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**GEOGRAPHIC  
INTELLIGENCE  
MEMORANDUM**

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***THE CHINA-INDIA BORDER DISPUTE***

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**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS**

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British administration. Disputes occasionally arose over these areas and Tibetan occupation of the area. The British maps continued to show either a boundary and counter-protests were filed but without a final determination.

Milang Area (See Map Inset B): The largest area in dispute is north of Milang, a small semipermanently inhabited village located about 20 miles south of the water-divide passes. In 1936, a Chinese patrol advanced within a short distance of the village, causing an Indian protest to be lodged. Between Milang and the passes are two small summer settlements and high pastures suitable for seasonal grazing. Indian maps mark the border along the passes on the line of water parting, whereas Chinese maps show a line running northwest-southeast just north of the water divide, which is relatively inconspicuous, with no high peaks or difficult passes marking its crest. Such features do exist along the Chinese-claimed border.

Bara Hoti Area (See Map Inset B): The Bara Hoti area (called Wu-je by the Chinese) is a small upland pasture a few miles southeast of the Niti Pass. Despite its small size and apparent insignificance, numerous notes have been exchanged between India and China since 1936 over its ownership; since then, both Chinese and Indian patrols have alternately occupied the Bara Hoti area. Initially the Chinese actions may have been of a probing nature designed to ascertain the extent of Indian surveillance of the frontier and to test Indian reaction to Chinese advances. The Indians hold the position that the border follows the major water divide, thus placing the Niti, Tunjun, and Shishal Passes on the border; the Chinese view presumably is that the border runs south from the Niti Pass through the Chor Hoti Pass, which is located several miles south and west of the Indian line. Curiously, however, their maps showing the boundary delineation agree with the Indian maps. Part of the trouble arises from the nature of the water divide, which is relatively inconspicuous, with no high peaks or difficult passes marking its crest. Such features do exist along the Chinese-claimed border.

Assam-Tibet Sector

The dispute over India's North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) in Assam involves an area of about 26,000 square miles inhabited by roughly 500,000 to 800,000 primitive hill tribesmen. Physically, the area consists of a belt of steep hill and mountain terrain 50 to 100 miles wide rising sharply from the Brahmaputra plains to the crest of the Great Himalaya and associated ranges, which coincide with the McMahon Line. The Chinese-claimed border generally runs along the southern margin of the hills. This is by far the most difficult of the Himalayan areas to penetrate from the plains. Heavy rains continue from June through October; dense, tangled forests choke the valleys and cover much of the hill country; landslides are common and earthquakes are not infrequent. Several tribal groups at various cultural levels inhabit the area; most of them are isolated and have little outside contact beyond petty trade with one another or with Tibet and Assam. Although a few of the more northerly groups -- particularly in the northwestern part of the Kameng Division -- have close ethnic and cultural ties with Tibet, most of the hill tribes appear to have little kinship with either the Assamese plains dwellers or the Tibetans.

The crux of the Sino-Indian dispute over the NEFA area concerns the validity of the tripartite 1914 Sino Convention -- which was signed by Great Britain and Tibet but not by China -- and the appended convention map upon which the Tibet-India border (McMahon Line) was drawn. The primary purpose of the convention was to clarify Tibet's relationships with India (Great Britain) and China. India points out that subsequent Chinese protests over the Sino-India agreement were concerned with these relationships -- particularly the delimitation of Inner and Outer Tibet -- not with the McMahon Line. Chou En-lai, however, claims the McMahon Line to be "illegal" since China did not sign or ratify the Sino Convention. He maintains that Tibet was then and is still part of China and cites old maps to support the Chinese claims.

With the possible exception of the Towang area, the greater part of the NEFA territory appears to have had no administration in times past from India, Tibet, or China. Before 1900 the British had made pacts with the various hill tribes designed to keep them from raiding the plains dwellers; but civil administration of the area was left largely unattended. Later, because of Tibetan and Chinese activity along the frontier, several survey and military expeditions were sent into the hills (1911-1913). These expeditions led to the recommendation that the Great Himalaya crest be proposed as a border between Tibet and India (the McMahon Line). The Great Himalaya Range, however, is not in all cases the line of water parting. Despite the drawing of the McMahon Line, almost nothing

has been done to extend administrative control into the hills; and, until drawn at the line separating hill tribes from the plains dwellers (which is in accord with most Chinese maps) or no boundary at all. Not until 1943-44 did the British begin a serious effort to "make good" their McMahon Line. Outposts were established and administration extended to some areas, but sizable areas in the north and northwest remained unadministered. After 1947 the Government of India slowly extended its control; airstrips were built to supply outlying valleys; and more recently, roads have been constructed linking the plains with the administrative headquarters of the Kameng and Subansiri Divisions. In 1954, India was able to install a pro-India abbot at the important Towang Monastery, thus reducing Lhasa's religious ties with the area. Concurrently the Chinese occupation of Tibet resulted in improved communications within Tibet and in an extension of Chinese military and civil control to areas adjacent to the McMahon Line. After the March 1959 uprising in Tibet, several Indian posts were moved to the border vicinity (Longju outpost was occupied in April). The following August, Chinese patrols engaged Indian patrols at Longju and Khinsemang.

