

**PEACOCK VERSUS DRAGON: DIPLOMACY, STRATEGY,  
AND WAR 1914-1962**

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## Introduction

On 1 April 2024, I was working at the Arunachal Pradesh State Archive in Itanagar. The weather was cold that day. Suddenly, a news notification appeared on my phone that read China releases fourth list of 30 more names for places in Arunachal Pradesh. At that moment, I felt that it was coincidental to be in this beautiful part of India for my archival visit when this occurred. The history of India and China relations starts after India's independence from the British rule; and, witnesses shift in the relationship after the establishment of People's Republic of China. In the past, however, both the countries share a long historical interaction since ancient time. The rise of the British power in India changed the course in the pattern of connection between these two countries. Nevertheless, the friendship between India and China was soon overshadowed by geopolitical factors.

In 1914 the tripartite Agreement was concluded between the British and the Tibetan plenipotentiaries without the Chinese representative signature on the documents. This particular event shifted the British approach towards Tibet vis-à-vis China. Another reason for the British Government's shift in attitude towards Tibet was the outbreak of World War I. However, after the Simla Convention the Tibetan government maintained its independent status and foreign relations until mid-twentieth century. The Chinese troops incursion in the eastern Tibet was increasing after the Simla Convention which led to frequent clash between Tibet and China. Alastair Lamb has argued that with the end of the Simla Conference British policy with regard to Tibet divided into two streams, sometimes merging and sometimes flowing quiet separately.<sup>1</sup>

From Simla to Rongbatsa truce the British Government provided diplomatic assistance to Tibet to settle crisis with China. The British Government also supplied arms and ammunition to the Tibetan Government, enabling them to strengthen their army against China. During this period, the British diplomatic intervention did not brought 'permanent settlement' between Tibet and China, the reason was that the Chinese government opposed foreign power interference in Tibet. The Chinese government viewed Tibet as an integral part of China, and any foreign

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<sup>1</sup>Alastair Lamb, *Tibet, China & India 1914-1950: A History of Imperial Diplomacy*, Hertfordshire, Roxford Books, 1989, p. 19.

intervention in Tibet was regarded as interference in China's internal matters. China's rejected the British proposal during the Rongbatsa truce and demanded for bilateral agreement with Tibet without the participation of the British.

In November 1920, the British Government dispatched Charles Bell in a diplomatic mission to Tibet. The objective of the mission was to convey to His Holiness the Dalai Lama friendly greetings from the British Government and to explain the present political position. Prior, to the British mission, the Chinese mission after a long journey through eastern Tibet arrived in Lhasa in mid-January 1920. However, the Chinese mission did not succeed in effecting anything definite within the Tibetan government through this mission. But Chinese influence in Lhasa was considerably augmented. The Chinese mission had done what it could to poison the minds of the Tibetan Government and people against British.<sup>2</sup> The deputation of a British official to Lhasa was not only the obvious counter to the Chinese mission but it followed logically fresh approach to the Tibetan question which the Peking Legation had been considering in the light of the negative Chinese reaction to any British attempts to reopen discussions on past agreements.<sup>3</sup> Later, Charles Bell wrote in his work that the mission had been able to smooth away misunderstanding and reestablish confidence between the British and Tibetan Governments.<sup>4</sup>

In late 1920s, however, the anti-British sentiments were growing among the Tibetans they felt that both British and Chinese have similar intentions over Tibet. However, the visits were made by the British Officers to Tibet to develop ties between the authorities of Delhi and Lhasa. In early 1930s, the Chinese troops incursion was growing in eastern Tibet. The Tibetan Government asked for a supply of arms and ammunition to the British Government in payment. By 1932 the Tibetan army was able to retain the Chamdo region from the Chinese but lost some of the region in the frontier to the Chinese and the agreement was signed on 15 June 1933 between the Chinese and the local Tibetan commander.

After the death of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, the Tibet government faced both internal and external problem. During his leadership, the Dalai Lama managed to preserve Tibet's

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Bell, *Tibet Past and Present*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1992, pp. 175-177.

<sup>3</sup> Lamb, *Tibet, China & India*, p. 108.

