

INDIA-CHINA BOUNDARY PROBLEM 1846–1947 – HISTORY AND DIPLOMACY
BY A. G. NOORANI

** Dr. Rohit Jadhav*

** Assistant Professor of Economics, Maharashtra National Law University Mumbai, Maharashtra.*

Introduction to the Book and Author:

Boundary issues have always been a key focus in India-China relations. Highlighting the roles of history, policy, and diplomacy, this book traces the origins and development of the boundary problem during the British Raj. A.G. Noorani explains how British efforts to define a boundary in the western sector began immediately after the creation of Jammu & Kashmir in 1846. In contrast, in the eastern sector, such efforts only started sixty-five years later, amid perceived Chinese threats. Analyzing the roles of bureaucracy and diplomatic negotiations, the author offers a nuanced view of treaties, conventions, and internal debates among British officials with conflicting policies. Breaking new ground, this book evaluates the importance of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, and shows how diplomatic developments over the past century influenced the boundary issues between India and China, which eventually escalated into the dispute of 1959. The central argument is that history played a direct role in shaping effective policy. Based on archival research and unpublished sources, this volume includes twenty-two appendices and fourteen maps to offer a unique perspective on a long-standing problem.

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Chapter 1: The Genesis

This chapter contrasts the basic history of both countries boundaries issues. Mainly, various treaties and acts have been mentioned for a detailed understanding of the problem. The issues 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 August 15, 1947, and China likewise entitled on October 1, 1949, when the People's Republic of China was established? The most basic details are mentioned in the chapter.

Chapter 2: Defining Ladakh's Boundaries

This chapter contrasts the basic history of the region of Ladakh. This 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 Treaty of 1846? What were the objectives they set for 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 the capital of British India, and Simla, where the Viceroy resided during the summer. Such questions are discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 3: Search for a Linear Boundary

This chapter discusses the importance of the linear boundary of both countries. Mainly, here discuss the failure of two successive boundary commissions that 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, 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 foolishness of Kashmir's Maharaja. Security problems as pressed themselves for the decision. Such a problem detail discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 4: The Three Kinds of Business Systems

This chapter discusses the importance of discussing the two schools on the boundary, and 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 favours 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 1958-59. These issues were discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 5: Reference to London

This chapter discusses the important contribution of Mr. H.S. Barnes, the Under Secretary. Barnes's suggestion to the Secretary of State for India, with a request to ask the foreign office to explain matters to Russia, soon caused on. "Russia is so ignorant of this part of the country that she does not know what to claim." She should, therefore, be told 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. This historical reference was discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 6: Hunza

This chapter discusses the important region of Hunza. The 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, Kunlun, and Hindu Kush ranges meet. This was a very important region for both countries for security and safety.

Chapter 7: Evolving a Boundary

This chapter explores the various activities of officials from Britain, Russia, and China in involving the boundary. Mainly, Russia's consul Petrovsky did not let the boundary issues 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. This historical reference was discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 8: The 1899 offer to China

This chapter explores the drive for the 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-20th 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. Such an offer was mostly discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 9: The Aftermath of the 1899 Offer

This chapter highlights the strategies after 1899. The record since 1846 reveals differences of opinion within India on the Karaloram 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. Such an offer was mostly discussed in the said chapter.

Chapter 10: The McMahan Line

This chapter discusses the importance of the McMahon Line. The eastern sector of the boundary dispute presents a striking contrast to the western sector in more than one. In Ladakh, the boundary has remained undefined. In the northeast 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 and Kashmir in 1846 and added it to the Empire.

Chapter 11: 15 August 1947

This chapter discusses the importance time situation at Indian Independence. 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). In sum, 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 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.

Chapter 11: The Aftermath

This chapter discusses the importance of 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.

Appendices: Almost 22 appendices have been mentioned in this book, which is very important for understanding the tasks of the book.

Appendix 1: Treaty between Tibet and Ladakh, 1842

Appendix 2: Treaty between the British Government and the State of Lahore, 9 March 1846.

Appendix 3: Treaty of Amritsar, 16 March 1846.

Appendix 4: Diplomatic Exchange with China for a Boundary Agreement, 1846-8.

Appendix 5: Vans Agnew's Memorandum of 13 May 1847 to the East India Company on the Boundary Commission of 1847, 28 July 1847.

Appendix 6: Convention between Great Britain and China Relating to Sikkim and Tibet Signed at Calcutta, 17 March 1890.

Appendix 7: Lieutenant Colonel Gore's 'Note on Aksai Chin' 8 Feb 1897.

Appendix 8: Francis Younghusband's Note on the Boundary between Hunza and Chinese Turkestan, 1898.

Appendix 9: Sir John Ardagh's Memorandum on 'The Northern Frontier of India from the Pamirs to Tibet', 1 January 1897.

Appendix 10: India Rejects the Ardagh Line.

Appendix 11: The Governor-Lord Elgin Defines the Proposed Boundary to the Secretary of State for India, 27 October 1898.

Appendix 12: Britain Formally Proposes a Boundary to China – The Ambassador Sir Claude MacDonald's Note to the Tsungli Yamen 14 March 1899.

Appendix 12A: Francis Younghusband's 'Note on the Boundary between Hunza and Chinese Territory 1904.

Appendix 13: Governor-General Lord Curzon to the Secretary of State for India, 26 January 1905.

Appendix 14: Lord Curzon to the Secretary of State for India, 10 August 1905.

Appendix 15: C. Kirkpatrick's 'Note on the History of the Boundary of Kashmir between Ladakh and Kashgaria', 8 June 1907.

Appendix 16: Indo-Tibetan Exchange of Notes Defining the McMahon Line, 24-5 March 1914.

Appendix 17: Convention between Great Britain, China, and Tibet Initialled at Simla, 27 April 1914.

Appendix 18: Statement by the China Foreign Office Waichiapu, on the Proceedings in Simla, 1914.

Appendix 19: Foreign Secretary Densy Bray's Letter to the India Office on the boundary, 7 September 1917.

Appendix 20: China's Memorandum Listing its Objections to the Simla Convention 1914, 30 May 1919.

Appendix 21: Extracts from Nehru's Note to the Secretary-General and the Foreign Secretary, 1 July 1954.

Appendix 22: Correspondence between Jawaharlal Nehru and Zhong En-lai, 1959.

Conclusion:

This book is also one of the important sources of India-China's border issues. The author has underlined the historic, political, tactical, as well as diplomatic interactions involving India and China during the British era. This explains the origins of the boundary confrontation between the two regional power countries. Specifically, the author attempted to explain how the British battled to safeguard both the western and eastern sector areas from the threat of China, as well as historical data on both countries' claims during the British era. On the other hand, that book is widely regarded as the most important document on India-China border disputes during the pre-and post-independence periods of both countries.

Recommendation:

In "India-China Boundary Problem (1864 – 1947) History and Diplomacy," Author A.G. Noorani provides a comprehensive comparison of the strategies of global, political and strategic acts and highlighting their characteristics and the importance of claims and counterclaims of both. This book is highly recommended for readers, scholars, researchers and general readers interested in understanding China's claim and India's response and beyond.

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