Related Border Problems

The undefined status of almost all of the China-India frontier and the wording of recent Chinese pronouncements suggest the possibility that other areas may eventually be disputed. Nepal also is currently concerned, since its 550-mile border with Tibet is undefined and since some minor differences in the boundary alignment may appear on Chinese- and Indian-produced maps. Furthermore, Chinese maps have shown parts of Bhutan -- primarily in the southeast -- as belonging to Tibet. Recent interference with Bhutanese couriers and officials in charge of tiny Bhutanese exclaves in western Tibet suggests the possibility of future problems.

At the western end of the China-India frontier, disputes have arisen between Pakistan and China over their boundary in the tiny mountain state of Hunza. Chinese claims to Hunza are of long standing, dating at least to the early nineteenth century; Hunza, on the other hand, maintained counterclaims in Sinkiang and the Upper Yarkand area. Traditionally, gifts were exchanged between the Mir (ruler) of Hunza and the principal Chinese official in Kashgar. In 1935, following more active Chinese interest in Hunza, British officials persuaded the Mir to abandon most of his claims and end the exchange of gifts. Although at one time both Nationalist- and Communist-produced Chinese maps showed all of Hunza as part of China, recent Chinese maps indicate claims to "only" parts of eastern Hunza. The area is small (about 675 square miles according to the Survey of Pakistan Political Map) but includes the potentially strategic Khunjerab and Pargik Passes leading east to Sinkiang. Particularly troublesome is the grazing area east of the Shishal Pass, near Darband (Darwaza), which the Mir still claims. This interpretation is supported by Pakistani maps. Despite recently increased Chinese activity here, the Hunzakuts still continue to use the pastures near Darband.

Prospects for Future Settlement

Maps of various dates and by different authorities have been used by both China and India to support their versions of the border alignment. These maps, however, merely reflect the lack of border surveys and the absence of boundary markers, and reveal the poorly mapped nature of some frontier sections, which leaves in doubt the exact location of water divides and mountain crestinlines. As indicated by the exchanges between Prime Minister Nehru and Chou En-lai, Indian and British maps could be used to support both Indian and Chinese claims; and, conversely, some Chinese maps could be cited to support either position. To further confuse the issue from the point of view of the United States interest in the problem, maps produced by the US Government have not in all cases been consistent in their treatment of the border; at present the border delineation on official US maps differs in places from that on both Indian and Chinese maps.

Neither India nor China can make an entirely open-and-shut case for its position on all disputed areas. Aside from the onerous task of evaluating the relative validity of Chinese and Indian claims, negotiations over many of the disputed areas will be hampered and confused by the lack of basic surveys and accurate maps. The complexity of these problems coupled with the lack of basic information suggests that any final settlement of the border will neither be soon nor easily accomplished.

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The correct border dispute between China and India is the subject of a long period of growing tension along China's 2,400-mile frontier from Afghanistan to Burma. Only one small section (the Uluksai-Gilgit-Tibet border) has been demarcated on the ground. For the remainder of the border the basis for the alignment is "historical tradition" in the west and the McMahon line in the east. The former is subject to varying interpretations, and the legality of the latter is in question. The dispute is further complicated by a profusion of ancient treaties and maps, national pride, and assumed past grievances. The setting of the dispute is an area of generally uninhabited high mountains and desolate plateaus that are little known and poorly mapped. Access to the frontier is difficult, particularly from the plain of the Indian subcontinent; long, difficult ascents must be made to the high mountainous frontier even over the passes and at elevations of more than 14,000 feet. In contrast the Chinese side of the frontier is backed by plateaus and mountains, generally 14,000 to 16,000 feet high and access to the border is less arduous. Except for the Xinjiang-Tibet road which traverses the disputed Aksai Chin area, no motorable roads currently cross the Indian-claimed border. On the Tibetan side, however, only a few miles remain to be finished in order to complete a road connecting northern India with western Tibet.