<sup>4</sup> Bell, *Tibet Past and Present*, pp. 203.

sovereignty and maintained external relations with India and China. In this interregnum phase until the new Dalai Lama was discovered the Tibet was under regent rule. During this period, the British and the Chinese were making attempts to increase political influence within the Tibetan Government. Both India and China began to dispatch diplomatic missions to Tibet to establish ties with the Tibetan government. After Basil Gould mission finally left Lhasa in June 1940 the situation in Europe was grave due to the outbreak of World War II. The British Government had little time to spare for contemplation of problems as remote as those posed by the nature of the Chinese presence in Tibet. However, it soon became apparent that even Tibet could not be isolated from the great global conflict. During this time, the British administration could afford to devote only the minimal resources to Himalayan policy. After the entry of Japan and the United States in the World War II, Tibet acquired a certain geopolitical significance which performance influenced British attitudes.<sup>5</sup>

The diplomatic ties between India and Tibet were sustained through the officials involved in the mission in Lhasa. Their effort to impress and establish a connection with the authorities within the Tibetan Government played a crucial factor in shaping the bilateral relations between India and Tibet during the 1940s. During this time, the Chinese officials in Lhasa established library in response to this the British mission in Lhasa built up their collection of books on Tibet. They used these to impress influential Tibetans, who were given books by writers such as Bell and Tucci which demonstrated European interest in and concern for, Tibet.<sup>6</sup> China's intention over Tibet in the 1940s showed their geopolitical interest by persistently showing Tibet on their maps as a Chinese province.

After the appointment of Shen Tsung-lien as Chairman of the Mongolia and Tibetan Affairs Commission in January 1944 there was a shift in the attitude of the Chinese government towards Tibet. During this time, the British Government in India dispatched mission to Tibet under Basil Gould who reached Lhasa on 31 August 1944. After meeting Gould in Lhasa, Shen pointed out two obstacles in the way of post-war Anglo-Chinese relations one was Hong Kong and the other Tibet. The British Government after the Gould second mission to Lhasa was aware that it was not possible for Tibet to achieve sovereign or quasi-sovereign status vis-à-vis China.

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<sup>5</sup> Lamb, *Tibet, China & India*, p. 299.

<sup>6</sup> Alex McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj: The Frontier Cadre 1904-1947*, Dharamsala, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 2009, p. 241.

Chiang Kai-shek, however, was a firm believer in the theory of the 'Five Race'. However, Olaf Caroe had a very clear perception; China should be pressed to accept Tibet's autonomy. By the eve of the Transfer of Power in 1947 the British Government Foreign Office had decided that the British would now to all intents and purposes cease to have anything to do with Tibet. Later, the news of the Communist victories in China produced great pessimism and anxiety in Tibet, because the godless Communist was considered to be much greater threat to the Tibetan way of life than the Kuomintang.<sup>7</sup>

When India became independent in 1947, it maintained diplomatic missions that had been introduced during British rule in Tibet. The British Mission was changed into the Indian Mission in Lhasa followed by the appointment of the Indian officials and medical teams in Tibet replacing British officials. India desired Tibet to remain free from foreign interference but was not ready to defend Tibet's autonomy. The newly formed independent Government of India drafted a friendly policy towards China without hampering its claim of suzerainty over Tibet. The crisis erupted soon after the People's Liberation Army (PLA) invaded Tibet; and, the boundary question created tense atmosphere in diplomatic level between India-China. The Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950 dramatically altered the geopolitics of the entire region.<sup>8</sup> Tibet, which until then had closer ties to India than China, was no longer a *de facto* independent country. During this period, in 1950s, relations between India and China seemed to blossom under the Hindi slogan *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai*. The next shift in the India's policy towards Tibet and China was witnessed after Indian Government officially recognized Chinese sovereignty over Tibet for the first time through the 1954 Agreement.

India China relations deteriorated in mid-1950s on the issue of the boundary question. During this time, the Chinese geopolitical interest within the territory of India was increasing. The China began to build roads inside Indian territory on the western sector of the boundary between India and Tibet. Further the Chinese used the Aksai Chin route to supply western Tibet through the first half of the 1950s, and claimed that during this time they patrolled and surveyed the whole Aksai Chin area. However, India Government issued map changes in 1954 showing Aksai Chin as part of India. And the Chinese activity on Aksai Chin in the 1950s did not arouse

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<sup>7</sup> Melvyn C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989, p. 612.

