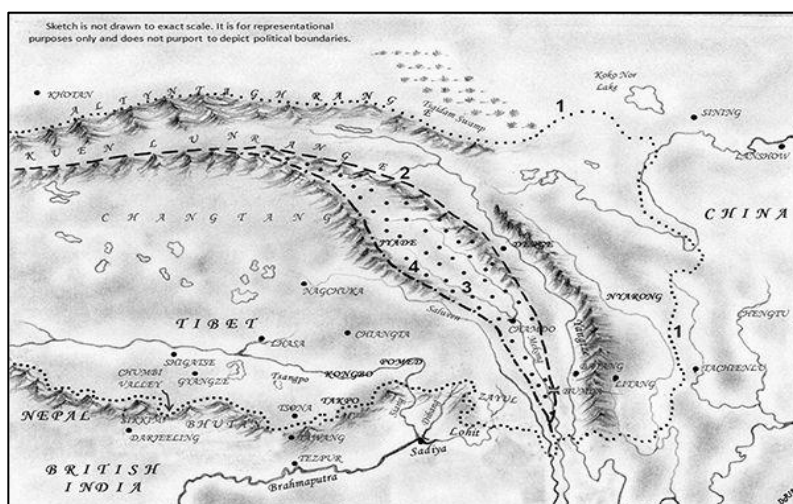


Map 2: Proposed Division of Outer Tibet and Inner Tibet McMahon's Red and Blue line in 1914⁸

Source: The McMahon Line: A Century of Discord

In the first draft of the territorial claim submitted by Lönchen Gaden Shatra Paljor Dorje to the conference chaired by Henry McMahon, Tibet asserted that its border with China was defined as follows: in the northeast, it extended to Lishi of Meirugang in Ziling; from there, it followed the river flowing eastward from the Anyê Maqên Snow Mountain to the first bend of the Yellow River; and in the southeast, the boundary was marked by the White Pagoda in Jianchang. The specific borders are as follows: to the north lie the Kangrinboqe (Kunlun) Mountains and the Aldanda Mountains, extending along the Tömed (Qaidam) Mountains to the Hedili (Hexi) Mountains. From the Pakangdo (Bakangtuo) Mountains, the boundary stretches to the Pana Gazon area, located north of Ü-Tsang, passing through the border of Amdo (Gansu) Province.

The border then turns southward, running through the southeast regions, including Mgo log, Kawa Garbo, Tsamda, the 18th Chuchen District, Chakla, and Dartsedo. From there, it continues south to the junction of Kham and Nyagchu, then follows the Tibetan border westward to Rima Mountain.⁹



Map 3: Maximalist Claims by China and Tibet in 1914 (Overlapping Claims of 1,600 sq kms)¹⁰

Source: The McMahon Line: A Century of Discord

The reason why the boundary between Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet could not be finalised was because there was a spatial gap of over 1,600 sq kms between the two claim lines. Tibetans claimed territory to the farthest east to Dartsedo and Tso Ngonpo, while the Chinese wanted to extend their westward claim to include Gyāmdā Shang, which is about 200 kms from Lhasa—resulting in both sides having maximalist claims.¹¹ This was a major hurdle during the Shimla negotiations and was the principal reason for the refusal by China to be a party to the final signatory of the Treaty.¹²

The McMahon Line

The mention of the McMahon Line first appeared in the Shimla Treaty after the Shimla Convention in 1914. It runs from the border between Bhutan and Tibet, roughly along the watershed and ridgeline to the Isu Razi Pass, southeast of the Dulong River in Yunnan, dividing the territory, traditionally considered as a part of Tibet, into India and Myanmar. The essential reason for the Britishers to have the Shimla Convention, as per Sui Shui, was three-fold.

- Discuss the relationship between Tibet and China, after the fall of the Qing Dynasty
- Discuss the boundary issue between Tibet and China
- Discuss the border issue between Tibet and India¹³

The Shimla Convention was held from 13 Oct 1913 to 03 Jul 1914, a duration of almost nine months. The Chinese side was represented by Chen Yifan, the representative of the then-Beiyang government (the Central Government of China) and the Envoy to Tibet, and Wang Haiping, the Deputy Representative and Deputy Envoy to Tibet. The British side was represented by McMahon, the Foreign Minister of the British Indian government; Ross, the Deputy Representative and the former Minister to China; and Bell, the Consultant and the British administrator in Sikkim. The Tibetan side was represented by Shatra, representative of the Tibetan local government; and the assistants were Taiji Trimen Norbu Wanhjie, Nezhun Kangqiongdan Batajie, Renxi (fourth-rank official), Dadova (fifth-rank official), Qiongrang Xunba, and Xuezhun Tudeng Ngawang. Each of the three major monasteries sent one representative to the Convention.¹⁴

On 13 Oct, when the Shimla Convention began, the British representative and the Tibetan representative¹⁵ proposed an almost similar draft treaty, each with six articles. The core content was to demand the independence of Tibet, expand the jurisdiction of Tibet to Tibetan-inhabited areas such as Litang, Batang, and Dartsedo in Amdo and Sithrön, and to not allow China to send personnel to Tibet. Meanwhile, Chinese representative Chen Yifan upheld the position that ‘Tibet is a part of China’s territory’, demanded that Tibet obey the jurisdiction of the central government in foreign affairs, military affairs, and internal affairs, and that the boundary between Tibet and the interior should remain the same as was in the late Qing Dynasty.¹⁶ Interestingly though, according to the Chinese records, during the early Qing dynasty, Tibet was divided into four parts—Front Tibet, Back Tibet, Kham, and Ngari.¹⁷

In the face of stark opposition between the positions of the Beiyang government representative and the Tibetan representative, the British representative put forward ‘Mediation Draft Agreement’ with 11 clauses on 11 Mar 1914 in their fifth meeting. The core content of the draft was two-fold—one was to emphasise that China only had ‘Suzerainty’ over Tibet, and the other was to expand the geographical scope of Tibet and divide Tibet into Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet, with the latter enjoying a high degree of autonomy.¹⁸

During the Convention, McMahon proposed to Shatra a line of Indo-Tibet border, starting from north-eastern Bhutan to the tri-junction of Tibet-India-Burma (Myanmar), which is north of Diphu Pass. It had the inclusion of territory in the south-eastern Tibetan areas of Menyu, Loyu, and Zayu into British Indian territory. According to the Chinese, after consulting with the Dalai Lama, Shatra said, “If... Tibet can gain independence and all Han army officers and soldiers in Kham can be withdrawn to Han areas, Tibet

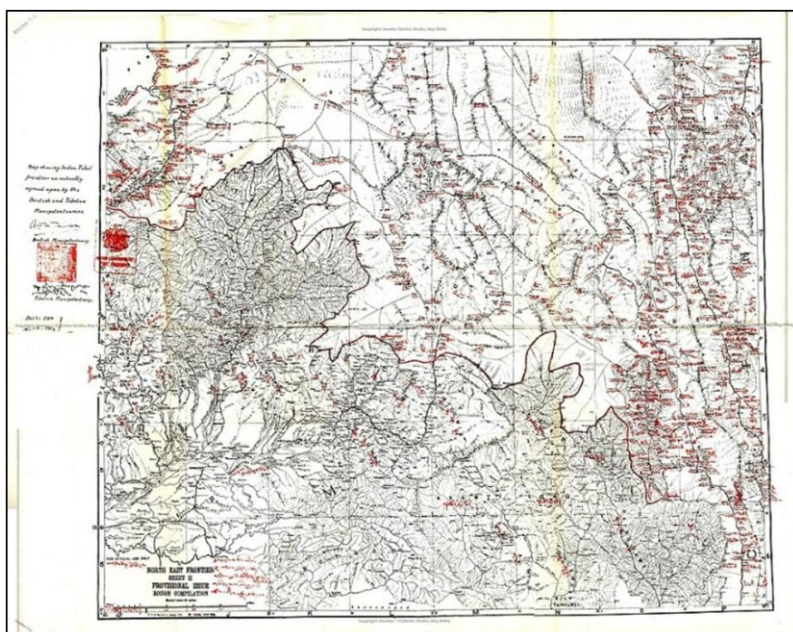
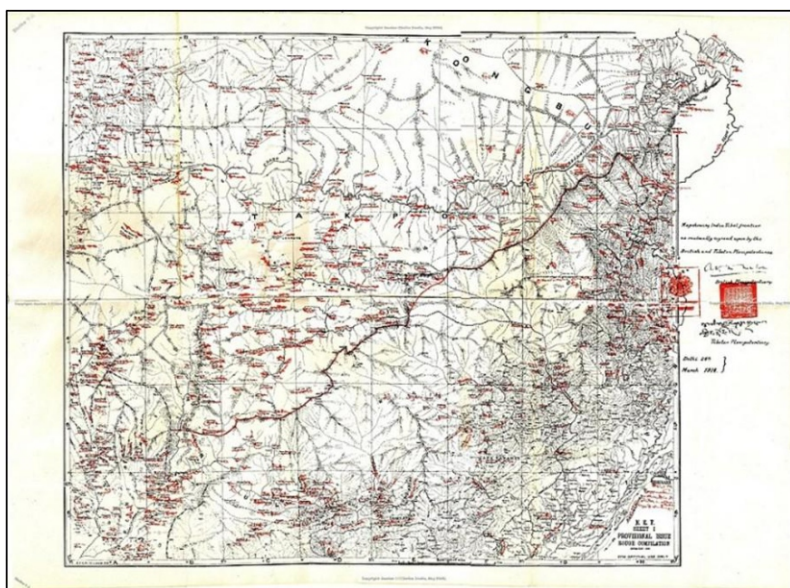
will accept this Indo-Tibet border”.¹⁹ However, Tibet was already an independent country at that time as per the agreement signed between the Chinese and the Tibetans on 14 Dec 1912. In fact, the 13th Dalai Lama had issued a proclamation stating that the Chinese tried to colonise Tibet on the pretext of policing the trade marts and, therefore, the relationship between the two as patron-priest has faded away.²⁰ On 24-25 Mar 1914, McMahon and Shatra exchanged letters in Delhi, confirming the so-called Indo-Tibet Eastern Sector ‘Borderline’ proposed by British India.²¹