Minor border disputes have punctuated the history of sections of the frontier -- particularly the Tibet border west of Nepal -- but, heretofore, conflicting territorial claims have been important only locally. The political union that prevailed along the frontier prior to 1949 ended with the Chinese national occupation of Xinjiang and Tibet in 1950-51. China established military garrisons near the frontier, constructed roads, and initiated surveillance procedures for travelers and border traffic. India reacted by establishing a limited section of frontier posts, beginning the construction of roads into the high mountains, and extending the territory delimited by the Inner Line, which which requires Indian military and official special permission to approach the frontier region. Trade relationships based on tradition became more formalized as China signed trade agreements first with India (1954) and then with Nepal (1956) by which traders and pilgrims were required to enter western Tibet only by certain designated passes and routes and to trade at specified Tibetan markets.

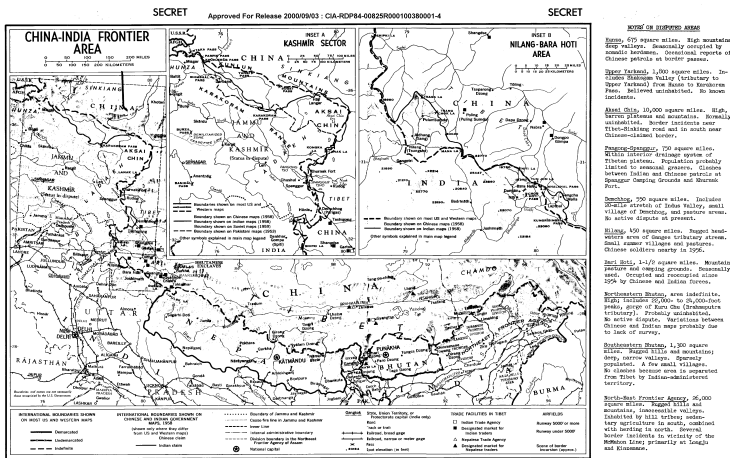
Chinese interference with the activities of Indian officials and border guards prior to the March 1959 Tibetan revolt had increased after the revolt. Eventually the influx of refugees into northern India and the border areas and the actual extension of the area covered by armed patrols along many sections of the ill-defined and poorly mapped frontier resulted in armed clashes. In late August 1959, Nehru admitted that border clashes had occurred along the McMahon line. In early September the Government of India published the first Indo-Indian notes on the border and related issues since 1939, and thereby formed a basis for the continued nature of the frontier, the conflicting cartographic representation of the border, and the various sectors and areas in dispute.

Kashmir-Skiatone-Tibet Sector (See Map Annex A)

The China-Indian border in the north consists of an extensive north-south-south-east-trend region that extends from Afghanistan to a distance of more than 300 miles, and is bordered on north and south by the massive Karakoram and Kailash mountains, respectively. In the north, the Government of India proposed the Chinese Government a border that, with minor exceptions, runs along the McMahon line (the eastern frontiers border) and Karakoram Range. The Chinese did not reply to this proposal. British explorations and expeditions to various points in the upper reaches of the Karakoram Range, particularly with Indo-China Trade caravans apparently provided the basis for the British version of the border along the Karakoram. In the latter part of the 19th and

19th-century and large-scale (British) Survey of India maps of this area were consistent in showing the border. United States cartographers have used as an authority for the Kashmir-Skiatone-Tibet sector each available British map in the 18,000,000 map of Northern India (OSR 2977), first published in 1867. US Government cartographers, however, normally carry a caveat to the effect that the US Government may not recognize the boundaries shown.

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Patented maps the border from Afghanistan to the Karakoram Pass agree in general with the Chinese version. East of the Karakoram Pass, however, the boundary alignments differ markedly. Indian, British, and United States maps show a boundary following, in part, the crest of the Karakoram to about 87°00' E. from here the line trends northwesterly across the Aksai Chin area and joins the Chinese version of the border near the Indus. For the location of the border segment east of the Karakoram Pass, Indian officials apparently have advanced the watershed principle as the chief criterion. The Aksai Chin area, however, consists of a series of basins with interior drainage; their watersheds are circular and, consequently, poorly meaningful for boundary marking. Soviet maps and the 1973 Survey of Pakistan Political Map show a boundary between the Chinese and Indian versions, but somewhat closer to the Chinese.