<sup>8</sup> Bertil Linter, *China's India War*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 14.

the Indian Government. The Government of India did not know about the Chinese road building in the Aksai Chin.<sup>9</sup> Paradoxically, India's position in the North East Frontier Agency was more strategic in nature vis-à-vis China. During this time, India's strategy in NEFA was to establish political authority over the borderland's inhabitants. The roads were built to enable contact with the local communities in a way favourable to the administration.<sup>10</sup>

The rise of the Tibetan resistance against the Chinese in Lhasa shifted the India's relations with China. By late 1957, Khampa resistance in Tibet changed into a nationwide rebellion. The Chinese wanted to use force to suppress resistance but feared that such action might ignite an uprising in central Tibet.<sup>11</sup> The escape of 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama from Lhasa to India added more tension both in the diplomatic and political level between India and China. However, 1959 revolt marked the end of the attempt to forge a co-existence between Communist China and Buddhist Tibet. The flight of the Dalai Lama symbolized the final demise of Tibet as an autonomous entity with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Further, whatever the weakness of the 17-Point Agreement, it did provide scope for the Chinese and the Tibetans to work together.<sup>12</sup>

The diplomatic and political tension between India and China was increasing in the Himalayan frontier. From July 1962, the relations between the two countries entered the crucial stage which finally triggered conflict. During this period, the major cause of diplomatic failure between India and China relation was due to the Chinese troops violations of international border line. China considered Indo-Tibet boundary demarcated during colonial period was done without their consent and never recognized it. This escalated further tension resulting into confrontation in the Himalayas between the Indian Army and the PLA of China.

### **Scope and Objective**

The study examines India's policy with Tibet and China from the colonial to post-independence period. It also examines the role of agents, envoys, and administrators in the initial stage of

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<sup>9</sup> Neville Maxwell, *India's China War*, Dehra Dun, Natraj Publishers, 2015, pp. 83-87.

<sup>10</sup> Bérénice Guyot-Réchar, *Shadow States: India, China and the Himalayas, 1910-1962*, Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 110.

<sup>11</sup> Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947*, London, Pimlico, 1999, pp. 165-166

<sup>12</sup> Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land*, p. 208.

British policy towards Tibet. Further, the study examines the intercourse between India and Tibet from the eastern Himalayan region, exploring aspects of trade and bilateral ties. The aim of the study is to examine the transition in India's policy towards Tibet vis-à-vis China and Russia during early twentieth century. The study also examines the British forward policy and military invasion in Tibet. The study attempts to examine British expansionist policy within the tribal region in the eastern Himalayas. Additionally, the study explores the British diplomatic intervention during the Sino-Tibet crisis after the Simla Convention. The objective of the study is to understand British policy towards Tibet in relation to China following the end of the tripartite agreement in 1914. Furthermore, the study investigates the supply of arms and ammunition to Tibet from India. The study also explores the role of the British officers and local agents in channelizing the connection between Delhi and Lhasa. Additionally, it aims to study the diplomatic, strategic, and boundary conflicts between India and China following the end of colonial rule in India.

This thesis analyzes shift in British diplomacy and strategy in Tibet. It further explores the role of the British frontier officers in the eastern Himalayas and Tibet. Additionally, the thesis investigates the impact of British military logistics assistance to Tibet on India's relations with China. It also examines the boundary issue and the factors that led to the outbreak of the India-China War of 1962. Furthermore, this thesis looks into the coordination between India's civilian leaders and military officers during the crisis in the Himalayan frontier with China. Finally, this thesis attempts to analyze India's territorial dispute with the People's Republic of China and the significance of the Tibet factor following the outbreak of war.

## **Literature Review**

The existing literature has contributed immensely on our understanding of the relations between India, Tibet and China within geopolitics of Asia. The colonial historical writing has explored the evolution of the British policy towards Tibet in relation to China. Many scholars such as J.C. White, Charles A. Sherring, Francis Younghusband, Charles Bell, and Erich Teichman writings delves with the aspect of commercial and diplomatic developments between India and Tibet. In the post-colonial history writing on India's diplomatic relations with Tibet and China throws light on India's policy with China in regards to boundary question and Tibet factor. These aspects remain important discourse among the scholars while constructing the history of post-

independence India's diplomacy towards China. Scholars such as Melvyn C. Goldstein, Alastair Lamb, Claude Arpi, Neville Maxwell, Betil Lintner, Parshotam Mehra, Amar Kaur Jasbir Singh, and A.G. Nooranih has explored and traces out the British policy towards Tibet vis-à-vis China and has interpreted the failure of diplomatic relations between India and China through different angle and understanding. Additionally, the account of B.M. Kaul, J.P. Dalvi, and G.S. Bhargava on the India China War gives insight of the India army strategic preparation for war and a very different perspective on India's defeat during the war. The existing of the voluminous literature in India China relations after colonial period delves through different perspective and reflects multiples dimensions in understanding the evolution of India's foreign policy, strategic developments and the diplomatic ties with China within a context of the bilateral relationship.

