

Abstract

The research work focuses on India's interactions with Tibet and China from the colonial era through to the post-colonial period. The East India Company (EIC) made its initial efforts to establish relationships with the Tibetan government in the mid-18th century to create commercial and diplomatic ties between India and Tibet. During this period, Warren Hastings, the governor-general of Bengal, sent George Bogle as a British diplomatic representative to the court of the Tashi Lama (Panchen Lama). Bogle's visit fostered a closer relationship between India and Tibet. However, once Hastings left India, the policies he had introduced towards Tibet were quickly disregarded. By the late 18th century, geopolitical tensions in the Himalayas, including Nepal's invasion of Tibet and the involvement of the Chinese Empire, completely halted interactions between India and Tibet.

In the early 1800s, the British EIC political influence in India was on the rise. This era saw a conflict between the EIC and Nepal from 1814 to 1816, ending with a treaty. The treaty resulted in significant territorial losses for Nepal and a shift in its political relations with the British. Nepal agreed to accept a British resident within its territory. Nepal ceded the districts of Garhwal and Kumaon and relinquished claims over the Terai region. Following the British annexation of these hills, Tibet shared a common geographical border with India. Another significant event that changed British policy toward Tibet was the colonization of Darjeeling in 1835. In mid-18th century, the rise of Prithvi Narayan Shah in Nepal directly impacted the trading relations between India, Nepal and Tibet. Consequently, the British EIC sought alternative routes to establish commercial ties with Tibet. The eastern Himalayan region had long-standing trade routes from Kalimpong through Jelep La Pass at the Sikkim-Tibet border. Thus, following the cession of Darjeeling from the Raja of Sikkim, the British EIC saw possibilities of developing trade link with Tibet through Darjeeling-Kalimpong. However, later Darjeeling-Kalimpong emerged as an significant *entrepôt* in India-Tibet commercial intercourse.

During the 19th Century, the Tibetan Government upheld a 'close door policy' and declined to engage in any diplomatic relations with the British Government. Nevertheless, the British authorities made several attempts to forge connections with the Tibetan administration. In this context, the Survey of India began conducting geographical explorations in the Himalayan region during the mid-19th century. During this time, local explorers were chosen to carry out covert geographical surveys in Tibet. The outcomes of these expeditions conducted by British agents enabled the British Government to understand the precise geographical boundaries of Tibet. Meanwhile, the British Indian Government sent secret local agents to Tibet to foster interactions between India and Tibet. Additionally, the British carried out a diplomatic mission in the latter half of the 19th Century, but this mission was quickly abandoned. Confrontations did occur between British and Tibetan forces along the Sikkim-Tibet border in the late 19th Century. The British forces emerged victorious against the Tibetan army, subsequently leading to the

signing of a Convention between the British and Chinese Governments, which eventually delineated the geographical boundary between Sikkim and Tibet, and acknowledge British protectorate status over Sikkim by the Chinese. Shortly thereafter, a Trade Agreement was finalized, granting the British to establish a trade mart near the border of Tibet at Yatung. However, the Tibetan government refused to recognize the agreements made between the British and Chinese without their involvement. The British India's Tibet policy initiated by Warren Hastings in the mid-18th Century, aimed at establishing commercial and diplomatic relationships, managed to persevere despite the interruptions. Nonetheless, by the end of the 19th Century, the British Government successfully established trading activities with Tibet.

The arrival of Lord Curzon as Viceroy of India was a pivotal moment that altered British policy towards Tibet. Throughout, the 19th Century, the geopolitical struggle known as the Great Game between Britain and Russia in Central Asia significantly influenced the foreign relations and policies of British colonies, especially India. The British Government consistently prioritized India's position while formulating new strategies. India was the most valuable colony within the British Empire, and any perceived threat to its security was taken with prime concern by the British Government. The British Government made all efforts to ensure the security of India from other powers. In early 1900s, Russian influence in Tibet was growing, which eventually led the British Government to reconsider its approach toward Tibet. During this time, Curzon implemented a forward policy regarding Tibet and received directives from London to establish direct contact with the Tibetan Government. The British Government dispatched a mission led by Francis Younghusband to Tibet, resulting in the Lhasa Convention between the British and Tibetan Governments in 1904. The British mission departed shortly from Lhasa after signing of the Convention. The swift exit of the British mission created a political vacuum in Tibetan geopolitics, which was soon filled by the Chinese. Following the Lhasa Convention, the British Government negotiated a diplomatic with Russia and late with China. At this time, the Chinese were enhancing their political influence in Tibet and soon the Chinese troops invaded Tibetan territory from the eastern frontier of Tibet. This time, the Dalai Lama, the Head of the Tibetan government, fled to British India seeking asylum. Concurrently, the British India Government was extending its administrative control in the eastern Himalayas over tribal areas, dispatching officers to explore the region and establish dominance. However, the Tibetan government maintained political and religious control in some of the areas of northern hills of Assam, and the Chinese were also fortifying their presence in the tribal region of the eastern Himalaya. However, the fall of the last Chinese dynasty in mid-1912 significantly altered the dynamics of relations between India, Tibet, and China.