According to the Chinese proposition, after the fall of the Qing government, the Tibetan Kashag government saw an opportunity to gain ‘Independence’ and, hence, their representative negotiated a secret agreement with the Britishers before the Shimla Treaty. The Tibetan representative was willing to recognise Britain’s occupation of southern Tibet in exchange for their support.²² As the negotiations progressed, a draft document with a map was prepared in the 7th meeting held between 22 Apr and 27 Apr 1914, which was formally signed by the Beiyang government of the Republic of China representative Chen Yifan. The Beiyang government and Chen had generally accepted the articles of the draft convention and the principles enunciated in it, except the Article IX relating to the issue of the demarcation between Inner and Outer Tibet.²³

On 27 Apr 1914, the tripartite meeting between China, British India, and Tibet was held again. The British side put forward the final amendment, which required that “Tibet’s internal affairs be temporarily supervised by the British Indian government” and stipulated in Article IX that the territory of Tibet. The boundary between Inner and Outer Tibet had to be marked with red and blue lines on the map attached to the draft treaty. The red line was the McMahon Line and the Britishers attempted to legalise it. The Chinese opine that under pressure from British India, Chen Yifan was forced to sign the draft treaty.²⁴ Interestingly though, the Indo-Tibet border had been delineated and sanctified by signature and seal on large-scale maps by the British as well as Tibetan plenipotentiaries, and ratified by the two countries on 24-25 Mar 1914, to which Chen had made no remarks or opposition.²⁵

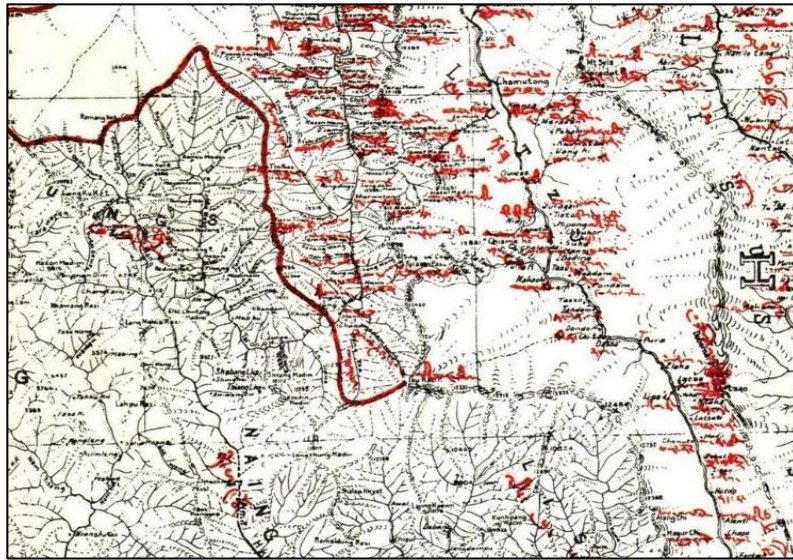
After the contents of the draft treaty were published in domestic media in China, there was a backlash from the masses. The then-Chinese government immediately declared the draft Shimla Treaty invalid and sent a note to the British Minister to China on 01 May 1918, stating that it did not accept the terms of the Tibet border.²⁶ However, the British and Tibetan local representatives still formally signed the Shimla Treaty on 03 Jul 1914. Chen Yifan was ordered to refuse to sign, rather issue a statement, “This government will not recognise any treaty or similar documents signed by Britain and Tibet today or in the future”.²⁷

On 06 Jul 1914, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC sent a note to the British Minister to China, which stated that it “Cannot recognise any treaty or similar documents signed by Britain and Tibet without China’s commitment”.²⁸ Since then, successive Chinese governments have maintained this position.



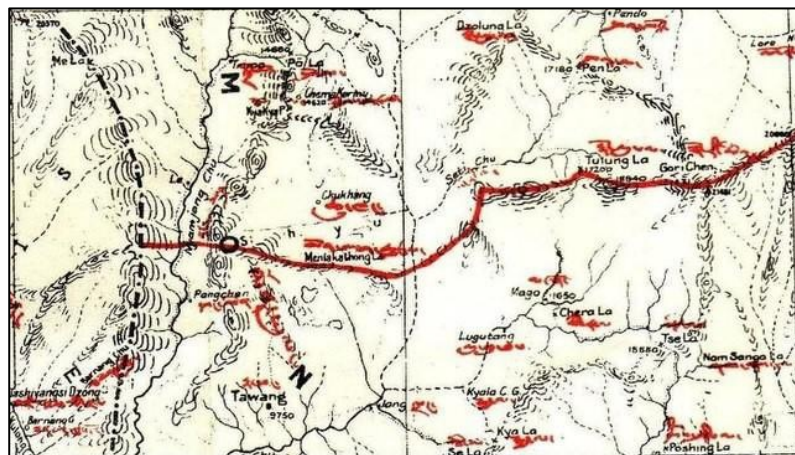
Map 4 and 5: Maps Showing Indo-Tibet Frontier as Mutually Agreed Upon by the British and Tibetan Plenipotentiaries²⁹

Source: The Past and Present of the Sino-Indian Border Issue



Map 6: McMohan Line near Tawang³⁰

Source: Wikivand



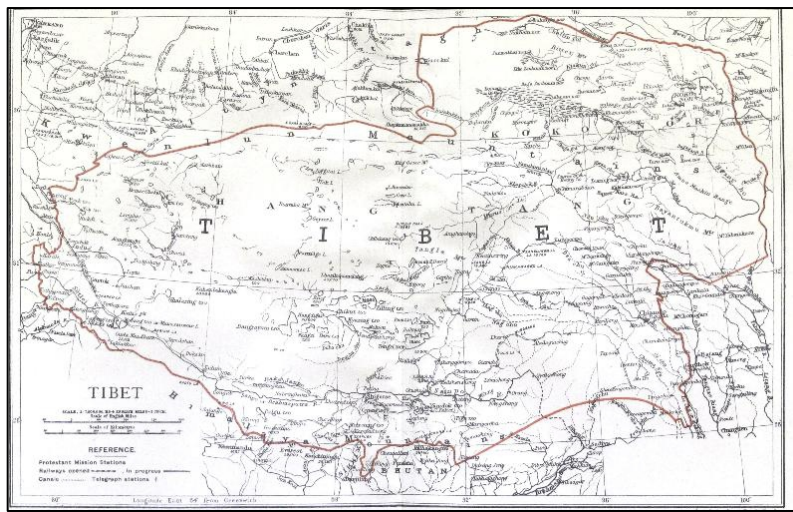
Map 7: The McMahon Line, which Demarcated the Border between Tibet and British India in the Shimla Treaty, Ends at the Isu Razi Pass³¹

Source: Wikivand

As per the Chinese argument, the Shimla Treaty is 'Illegal' as the Tibetan Kashag government was only a local government. For the treaty to take effect, the Beiyang government of the Republic of China still had to accept it and admit that it did not have sovereignty over Tibet, which was difficult for the then-ruling government of China.³² However, at the time when the Treaty was signed, Tibet was an independent country and the Chinese representative was a part of the convention only to discuss the boundary of the Inner and Outer Tibet. In essence, the Shimla Convention was basically to define the 'North-Eastern border of Tibet' with China and the 'Southern border of Tibet' with British India to grant Tibet an independent status. By 07 Jul 1942, the Tibetan local government even established a 'Foreign Affairs Bureau'. The Kashag government notified the Tibetan office of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, "From now on, all matters between Han and the Tibetans should be handled directly by this agency".³³ Thus, proving the 'Diplomatic Independence' to Tibet.