Charles Bell book entitled *Tibet Past and Present* gives an account of the British policy towards Tibet in the early phase of twentieth century. The book also delves into the Tibetan history from earliest times, tracing out the historical background of Tibet's politics, religion, geography, and culture, and particularly focusing on the period witnessed by the author himself in early twentieth century. Bell work gives an inside view of the Tibet, his service for eighteenth years on the Indo-Tibetan frontier and his personal relationship with Dalai Lama and with the Lhasa authorities has been well accounted by author in his book. Bell has pointed out that the supply of the military logistics by the British Government to the Tibetan Government after the Simla Convention certainly helped Tibet in strengthening its army against China troops. He further pointed out that there was no desire among the Tibetan people in completely detaching themselves from the China's supremacy. In the context of freedom from Chinese political influence, the Tibetans do not desire a complete severance of their long-standing political connection with China.<sup>13</sup> The book mostly covers the period of Charles Bell involvement on the British policy towards Tibet which lasted until early 1920s. However, the conflicting boundary claims of China and Tibet at the tripartite conference in Simla, and the question of Tibet's sovereignty dragged on unsettled through the years of the World War I. Prior, to the end of the Great War, the resumption of active hostilities was witnessed on the Sino-Tibetan frontier which culminated to the restoration of peace in the border in 1918. During this

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<sup>13</sup> Bell, *Tibet Past and Present*, pp. 217-218.

time, the Chinese government had a limited political control over the Western Provinces and the Tibetan frontier.

Eric Teichman book entitled *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*<sup>14</sup> throws light in this period on the context of the British intervention over Tibet after the tripartite agreement of 1914. This book gives a personal account of the author during his service in the frontier of Tibet and China. Teichman has traces out the history of Sino-Tibetan relations from the Chinese side with close attention for many years and has well documented the events and hostilities that broke out between Chinese and Tibetans on the eastern border of Tibet and China in 1918. His work gives primary account of the British intervention in Sino-Tibet crisis in the eastern frontier of Tibet, and his personal involvement in promoting peace between China and Tibet by acting as mediator between the local frontier leaders on both sides in restoration of peace and tranquility is explore in this book.<sup>15</sup> Further, this book highlights his long and arduous journeys through remote and largely unknown regions of Eastern Tibet to settle the dispute between two rival powers. Teichman has pointed out in his work that in 1917 the eastern frontier of Tibet was free from the Chinese rule. The Tibetan Government maintained internal peace and prosperity in the region, and reorganized its army in the frontier vis-à-vis Chinese troops.<sup>16</sup> He further pointed out that China having recognised the principle of Tibetan autonomy under Chinese suzerainty, it is mainly the question of the boundary between China and autonomous Tibet which has proved so difficult of solution. During this time, the hostilities between Tibet and China were escalating in the eastern frontier of Tibet regarding the question of the boundary settlement. The British Government intervenes diplomatically to solve the problem but failed to persuade the Chinese government for the permanent settlement of the Tibet's political identity and boundary question.

Alastair Lamb book entitled *Tibet, China & India 1914-1950* traces out the India's political and diplomatic relations with Tibet and China after the conclusion of tripartite talk in Simla until the end of old Tibet. He has argued that the basic defect of the 1914 Convention was that it expected China to sign away the Tachienlu-Batang province in Szechuan. He further

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<sup>14</sup> Eric Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet: Together with A History of the Relations between China, Tibet and India*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1922.

<sup>15</sup> Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer*, p. 58.