The British Government desired to settle the boundary demarcation in the Indo-Tibet north eastern frontier. Consequently, the British Government sent invitations to both the Tibetan and Chinese Governments for a tripartite discussion in India. Representatives from both China and Tibet arrived in Simla for the negotiations. The Simla Convention, which took place from 1913 to 1914, resulted in an agreement between only the British and Tibetan representatives, as

the Chinese declined to sign the documents, leading to the demarcation of the border in the eastern Himalayas. This boundary line became known as the McMahon Line. The primary reason for China's refusal to sign the agreement was the division of Tibet into 'inner' and 'outer' regions. Following the Simla Conference, the relationship between the British approaches toward Tibet changed. In the eastern Tibet, there were military confrontations between Chinese and Tibetan forces. The British Government intervened diplomatically during the Sino-Tibetan crisis in an attempt to resolve the issue through negotiations. The Chinese opposed the British Government's role as a mediator between Tibet and China, and began to ask for the bilateral settlement with Tibetan authority without the participation of the British.

The Chinese government sent a diplomatic mission to Lhasa in order to exert political influence over the Tibetan administration. The British also initiated a mission led by Charles Bell to foster diplomatic relations with Tibet. This British mission successfully received a warm response from the Tibetan government. Additionally, Charles Bell personal friendship with the Dalai Lama further showed positive aspects in the Indo-Tibet relations. Later, the British missions continued under the different British officers, and these missions, conducted by British officials, played significant role in reshaping the British policy and attitude toward Tibetan government. In addition, the British Government provided arms and ammunition to Tibet, which subsequently led the Tibetan administration to place orders for military supplies from the British with payment. Before the Dalai Lama's passing, the situation along the eastern frontier between Tibet and China was tense, marked by ongoing clashes. Following the Dalai Lama's death, both the British and the Chinese sought to establish political influence within the Tibetan government. Diplomatic missions were continually sent by the British Government to maintain connection with the authorities in Lhasa. The relationship between the British India and Tibet hinged on the on the diplomatic missions, which persisted until the end of the British rule in India. By the end of the British rule in India boundary question began to surface between India and Tibet regarding the eastern Himalaya which was delimited during the Simla Convention.

After India's independence the diplomatic transition was witnessed in the foreign relations under the new Indian Government. The British Mission in Lhasa was transfer to Indian Mission, and the British officials were replaced by Indian officials in Lhasa. During this time, India's approach towards Tibet was centered on the belief that that Tibet autonomy needed to be secured. The Kuomintang regime was gradually declining by late 1940s while the Communist was gaining victories in various region of China. The rise of the People's Republic of China shifted the approach of India's policy towards Tibet. However, after the People's Liberation Army invasion of Tibet, the geopolitics of Tibet changed and the old theocratic state was now overshadowed by Communist China. China became immediate neighbour to Indian, sharing the long stretch of Himalaya boundary from the Western side in Ladakh to the Eastern side in Arunachal Pradesh.

In 1950s the Chinese began constructing roads in the western side of Indo-Tibet border in India's Aksai Chin territory. Tensions escalated when the Tibetan resistance movement against

Chinese control gained momentum in Tibet by mid-1950s. India's relations with China further effected after Dalai Lama escaped from Tibet and enter into India. China perceived this as India's betrayal of their friendship by granting the Dalai Lama asylum. However, the incursions of Chinese troops into India's Himalayan frontier were on rise. Later, the diplomatic relations between India and China worsened further due to the occurrence of border clashes. During this time, due to the tense atmosphere in both diplomatic and political level the war between these two rival powers in Asia seemed unavoidable. The Chinese forces launched a large-scale military attack in Indian troops stationed in the Himalayan frontier. The Indian Army faced problem during the war with China in the high Himalayan frontier the roads were inadequate for transportation and military supplies were not delivered effectively which caused massive setback for the Indian Army in the face of Chinese troops invasion. Additionally, there was lack of proper coordination among Indian political leaders, bureaucrats, and the Army. Numerous unfavourable factors ultimately contributed to the defeat of the Indian Army during the confrontation in both the western and eastern sectors of India and China border. The war ended with the declaration of the ceasefire by the Chinese troops which ultimately jeopardize India's military superiority internationally. China attacked India with the objective to demonstrate their dominance to the Indian political leaders in Asia.

Following independence, India's relationship with China was initially characterized by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's aspiration to cultivate a friendly rapport. He advocated for the principle of 'peaceful coexistence' and promoted the slogan 'Hindi Chin Bhai Bhai' to underscore the notion of solidarity between the two nations. However, Mao Zedong's expansionist ambitions and governance soon undermined this vision. The historical interplay between India, Tibet, and China from the colonial to post-colonial period has consistently been marked by ambitious diplomacy, comprehensive strategy, and sanguinary war.