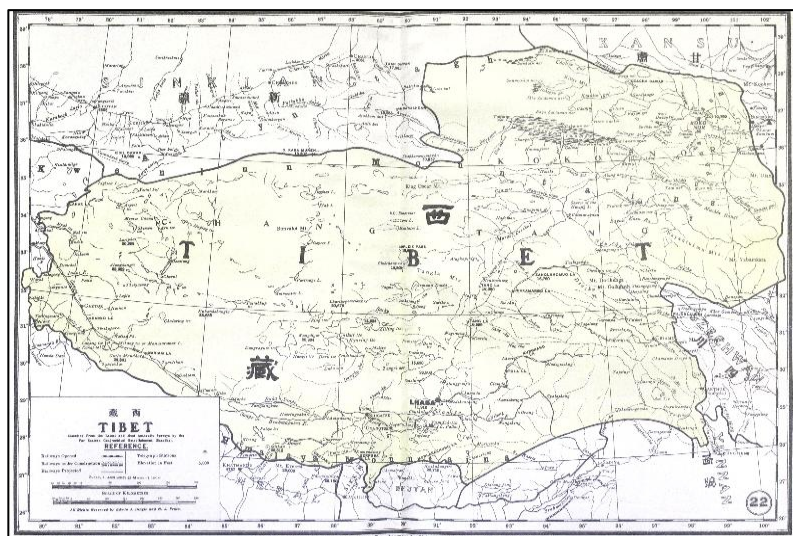
China insists the Indo-China border is undetermined as the maps published by British India before 1929 were roughly the same as those of the Chinese maps, which shows the border as undefined.³⁴ China's viewpoint is articulated in Zhou Enlai's letter to Nehru on 08 Sep 1959, where he argues that even though the drawing method has changed since then, the words 'Undetermined' were still used.³⁵ He further emphasised that neither the Shimla Treaty, nor this exchange of notes is recognised by the Chinese government of that time or by any subsequent government of the PRC and, therefore, they are completely illegal and invalid.³⁶

However, even during the Qing dynasty, i.e., before 1911, the Chinese maps showed the territories of China and its boundary with India same as the Indian territory shown in maps of India i.e., post-1954 map. McMahon Line is roughly according to these lines, and even after the Shimla Treaty, the postal maps of China were the same as that of India's current claim line. It shows that India's claim of traditional and customary boundaries was depicted in maps of China consistently and was, thus, tacitly recognised by the successive governments in China.



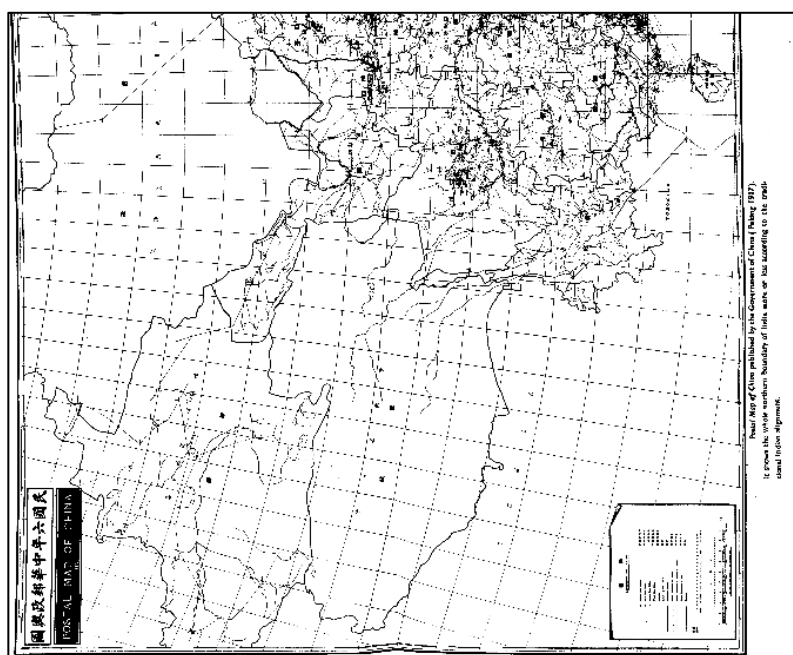
Map 8: Tibet in the Atlas of Chinese Empire³⁷

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India



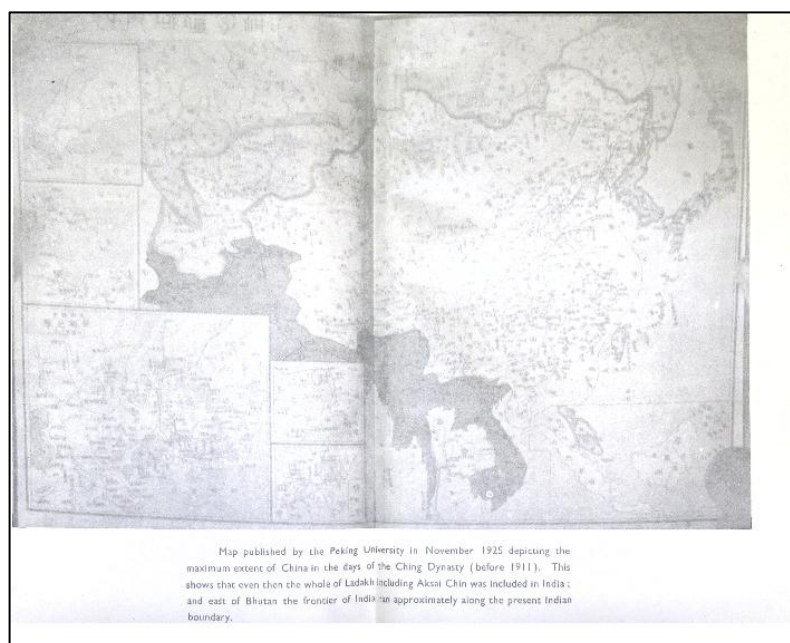
Map 9: Tibet in the New Atlas and Commercial Gazetteer of China³⁸

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India



Map 10: Postal Map of China Published by the Government of China (Peking 1917)³⁹

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India



Map 11: Peking University Map of November 1925 Depicting the Maximum Extension of China During Qing Dynasty⁴⁰

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

China often emphasises that the area south of the McMahon Line and north of the traditional customary line has always been under the jurisdiction of the Tibetan government. Quoting Neville Maxwell's book *India's China War*, the Chinese narrative has always stated that Mills, an official of the British Indian government, once admitted, "The tribes to be incorporated (in India) belong naturally more to Tibet than to India. In race and in language, they are Mongoloid. They all speak Tibeto-Burmese languages, which have

nothing in common with the Assamese of the Aryans of the plains. It follows, therefore, that what might call the social and cultural pull is towards Tibet... The (McMahon line), therefore, suffers from the disability that it may look well on the map... it is in fact not the natural boundary, whereas the frontier along the plains is the natural one".⁴¹

As per the note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China to the Indian Embassy in China on 26 Dec 1959, Henry Joseph Twynam, who served as the acting Governor of Assam (on behalf of Sir Robert Niel Reed) in 1939, wrote a letter in the London Times on 02 Sep 1959 to testify that the

McMahon line "Does not exist and has never existed".⁴² According to the Chinese, from 1951-53, the Indian Army made large-scale advances to the area south of the McMahon Line and gradually consolidated its control of a large area of this territory; however, even if China did not recognise the McMahon Line, it has never crossed this line to avoid conflict.