<sup>16</sup> Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer*, p. 51.

argues that the failure of the tripartite talk in Simla was the division of the whole Tibet into Inner and Outer Tibet.<sup>17</sup> The British Government supply of the arms and ammunition to the Tibetan created negative impact on the Anglo-Chinese relations. The Chinese government, therefore, were convinced that the British were assisting the Tibetans in aggression against China. He argues that the Tibetan government misused British Indian aid which further created diplomatic problem for British to bring Chinese under the peaceful settlement with Tibet.<sup>18</sup> Lamb pointed out that by February 1920 the history of the Tibetan problem was clearly entering a new phase. The attempts to bring China to some binding agreement which would protect those features of Tibetan autonomy so desirable to the security of British India completely failed.<sup>19</sup> This book further highlights the role of the British diplomatic mission carried out by the British officers Charles Bell, Leslie Weir, F. Williamson, Basil Gould, Arthur Hopkinson, and Hugh Richardson in developing diplomatic connection between India and Tibet. Lamb pointed out that the Tibetan attitude towards China was neither constant nor unambiguous; and, moreover, the Simla Convention itself, to which Tibet had adhered by the Declaration of 3 July 1914, ruled out a total Tibetan independence from China. There was always, if only latent, Chinese suzerainty over Tibet.<sup>20</sup>

Amar Kaur Jasbir Singh book entitled *Himalayan Triangle: A Historical survey of British India's relations with Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan 1765-1950* highlights the British India's relations with Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan since the extension of East India Company control over Bengal and adjacent areas focusing an integrated appraisal of the development of these three kingdoms their closely inter-linked political and religious ties. Singh pointed out that the decline of British prestige in Tibet in mid-1920s was due to the failure of the British Government to secure Chinese adhesion to the Simla Conference. Also, the separate attempts to get China to reopen the negotiations proved unsuccessful.<sup>21</sup> She further traces out that the Britain was less directly interested in the question of the location of the Sino-Tibetan boundary, of prime importance to Tibet perhaps, and China did not intend to accept British intervention in matters

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<sup>17</sup> Lamb, *Tibet, China & India*, p. 40.

<sup>18</sup> Lamb, *Tibet, China & India*, pp. 52-74.

<sup>19</sup> Lamb, *Tibet, China & India*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>20</sup> Lamb, *Tibet, China & India*, p. 515.

<sup>21</sup> Amar Kaur Jasbir Singh, *Himalayan Triangle: A Historical survey of British India's relations with Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan 1765-1950*, p. 94.

concerning Tibet.<sup>22</sup> She argues in her work that independent Indian Government was not ready to guarantee Tibetan autonomy, in the face of Communist China, which would have meant bringing Tibet under some measure of Indian control.<sup>23</sup> Her work throws much light on how India's relations with China deteriorated during the colonial period and how Tibet emerged as a significant factor in Anglo-Chinese relations in the first half of the twentieth century. As well as explaining why Bhutan has managed to remain tolerably free of direct Indian control while Sikkim, as an independent state came under the Indian union in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>24</sup>

Wendy Palace in her book entitled *The British Empire and Tibet, 1900-1922* argues that the Younghusband expedition had a profound and long term effect on British and Tibetan relations. She further pointed out that there was a sad inevitability about the quadrilateral conflict that developed within the British Foreign Service over the Tibetan question between 1904 and 1922. The author has pointed out that the problem which Tibet presented for India was quite different. For the Indian government control over Tibet was primarily related to the wider issue of frontier security, although commercial interest was also main objective for the British to gain political influence beyond Himalayas. Further this book highlights that after departure of the Bell from Lhasa in 1921 Tibet again began to withdraw from entanglements with the outside world. Palace argues that if the British government acted as protector for Tibet it might have gained its sovereignty. There was never any real intention on British Government part to try to take over the running of the country. Palace argues that the British interest posed a very real threat to Tibetan security, and British commercial and geopolitical interest helped to create the very conditions that made the Chinese invasion possible later.<sup>25</sup>

Alex McKay in his book entitled *Tibet and the British Raj: The Frontier Cadre 1904-1947* highlights the role of the frontier officer's in the British India and Tibet relationship. His work comes up with the narrative describing the Tibet's cadre's role in the events from the Younghusband until the end of the British rule focusing in two main issues that is the character of cadre officers and how this affected their actions and, secondly, the image of Tibet which

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<sup>22</sup> Singh, *Himalayan Triangle*, p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> Singh, *Himalayan Triangle*, p.141.

<sup>24</sup> Singh, *Himalayan Triangle*, pp. 275-276.