1957-built Skiatone-Tibet road was discovered and detailed by the Chinese; in July 1959, another Indian patrol was detected and in October, patrol clashes occurred to the south, with resulting casualties. Although the China-Rohat border in this area was never formally delimited, the Indians hold the position that the 1962 treaty between Rohat and Tibet (following Rohat's annexation of Ladakh) established the fact that the border was "well-known," the treaty stating in part that "the boundaries of Ladakh and its surroundings have been fixed from ancient times," implying that demarcation of the border was not necessary. Since a Tibetan with Chinese map signed the treaty and the Republic of China was normally included as one of the negotiating parties, the Indians argue that by the provisions of this treaty China accepted the "old established frontier." The British had stated that China was a party to the 1862 treaty. In agreement, however, that there is a "customary line derived from historical tradition" separating Ladakh from China but insists that the border along an Chinese map -- part and present -- correctly reflects this tradition. Since both countries insist that their map follows the traditional frontier, a question arises as to whether the 1962 treaty was actually

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intended to refer to the northern Ladakh border in the Aksai Chin area, which is with Skiatone-Tibet road with Tibet. The source of knowledge concerning the Aksai Chin, its lack of population and uninhabited, and discrepancies in both old and current maps of this area suggests that the 1962 treaty may have applied only to the eastern Ladakh border with Tibet.

Although Prime Minister Nehru has presented Indian concepts of the Aksai Chin area in a different category from other India-China border disputes. On 10 September, Nehru stated, "It is a matter for argument as to what part of it belongs to us and what part of it belongs to somebody else... This particular area stands by itself, it has been in challenge all the time."

Pangong-Tso and Spangong-Tso Areas Several Jammu-Kashmir-Tibet border areas just south of the Aksai Chin area are disputed, the main problem being the interpretation of the "natural line" along the 1962 treaty and the determination of major watersheds. In the past, disputes in this area (usually over seasonal grazing rights) have been caused by the indefinite nature of the frontier.

In the Pangong-Spangong Tso (lake) area, about 750 square miles are in dispute. The area is generally inhabited only seasonally by nomads and their flocks. North of Pangong Tso, Chinese maps -- and most other maps except those of India and Pakistan -- indicate a boundary generally following the watershed between the upper Spangong tributaries and the interior drainage basin of the Tibetan plateau; Indian maps show a border some 20 to 15 miles to the east. At Shunak Pass (ancient ruins) and Spangong Gaping (old ruins), Chinese troops west of Spangong reportedly are but 8 miles from an Indian landing strip at Chumal. From the standpoint of terrain, the Chinese version of the border -- particularly north of Pangong Tso -- appears sound. There is, however, some merit in holding the boundary at Pangong Tso across the small bit of land separating the two arms of the lake in accordance with the Indian view, thus placing Shunak Pass within India. The Indians state that in a 1934 conference between British and Tibetan officials over disputed pasture areas, Indian jurisdiction over Shunak Pass was not disputed. In the case of Spangong Tso, however, the location of the lake within Tibet -- as shown on Chinese maps -- appears logical from the standpoint of physical geography since the lake is within the interior drainage system of the Tibetan plateau.

Deomung Area For a few miles south of Spangong Tso, the Indian and Chinese borders coincide. In southwestern Ladakh, however, the maps vary in showing where the border crosses the Indus, with Indian maps placing the border about 20 miles upstream from where the Chinese and most other maps show the crossing. Explorers' notes (1949) indicate a Ladakh-Tibet boundary near Deomung, roughly in line with the Indian claim. These facts, no changes in this area have been reported, but the divergence noted on the maps suggests that the Deomung area is a likely trouble spot -- particularly since the Deomung area follows the Indus Valley in one of the routes of entry specified in the 1954 Sino-Indian Trade Convention.

Southernmost Tibet-India Sector

From Ladakh to Nepal, the India-Tibet border is also "traditional," in general following the water-parting line between the two countries, although east of the 25,000- to 29,000-foot peaks of the Great Himalayas range are south of the divide. The border alignment here has had little effect on the Tibetan claim (since parts of the frontier area apparently belonged to Tibet prior to the twentieth century) and is subject to claims based on the water divide. The Government of India relies on support for its claims (based on tradition) in the water-parting criterion) the acceptance by China of the six passes specified in the 1954 Sino-Indian Trade Agreement as the only ones to be used by India in the Himalayas. There appears to be no disagreement between the Chinese and Indians as to the border alignment in the vicinity of these passes. The border is subject to regular patrolling and disputes have occurred in part that "the boundaries of Ladakh and its surroundings have been fixed from ancient times," implying that demarcation of the border was not necessary. Since a Tibetan with Chinese map signed the treaty and the Republic of China was normally included as one of the negotiating parties, the Indians argue that by the provisions of this treaty China accepted the "old established frontier." The British had stated that China was a party to the 1862 treaty. In agreement, however, that there is a "customary line derived from historical tradition" separating Ladakh from China but insists that the border along an Chinese map -- part and present -- correctly reflects this tradition. Since both countries insist that their map follows the traditional frontier, a question arises as to whether the 1962 treaty was actually

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