McMahon did extremely meticulous work before drawing the map after due deliberations with Charles Bell, Bailey, and Morshead. From the south of Mela Pass advancing towards eastwards along the most prominent ridge, the red line was decided with the village of Pangchen on the Indian side and Le in Tibet, as it was clear that the people dressed differently on both sides. To the north, the people were of Tibetan descent; while to the south, they were Bhutanese and Aka extraction.⁴³

Besides, there is differing perception about the Thagla Ridge, especially the pastures to the north of Namka Chu and on the Thagla Ridge. Both belong to Indian villages of Pangchen, which is well-acknowledged by the Chinese side during the 1953 local officials meeting.⁴⁴ The decision then was that the Tibetans can continue to use the pastures on the condition to pay for it. As per the historical records, nine kms upstream of Le is Lepo Tsukang, point where the traders had to pay 10 per cent tax in order to enter Tibet; while the north of Namka Chu is the Indian border outpost of Khinzemane that lies at the foot of the Thagla Ridge.⁴⁵

Chapter 2

Military Escalation and Armed Conflicts

Conflict of 1959

In 1959, the first incident of armed conflict between India and China took place, which was closely related to the changes and developments in Tibet. In Mar of that year, the Tibetans launched an armed rebellion in Lhasa, which was a culmination of the continuous tensions and armed conflict between Tibetan guerrillas and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) that started in Kham and Amdo regions in 1956. As the PLA moved towards Tibet to curb the rebellion, there was fierce confrontation. However, the PLA quelled the rebellions and proceeded with reforms in Tibet, which was opposed by the Indian government and questions were raised over the status of autonomy of Tibet.

Before the PLA entered Tibet, it was in a state of having borders but no defence. However, after Mar 1959, when PLA entered Tibet's Shannan, it stationed its troops at the border, thereby, changing the previous situation of having borders but no defence.⁴⁶ Shannan is the region located in the southeast of Lhasa and borders Bhutan in the southwest. There are 24 roads leading to the Monyul region of Tibet, south of the McMahon Line. China considered that the areas under Indian control such as Dhola Post, Khenzenmane, and Longju comes under the jurisdiction of Shannan. On 04 Apr 1959, the PLA crossed the Yarlung Zangbo River with four regiments and two battalions divided into three routes: east, west, and center; and marched towards Shannan. By 21 Apr, part of the PLA advanced to the Cona Zongping Pass and Kada area, and captured more than 30 Zongs (equivalent to a county manors) and Xis (equivalent to county-level creek) in the south of the Yarlung Zangbo River, east of Gyangzê, and west of Lazong.⁴⁷ In order to cut off the connection between the Tibetan Armed Forces and foreign countries through Shannan area, many PLA troops blocked areas of Shannan and controlled the area near the McMahon line. On the behest of China's Central Military Commission's orders, the PLA entered the border defence points of the China-Bhutan border and the eastern section of the Indo-China border, regarding it to be an underdetermined border.⁴⁸

Consequently, the confrontation between the PLA and the Indian Army took place at Longju village in the Majidun area on 25 Aug 1959. The Chinese termed it a 'Provocative Action' of the Indian Army, and Premier Zhou Enlai labelled it as "India's unwillingness to let reforms happen to become a socialist Tibet and to let it remain as a buffer zone".⁴⁹ India's communication to China on 16 Nov 1959, clearly pointed out that "As we have stated earlier, we disagree with your statement that it (Longju) is on your side of the McMahon line. We have no doubt that it is on our side. But whether it is on your side or ours, the facts are that your armed forces (PLA) attacked and oust our personnel from Longju, inflicting casualties on them, and forcibly occupied our outpost".⁵⁰

Liao Xinwen, a researcher at the Literature Research Office of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee in Beijing, divides China's approaches to the first armed conflict of Longju on the Sino-Indian border into three stages—a political battle; a military and political battle, and a diplomatic and political battle.



Map 12: Map of Longju⁵¹

Source: Defence Education Network, NetEase

- The first stage was in Aug 1959, when the Indian Army crossed the McMahon Line from the east and attacked the Chinese border guards. This stage was mainly a political battle, in which both Zhou Enlai and Nehru exchanged letters to reaffirm their respective positions. Zhou Enlai emphasised that China affirms the border has not been demarcated and it will never recognise the McMahon line; while actively seeking a fair and reasonable solution. However, Beijing will never unilaterally change the long-standing situation on the border between the two countries.⁵² The Second National People's Congress Standing Committee held an enlarged meeting on 11 Sep 1959, endorsing the position, attitude, and policy of Zhou Enlai's report on the India-China border, while some senior officials of the former local governments of Tibet emphasised that the McMahon line was imposed on them.⁵³
- The second stage was during the conflict between the Indian Army and the PLA in late Oct 1959 in the Western Sector. This stage was mainly a military and political battle. Even though there was a fierce confrontation between both sides, the Government of China still believed that the ultimate solution to the border issue was to adhere to the principle of peaceful negotiations. The most critical issue for China then was how to achieve a ceasefire and, in the words of Wang Jiaxiang, this issue made the central government "Worry for several days".⁵⁴ On 03 Nov 1959, at the Central Working Conference held in Hangzhou, Mao Zedong stated, "I have such a plan, that is, peace. You (the Indian side) said to withdraw from Longju, I will expand it to the entire border line, and our love for peace will reach the extreme. Across the entire border line, each side will retreat by 10 kms, 15 kms, or 20 kms. Create a gun-free zone (de-militarised zone), and only allow civil affairs personnel to manage it as usual, waiting for a negotiated settlement".⁵⁵ The proposal was approved by the Central Polit Bureau meeting. Zhou Enlai called this proposal "A concrete and positive proposal" and "A very important concrete step".⁵⁶
- The third stage was after the Central Committee decided for both China and India to withdraw from the border. This stage was mainly a diplomatic and political battle. On 07 Nov 1959, the Central Committee of the CPC entrusted Zhou Enlai to write a letter to

Nehru, proposing that “The armed forces of China and India should immediately withdraw 20 kms from the McMahon Line in the east and the LAC in the west; in the areas where the armed forces are withdrawn, both sides guarantee that they will no longer send armed personnel to garrison and patrol, but will still retain civil affairs personnel and unarmed police to perform administrative tasks and maintain order”.⁵⁷ However, on 16 Nov 1959, Nehru made a counter-proposal in his reply stating that “Each government instructs its outposts not to send out patrols” and it is advocated that the Chinese army “Withdraw from Longju” and the Indian army “Will not reoccupy it”.⁵⁸



Map 13: Chinese Map of Asaphila-Duren Cokhang Patrol Clash⁵⁹

Source: 1002What, Southern Tibet

After the Nehru-Zhou meetings from 20-24 Apr 1960 in New Delhi, the PRC premier summarised five common points based on the negotiations between the two sides:

- Regarding the issue of whether the border is determined, the common understanding should be “The border has not been determined and must be determined through negotiations” and “Resolved rationally, equally, and amicably”.
- Although the border between the two sides has not been formally demarcated or determined, there is LAC, and the two sides can consider using this line as one of the bases for demarcation.
- While the watershed is one of the geographical factors considered in demarcation, it is not the only one. In addition, there are river valleys and mountain passes, which should apply to all sections of the border.
- Territorial claims should not be made for areas that are not under one’s jurisdiction.
- Both sides should take national feelings into account.⁶⁰

Conflict of 1962

After the diffuser of tension, the PLA unilaterally withdrew 20 kms from their perception of LAC in the east and stopped patrolling in the withdrawn areas from Apr 1960. However, in 1961, PLA outposts were again stationed on the eastern section of the border and patrols were resumed.⁶¹ As per the Chinese, on 20 Oct 1962, India launched a large-scale attack on the Chinese Army. The then-Vice-Premier of the State

Council of the PRC, Chen Yi, stated in a television interview that the reasons for the Indian action were twofold: first, as China has repeatedly tolerated, the Indian government had an illusion that China will not fight back; second, the Indian government mistakenly believed that China's domestic economic situation is very difficult and it is very isolated internationally, so it attempts to use force to make China surrender.⁶² After the bloody confrontation, the Chinese side made three-point proposition to resolve the border dispute:

- Both sides affirmed that the India-China border issue must be resolved peacefully through negotiations. However, before reaching a peaceful solution, the Chinese government hoped that the Indian government would agree that both sides respect the LAC between the two sides along the entire Sino-Indian border. The armed forces of both sides would withdraw 20 kms from this line and disengage.
- If the Indian government agrees to the above proposal, the Chinese government is willing to withdraw its border troops in the eastern section of the border to the north of the LAC through consultation. At the same time, in the middle and western sections of the border, both China and India guarantee not to cross the LAC, i.e., the Traditional Customary Line. The disengagement and cessation of armed forces of both sides will be negotiated by officials appointed by the Chinese and Indian governments.
- The Chinese government believed that to seek a friendly solution to the Sino-India border issue, the Prime Ministers of China and India should again hold talks. It was proposed that whenever both sides feel it appropriate, the Government of China would welcome the Prime Minister of India to visit Beijing; and if the Indian government feels it is inconvenient, the Chinese government will go to Delhi for talks.⁶³

According to the Chinese, the proposal was rejected by the Indian side on the same day and the Indians prepared for an offensive. The Chinese government then opted for a ceasefire. On 21 Nov 1962, the People's Daily published a Chinese government statement calling for ceasefire with three points:

- The Chinese border guards will ceasefire along the entire Sino-India border starting 22 Nov 1962.
- From 01 Dec 1962, the Chinese border guards will withdraw 20 kms from its previous position, as decided on 07 Nov 1959, at the LAC between China and India. In the eastern section, although the Chinese border troops had been conducting self-defence counterattacks on the Chinese territory north of the Traditional Customary Line, they were still prepared to withdraw from their current stations to the LAC, that is, north of the 'illegal' McMahon Line, and further withdraw 20 kms from this line. In the middle and western sections, the Chinese border troops will withdraw 20 kms from the LAC.

To ensure the normal exchanges of people in the Sino-India border areas, prevent the activities of saboteurs, and maintain order on the border, China will set up checkpoints at several locations on its side of the LAC, and deploy a certain number of police officers at each checkpoint. The Chinese government will notify the Indian government of the location of the above-mentioned checkpoints through diplomatic channels.⁶⁴

At the same time, the Chinese government established checkpoints at several locations, terming it as a need to ensure the normal exchanges of people in border area, preventing the activities of saboteurs, and maintain order, and to deploy a certain number of police officers at each checkpoint. On 30 Nov 1962, the General Staff issued a deployment plan that was approved by the Central Committee of the CPC to set up police checkpoints (later renamed as Civil Affairs checkpoints) on the Indo-China border:

- Within 20 kms of the Indo-China border, a total of 28 police checkpoints will be established (16 in the eastern section, three in the middle section, and nine in the western section). In the eastern section, police checkpoints will be established at Sama, Xia Chayu, Puzang, Gedang, Degangsi, Didong, Luxia, Laiguoqiao, Tamadun, Majidun, Long, Gongna, Xinda, Langbo, Xiao, and Le; in the middle section, the police checkpoints will be established at Xilanta, Bolin, and Shibui; and in the western section, the police checkpoints will be established at Zhaxigang, Bangongluo, Kana, Niyagezu, Kongka Pass, Hot Springs, Galwan Valley, Tianwen Point, and Shengxian Bay.
- The number of civilian police checkpoints can increase or decrease according to the importance of each section. Generally, a platoon to a company can be staffed at each checkpoint. It will be formally established after the troop withdraw from the 20 kms area.⁶⁵

Escalation and Armed Conflicts

On 08 Dec 1962, the spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of Defense issued a statement, pointing out that China's Tibet and Xinjiang local border defence forces, as per the decision of the Chinese government, will continue to withdraw on 09 Dec 1962. In the eastern section of the border, China's border defence forces stationed in the area north of the Tangapani River would withdraw from Laduo, Duolong Bridge, Bondila, Rupa, Putong Bridge, and other places to Lahong, Lahang, Dejangzong, and the areas north of them; the border defence forces stationed in Benqiong and the areas north of it would withdraw from Benqiong, Xilong, Jiya, Kangmudi, Gamu, Sadie, Wadi, Geli, and other places to Wanong and the areas north of it. Moreover, the border defence forces stationed in Daqiu Pass and Limijin would withdraw to Daba and Gelixiniang, respectively; and the border defence forces stationed in Gengren would withdraw to the areas north of the LAC.⁶⁶

On 28 Feb 1963, the Chinese completed the withdrawal plan and established 26 Civil Affairs checkpoints, which were 16 in the eastern section—Sama, Xia Chayu, Puzang, Didong, Luxia, Laiguo Bridge, Tamaden, Majidun, Long, Gongna, Xiao, and Le, Fuyi, Deergong, Chayu, and Quna; three in the middle sector—Xilanta, Bolin, and Shibui; and seven in the western sector—Tianwen Point, and Shengxian Bay, Hot Springs in Xinjiang and Niyagezu, Kongka Pass, Kunark Fort, Sipangur in Tibet.

On 01 Mar 1963, a spokesperson of the Ministry of National Defense of China issued another statement, stating that “With regard to the four areas within 20 kms on the Chinese side of the LAC—where China and India have disputes over ceasefire arrangements, namely Chedong and Longju in the eastern section, Wure in the middle section—and the areas in the western section—where India once established 43 military outposts and China added border posts to resist—the Chinese government has decided to vacate them and will not establish civil affairs checkpoints after troops withdrawal”.⁶⁷

The issue at the heart of the negotiations and of Chinese withdrawal is the gap in Chinese and Indian positions after the war. The Chinese insisted on restoring the LAC, finalised on 07 Nov 1959, for negotiations as their justified position and control of the border; while India emphasised restoring the entire border status quo of pre-08 Sep 1962 to proceed with further demarcation of the border. According to China's suggestion, both Beijing and India would withdraw, and in the eastern section, the distance that the Chinese border guards would withdraw will be far greater than the distance that the Indian Army would withdraw.⁶⁸ Moreover, doing so would neither prevent each side from continuing to exercise jurisdiction over the areas from which it withdrew, nor undermine any side's claim to the border.⁶⁹ However, the Indian position was that China has already crossed and controlled territory that belong to New Delhi and they need to first establish the status quo to negotiate, which never happened.

Other Major Confrontations

In Mar 1987, India massively increased its troops in the Tawang-Kejilang area. The Indian Army crossed Hatung La and entered the Kejilang River Valley to conduct a large-scale military exercise, code-named 'Chessboard'. The PLA also held an exercise, code-named '874'. It set up garrisons on the north bank of the Kejilang River Valley, which resulted in a military confrontation with the Indian Army. In 1999, the 'Dongzhang Confrontation' lasted 82 days in Langbo Township, Cona district.⁷⁰

Due to extremely harsh patrol environment in Asphila, which is around 30 kms southwest of Longju, 14 PLA soldiers died, including Zhang Guirong, the former Commander of the Tibet Military Region, who suddenly fell ill while surveying the patrol line in 1984, and Gunu, who pushed his comrades away and died in a mudslide in 2005.⁷¹

Chapter 3

Chinese Perceptions and Assessment of Future Offensive

Chinese Arguments on the Possibilities

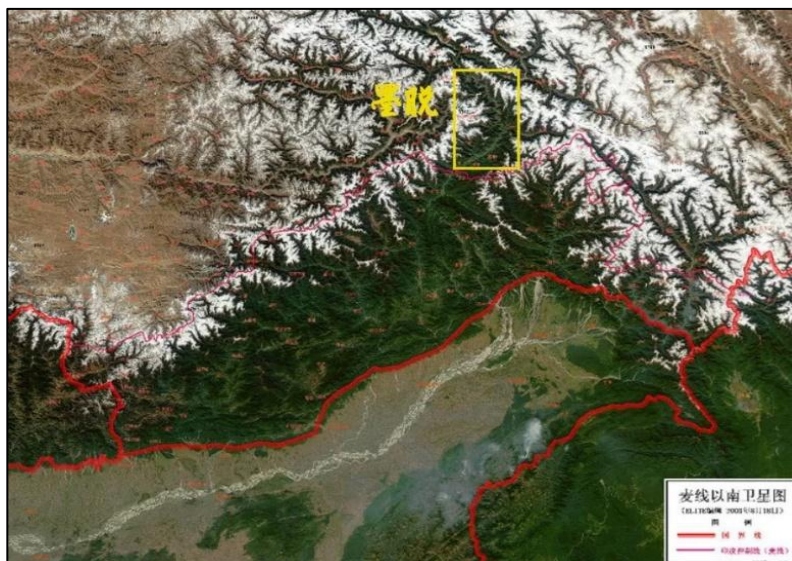
From 1981, India and China resumed border negotiations. At that time, Deng Xiaoping, the General Secretary of the CPC, proposed a ‘Package Solution’, which was basically to accede to India’s demand to adhere to the McMahon line on the eastern section of the border, in exchange for India’s concession for Aksai Chin on the western section.⁷² As a result, eight rounds of negotiations with India were conducted but failed to reach an agreement as New Delhi refused to accept the proposal. India suggested that the eastern section was simpler, so should be settled first, and then gradually the problem of the western section should be solved in the future.⁷³

The Chinese perspective, as stated by Wen Junxuan, was that when China really figured out the issue of the Sino-India border, it discovered that “Aksai Chin is too important to China. Even a person without strategic thinking would find out when looking at a map that if Aksai Chin is not under China’s control, it would be ‘Like a piece of the rooster’s butt has been dug out’. Aksai Chin is an important transportation route from China to South Asia, and it is also the only way from Xinjiang to Tibet. As regards the Tibet-India border, McMahon drew the line based on general principles, namely watersheds and ridge lines. This principle is not unacceptable, because from a military perspective, this division is the most balanced. China is also prepared to accept it if Aksai Chin is not an issue”.⁷⁴

Here, it is significant to understand the negotiation skills of the Chinese, which is the way Beijing would move to clinch a deal on the border negotiations. The Chinese would make claims on both—the land of Aksai Chin as well as the land of Arunachal Pradesh. The former is the land that China controls now, while the latter is the land that China claims as a bargaining chip. According to Wen Junxuan, “On the one hand, we (the Chinese) must tell the people that this land is ours, and on the other hand, we (China) must be prepared to exchange it. The side effects of doing so are also obvious. If it is really exchanged, the decision-makers will have to bear great historical risks. Since southern Tibet (part of Arunachal Pradesh) is to be used as a bargaining chip for China, a legal basis must be found for it. Therefore, the treaty signed by the Tibetan government cannot be recognised by the central government, although, according to general legal principles, the contract signed by the branch company must be recognised by the head office”.⁷⁵

Hence, China is using tactics of not accepting the Treaty and making claims on the land of Arunachal Pradesh to leverage the discussions on the table. In negotiations, India needs to be cautious that even if it would agree to the exchange offer of leaving the claims on Aksai Chin, it would only lose its territory, with China gaining an upper hand by offering the land which is and was an Indian land.

In the geopolitical map of the eastern area, from the perspective of the ‘Watershed Principle’, the border in the east can be broadly divided into two broad lines: White line, i.e., the watershed, and the Red line, i.e., the McMahon line. In between, China has two salient features in Shannan: Cona County in the west and Medog County in the east. The reasons for the formation of these two strongholds of China in Shannan are not the same.



Map 14: Location of Medog⁷⁶

Source: The World Through Geography

Medog is a canyon protruding to the north. After the Himalayas reach this point, it is blocked by the south-east Nyainqentanglha Mountains in the north and squeezed by the north-south Hengduan Mountains in the east, eventually forming a triangular rice wrinkle belt. Due to the complex terrain, the British did not go deep into it to find the watershed but drew the border line at the exit of the canyon. This left a protrusion for China in Shannan.⁷⁷ The inconvenience of transportation is only relative to the north of the mountain. However, to the south towards India, it is much easier. Hence, it makes sense to divide the border according to the shape of the mountain and the water flow.⁷⁸

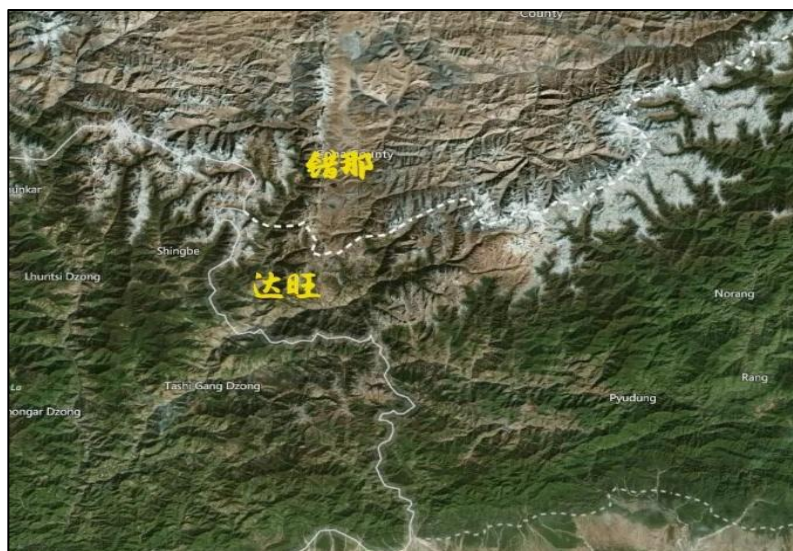


Map 15: Ariel View of Medog

Source: The World Through Geography

To the west is the Cona County. Chinese believe that if Medog was placed in China border according to the McMahon line for technical reasons, then Cona was given to China for political reasons. McMahon did not follow the watershed principle at this point and took a detour under Cona, for it was an administrative agency of the Tibetan government in history.⁷⁹ This detour left a gap for China, and in 1963, PLA captured

Tawang from this area and continued to move towards the south.⁸⁰ Interestingly though, as McMahon gave Cona to Tibet, there was no reason to draw the border further down. Therefore, the border line began to follow this valley to Bhutan and then returned to the ridge of the Himalayas in the north. This demarcation gave 'Tawang' to India.⁸¹



Map 16: Location of Cona⁸²

Source: The World Through Geography

The reasonable demarcation of the border is to ensure the strategic security of both sides to the greatest extent and, therefore, demarcation along the watershed on the top of the mountain can be easily accepted by both sides. Some Chinese scholars opine that although Medog is in the south of the mountain, it does not pose a threat to north-eastern India and because of the McMahon Line as a legal guarantee, Medog will not become a hot spot. However, as regards Tawang, the Government of China will fight to the end even for the sake of face. Wen Junxuan believes that the possibility of China gaining back Tawang is 70 per cent; while the possibility of gaining other areas in southern Tibet is zero.⁸³

Apart from Medog and Cona, Yadong is another stronghold of China. India has always regarded Yadong as a point of concern. Since the Tibetan government was clear about its sovereignty over Yadong, there has been no control of India over it.

From the Chinese perspective, even though it is often stated that both Indian and Chinese exchanged maps of the middle section, they are not in public space and the reaction of the masses is not taken into consideration. Hence, Chinese believe that Indian politicians did not do any better than Chinese politicians on this issue, in fact, they appeared to be more impractical. Scholars in China believe that in 2005, when China showed its sincerity and was willing to sacrifice some of its interests in the western section in exchange for Tawang, it still could not make a pragmatic decision.⁸⁴

Some reports point out that Beijing hopes to push the border to the Sela Pass in southern Tibet and is willing to provide some flexibility on the western section. In other words, the Chinese side proposed gaining control of the Sela Ridge in exchange for making concessions in the western sector—a plan they view as pragmatic. However, India did not appear to accept this proposal.⁸⁵ During the 1962 war, in Tawang, China attacked southward along the line of Xishankou-Dejangzong-Bomdila. The Xishankou, a Chinese-style name, refers to the Sela Pass. Many in China believe that at that time, if China did not retreat, they could have set up a defence line at Bomdila or Xishankou as Chinese had then crossed the Bomdila as well, which is south of the Sela Pass. Bomdila is very difficult to defend, but Sela Pass is completely defensible. Retreating was entirely out of political considerations.⁸⁶ China believes at the time that its proposal is very

pragmatic. Sela Pass is on the south side of the watershed. Even if India accepts this plan, it is unlikely to give up the pass.⁸⁷

There is a saying in China that the mountain range where Sela Pass is located is the main watershed of the Himalayas. This is mainly because there is a small north-south mountain range in this area that disrupts the direction of the Himalayas, causing a gap in the watershed. The Tibetans also infiltrated into the south of the mountain along this gap. However, they were more adapted to the high plateau and did not cross Xishan to move towards the plains. China is a little reluctant to use the branch where Sela Pass is located as the main watershed, but it is still a clear watershed. China thinks that if it is willing to set the Cona-Tawang area as a demilitarised zone, it should be acceptable to India (from a military perspective).⁸⁸

Probable Offensive of China

In the event of Sino-India conflict, Yadong and Tawang in the western section of Arunachal Pradesh are possible directions for ground forces to break through, while Medog can provide air support from Linzhi Airport for China.⁸⁹ In the 1962 conflict, China had driven the Indian Armed Forces out of Yadong and this worked in favour of China's strategic advantage.

There has always been a misunderstanding in India that China has a great strategic advantage in the eastern and western sections, and therefore, China can cause greater destruction to India, while this is not the case. First, in the Yadong line in southern Tibet, China only has two narrow breakthroughs—Yadong and Cona. Even if China succeeds in breaking through this line of defence, it can only pose a certain threat to India's north-eastern area. If the war does not end in a short period, India can easily mobilise forces from its inland to launch a counterattack. Even if China achieves tactical success, it will have to withdraw quickly as it did in 1962.⁹⁰

Chapter 4

Indian Perspective and Strategic Assessment

Indian Arguments on the Possibilities

There is a gap in understanding for the Indian leaders and policymakers as to what exactly the Chinese want for the complete settlement of the border. In most cases, there is a larger consensus among scholars in India that the Chinese are neither eager nor willing to settle the border, as they deem it as a complicated and complex issue, especially as it relates to the status of Tibet and that of His Holiness The Dalai lama. However, the WMCC discussions, Joint Working Group, and the Special Representative talks over the decades have made some progress and indicate the red lines of the India side for negotiations and acceptable possibilities.

Any settlement with the Chinese will now be grounded on the basis of ‘2005 Political Parameters and Guiding Principles’, where the issue of settled population has been highlighted. However, any consideration of the settled population as a criterion of settlement will need to take a cut-off year as the basis, mainly due to the fact that China has massively pushed the building of *Xiaokang* (well off) villages⁹¹ and is pushing the resettlement of its population in border areas, some of which are areas and territories claimed by India. The re-settled populations will change the entire demography and strategic importance of the areas. Besides, now that the Chinese have started to demand Tawang and insist it as ‘Non-Negotiable’, it is significant to point out that as per the 2005 Political Parameters and Guiding Principles, settled population cannot be moved and, therefore, any question on Tawang now being made by China is baseless and counter to the position accepted by it.

Recommendations

The preceding discussion reveals multiple contentious issues that call for greater mutual understanding. The violent history of the conflict remains an indelible part of the narrative. However, a far-looking approach is needed for the existing problem so that the issue of intense clashes does not become a consistent and perennial problem. Considering the discussion, here are a few propositions and probabilities that both sides can work on:

- **Demilitarised Zone without Defining LAC is Not Workable.** The Chinese have often proposed the establishment of a ‘Demilitarised Zone’, but the problem is in defining the LAC and accepting the positions of other side. As there has been no exchange of maps defining the control and claim of each side in the Eastern Sector, it is difficult to even define the area that can be demilitarised.
- **Equalisation of Strength and Military Infrastructure is Essential.** Military infrastructure equalisation is a significant factor in defining the demilitarised zone. As there is asymmetry in the military infrastructure build-up on both sides, there is a need to diffuse probable military threats and, hence, any future demilitarisation will need to have minimum guarantee of equalisation of strength and infrastructure build-up on both sides, with constant checks and verifications. It is important to note that in case of any military conflict, Indians will need to deploy at the height of minimum 10,000 ft above sea level in almost all sectors, having volatile Himalayas under its feet, while the Chinese already occupy the Tibetan plateau, therefore, the Chinese can quickly deploy themselves, adding to the fact that for the last 30 years, China has built modern civilian and military infrastructure.
- **Climate Conditions to be Kept in Mind for the Asymmetry in Strengths.** In the Eastern Sector, climate is another factor that creates asymmetry, as during the monsoon, the routes on the Indian side become inaccessible.

- **McMahon Line can be the Basis as it Mostly Adheres to the Watershed Principle.** As regards the Traditional Customary Line, it has never been a basis for demarcation of boundaries between two modern states but just remain as a principled claim line. In history, they were formal and informal business linkages at times. However, as the modern states boundaries are defined based on actual control and negotiations on demarcation, India and China will need to work towards mutually acceptable negotiated solution, while keeping in mind that McMahon Line is based on a meticulously drafted agreement and mostly follows the internationally acknowledged watershed principle.
- **Define LAC Sector-wise and in a Time-bound Manner.** The discussion and Chinese positions highlight the fact that China accepts that there exists a McMahon Line. However, the multiple propositions of the Chinese with regards to LAC, Traditional Customary Line, and McMahon Line in Chinese discourses create great confusion as there have been ever-changing stand points. Hence, to advance towards an amicable solution, it is imperative to identify and define the LAC sector-wise and in a time-bound manner. There can be two alternatives for this on the Eastern Sector: first, based on the current position and controls of both sides, second, based on the pre-1962 conflict positions.
- **A Cut-off Year for Segregating the Settled Population Based on 2005 Political Parameters and Guiding Principles is Necessary.** On the basis of ‘2005 Political Parameters and Guiding Principles’, settled population is one of the basic criteria, but considering that China has been massively pushing the establishment of *Xiaokang* villages, a criterion of settlement will need to take a cut-off year as the basis.
- **Establish Joint Survey Teams of Cartographers.** After the LAC is defined and the two sides reach an agreement and design a framework of resolving the border dispute, both sides can form a Joint Survey Team of Cartographers to design the maps, which have to be accepted by both the governments as well as the public. Both sides can also further move towards creating demilitarised zones in areas where there are overlapping claims. The authors believe, as the Chinese say, “The first step is the toughest”, but “A journey of a thousand miles starts beneath one’s feet”. Hence, LAC is the basis of future will of delineating and demarcating the border. It is essential to mention that the confidence-building measures between the two sides have not worked on ground for the precise reason that LAC has not been defined.
- **Sector-by-sector Approach is Inevitable.** The McMahon Line on the eastern section of the Indo-China border as well as the present status quo is more or less following the watershed principle.

Hence, if both sides agree to follow this internationally recognised principle, the negotiations on this sector can find mutually acceptable solution. It is, thus, important to resolve the issue sector-by-sector, rather than following a comprehensive approach.

Conclusion

The Oct 2024 meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at Kazan, which revived the SR talks, marked a modest step toward restoring dialogue after a prolonged standoff. Agreements at the Corps Commander and the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination levels on disengagement in Depsang and Demchok signal progressed, but substantive de-escalation, troop de-induction, and a durable settlement remain elusive. Both sides continue to differ fundamentally in approach: India favours a sector-by-sector resolution reflecting ground realities, whereas China insists on a comprehensive ‘Package’ settlement, echoing propositions it has floated since Mao Zedong’s 1959 demilitarised zone proposal.

The Eastern sector remains the most contentious, with China hardening its claim on Tawang as ‘Non-negotiable’. Historically, the ‘Package Solution’ of the 1980s envisaged China’s acceptance of the McMahon Line in exchange for Indian concessions in the Western Sector. However, Beijing’s shifting positions—from tacit acceptance of status quo to renewed maximalist claims—have eroded trust. Against this backdrop, India’s strategic choices must balance firmness with prudence.

Firstly, clarifying the LAC remains critical. Persistent ambiguity has been the primary trigger for repeated confrontations, and a sector-wise definition, supported by joint cartographic surveys, is the most workable way forward.

Secondly, proposals for a demilitarised zone can only be credible if accompanied by force balance and parity in infrastructure. India’s positions at altitudes exceeding 10,000 feet involve severe climatic and logistical constraints compared to China’s relative advantage on the Tibetan plateau, and without equalisation, demilitarisation would only formalise this asymmetry.

Thirdly, the McMahon Line—anchored in the watershed principle and supported by historical cartographic evidence—offers a sound framework for settlement. Even though China dismisses the Shimla Convention, its own official maps published prior to 1929 broadly reflected the Indian claim line, amounting to tacit acknowledgment of its validity.

Moreover, India must insist that the 2005 Political Parameters and Guiding Principles govern any settlement. Since China has undertaken demographic engineering through *Xiaokang* villages along the frontier, a cut-off year for settled population must be incorporated to protect the integrity of the agreement. Complementary to this, sector-wise confidence-building measures—such as patrol coordination, hotlines, and local dispute-resolution mechanisms—should be linked to verifiable behaviour, not abstract commitments.

Ultimately, the path to stability lies in incremental, sector-wise progress rather than elusive grand bargains. A comprehensive solution is possible only when Chinese proposals reflect respect for India’s core interests, especially in the Eastern Sector. Until then, India must combine dialogue through the SR and WMCC frameworks with sustained preparedness, infrastructure development, and diplomatic clarity.

Endnotes

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⁴¹ Neville Maxwell, *India's China War*, Jaico Publishing House; Bombay, 1970, p 59.

⁴² Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”

⁴³ Singh, *The McMahon Line*, 2019, p 37

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ First river across Himalayas in Tibet is Namjyangchu, which has two small tributaries—Le Chua and Namka Chu. The former is to the north and the latter to the south of the Thagla Ridge. The last Tibetan settlements along the Namjyang Chu vally are Le and Gordong, north of the Thagla Ridge. For further discussion, see Singh, *The McMahon Line*, 2019.

⁴⁶ *The History of Counterattack*, 1994

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Zhou Enlai's report at the National Conference of Heroes on 05 Nov 1959, as cited in Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”.

⁵⁰ Nehru's letter to Zhou Enlai on 16 Nov 1959, “Correspondence Nehru-Zhou White Paper III”, *Ministry of External Affairs*, Nov 1959-Mar 1960, accessed 05 Jan 2025.

⁵¹ Dashuo, “China Strikes Back at India”

⁵² Zhou Enlai's letter to Nehru on 08 Sep 1959, as cited in Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”.

⁵³ Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”

⁵⁴ Wang Jiexiang's conversation record at the Central Working Conference in Hangzhou on 03 Nov 1959, as cited in Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”.

⁵⁵ Records of Mao Zedong's conversation at the Central Working Conference in Hangzhou on 03 Nov 1959, as cited in Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”.

⁵⁶ Records of Zhou Enlai's conversation with Indian Ambassador to China Parthasarath on 08 Nov 1959, as cited in Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”

⁵⁷ Zhou Enlai's letter to Nehru on 08 Nov 1959, as cited in Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”.

⁵⁸ Nehru's letter to Zhou Enlai on 16 Nov 1959, “Correspondence Nehru-Zhou White Paper III”, Nov 1959-Mar 1960, *Ministry of External Affairs*.

⁵⁹ 1002What, Southern Tibet, 2023

⁶⁰ Record of the Meeting Between Zhou Enlai and Jawaharlal Nehru on 22 Apr 1960, as cited in Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”.

⁶¹ Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”

⁶² Chen Yi’s television interview to the *Swedish Broadcasting Corporation* on “Sino-Indian Border Issue”, *People’s Daily* on 15 Mar 1963, as cited in Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”.

⁶³ “Three Point Proposal of the Chinese After 1962 Conflict”, *People’s Daily*, as cited in Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”.

⁶⁴ *People’s Daily*, 21 Nov 1962, as cited in Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”.

⁶⁵ *History of Counter Attack War in Self-Defense Along Sino-Indian Border*.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Letter from Premier Zhou Enlai to Asian and African leaders on the Sino-Indian border issue on 15 Nov 1962, *People’s Daily*, 20 Nov 1962, as cited in Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”.

⁶⁹ Letter from Zhou Enlai to Nehru on 28 Nov 1962, *People’s Daily*, 01 Dec 1962, as cited in Xinwen, “The Countermeasures and Methods”.

⁷⁰ Wu Zhaoli, “Dilemma, Difficulties in Solving the China-India Border Issue and Future Prospects”, *South Asian Studies Newsletter*, 13 Apr 2021, accessed 05 Jan 2025, <https://www.essra.org.cn/view-1000-2419.aspx>.

⁷¹ Dashuo, “China Strikes Back at India”

⁷² Shyam Saran, “How a 1983 Discussion Between Beijing and Delhi Informs Indo-China Relations,” *The Caravan*, 2017, accessed 10 Jan 2025, <https://caravanmagazine.in/vantage/1983-discussion-beijing-delhi-indo-china-relations>,

⁷³ Shui, *The Past and Present of the Sino-Indian Border*

⁷⁴ Wen Junxuan, “In-depth analysis of the Sino-Indian border dispute”, *The World Through Geography*, 05 Feb 2019, accessed 10 Jan 2025, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/tL7ksGZzz83eQyJDRzOLFg>.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ In the 14th century, the Tibetan government established a county in ‘Cona’ to collect taxes from the Monba and Loba ethnic people in Shannan. Hence, it was a base station of the Tibetan government in Shannan. The current legal evidence is mainly that taxes were collected from these two ethnic groups, or it may be similar to the tribute paid by the four barbarians to the central dynasty. Therefore, it is regarded as insufficient evidence to prove that China has sovereignty over southern Tibet in history, as cited in Junxuan, “In-depth analysis”

⁸⁰ Junxuan, “In-depth analysis”

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

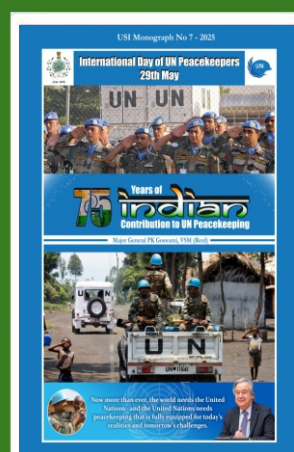
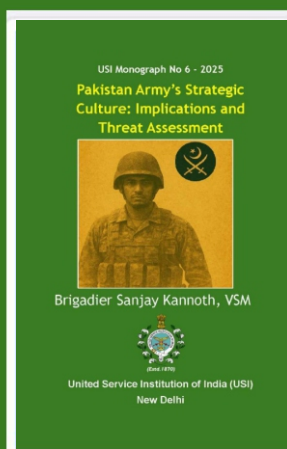
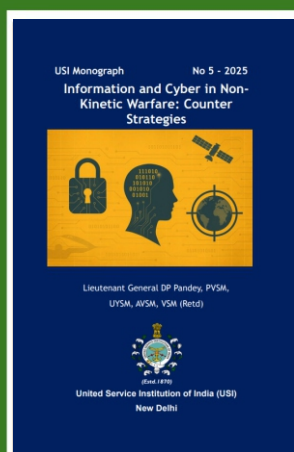
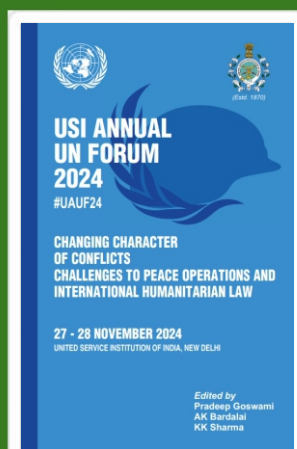
⁹¹ Xiaokang villages are newly built villages in the frontier regions of China, which can be for dual use. These will have civilian settlements as well as help for storage and transportation in case of conflict.

About the Monograph

Following the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping in Kazan, bilateral relations have seen a modest thaw. However, underlying tensions along the border persist. While troop disengagement has been formalized in certain areas, a durable resolution demands sustained diplomatic engagement and a carefully calibrated strategy by both governments to prevent recurrent border confrontations. The monograph examines China's consistent advocacy for a comprehensive resolution—one that includes the establishment of a demilitarized zone without a clearly defined Line of Actual Control (LAC). China's additional insistence on Tawang being "indispensable" further complicates the dynamics, particularly in the Eastern Sector. Arguing for a sector-by-sector approach, the monograph contends that meaningful negotiations on demilitarization can only proceed once the LAC is formally delineated. Drawing extensively from Chinese sources and strategic assessments, it presents a realistic and pragmatic pathway for India—one that safeguards its core interests and strategic positions. Given China's control of key territories post-1962, the scope for Indian concessions is limited. The monograph underscores the importance of recognizing the McMahon Line, rooted in a carefully drafted agreement based predominantly on the watershed principle, as a legitimate basis for negotiation. It recommends the establishment of Joint Survey Teams comprising cartographers from both countries to define the boundary in detail, with a cut-off year for identifying settled populations as a key criterion in the process.

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The United Service Institution (USI) of India was founded in 1870 by a soldier scholar, Colonel (later Major General) Sir Charles MacGregor 'For the furtherance of interest and knowledge in the Art, Science and Literature of National Security in general and Defence Services, in particular'. It commenced publishing its Journal in 1871. The USI also publishes reports of its members and research scholars as books, monographs, and occasional papers (pertaining to security matters). The present Director General is Major General BK Sharma, AVSM, SM** (Retd).



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