<sup>25</sup> Wendy Palace, *The British Empire and Tibet, 1900-1922*, Oxon, RoutledgeCurzon, 2005, pp. 143-149.

cadre constructed. This image shaped British administrator's historical understanding of Tibet.<sup>26</sup> Further this book particularly traces out on individual role of the cadre officers with Tibet and Tibetans, their love of Tibet and their role there made it difficult for them to detach themselves from Tibetan affairs when they retired from their duties in Tibet.<sup>27</sup> This book shows that the attitude and perceptions of the British and Chinese over Tibet varied, the view held by Whitehall in London on Tibet and the view held by the cadre was opposite to that of Chinese frontier officials and their central government there perspective was consistent that Tibet is integral part of China.<sup>28</sup> The author argues that the British missions to Tibet theoretically remained temporary but the officer involved were determined not to depart, at least while the Chinese remained in Lhasa; and, for the Tibetans this British missions were a channel of contact with the outside world.<sup>29</sup> He further pointed out that the cadre saw themselves as frontiersmen of the Raj, protecting India against Russia influence and bringing progress to local societies and they identified themselves as diplomats.<sup>30</sup>

In mid-1930s Chinese issued a map showing most of the Indian territory within the Chinese geographical limitations and questioned the validity of the Indo-Tibet boundary settled during the Simla Convention. A.G. Noorani in his book entitled *India-China Boundary Problem 1846-1947 History and Diplomacy* has traces out the history boundary demarcation in all the sectors between the India and China demarcated in the colonial period. He argued that when Jammu & Kashmir was added within the British Empire the annexation of this territory brought along a boundary problem for the British with China. This book highlights the role of history, policy and diplomacy and traces the origin and escalation of India-China boundary problems during the colonial period. The author pointed out that in the eastern sector of the Indo-Tibet boundary was demarcated very late in 1914 compare to the western sector. The writer pointed out that after the India's independence from the yoke of the British rule the leaders of independent India had totally different boundary consciousness they were more concerned about the eastern border and were only dimly aware of the western sector.<sup>31</sup> This book evaluates the

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<sup>26</sup> McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*, p. 151.

<sup>28</sup> McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*, p. 154.

<sup>29</sup> McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*, pp. 169-170.

<sup>30</sup> McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*, p. 217.

<sup>31</sup> A.G. Noorani, *India-China Boundary Problem 1846-1947: History and Diplomacy*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 168.

significance of India gaining independence from colonial rule and examines how the diplomatic events over century impacted the border question in the Sino-Indian relations. In the history of India, Tibet and China the boundary question stands as a significant factor to understand the diplomatic crisis between these two countries during the colonial time. In the past India and China never shared a common geographical boundary but the interaction between these two countries existed over centuries. The commercial link through Silk Route connected both the countries economically and culturally in ancient period. However, the connection was also established through Buddhism between India and China. India began to share common boundary with Tibet only after the Anglo-Nepalese War 1814-16 when British successfully acquired some of the strategic Himalayan hilly regions from Nepal.

During the British rule the boundary settlement was concluded with China and Tibet in both western and eastern sectors. Nevertheless, the boundary issue became important concern during the post-colonial period for India and China. Chinese refuse to recognise the border set by the British and instead asserted their claim based on historical ground. Therefore, in order to comprehend the diplomatic conflict between India and China, the boundary dispute arises as a significant factor. Parshotam Mehra book entitled *The McMahon Line and After* highlights that the India's boundary relations in the eastern Himalayan region and it also traces the triangular contest between Britain, Tibet and China since the British invasion over Tibet in the beginning of the twentieth century. He has pointed out in his work that despite the Indian potentate's unambiguously authoritative assertion in regard to a north-east frontier policy or province, the expedition to Lhasa gave a powerful impetus to activity on this part of the frontier.<sup>32</sup> He further pointed out that the British became suddenly aware of the eastern frontier in mid-1930s, which had, over the years since the Simla Conference, been largely neglected.<sup>33</sup> This book explores the British political developments in the north-eastern frontier since early twentieth century focusing on the expedition of the British officers in tribal region of Assam northern frontiers. The author further delves into the diplomatic aspects between British India, Tibet, and China in solving the boundary question. He further pointed out that the boundary issue in the eastern Himalayan frontier of India remained disputed with both Tibet and China until the end of the British rule.

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<sup>32</sup> Parshotam Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After: A study of the Triangular Contest on India's North-eastern Frontier Between Britain, China and Tibet, 1904-47*, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Mehra, *The McMahon Line*, p.415.

The history of India, Tibet and China after the end of the British rule in India has been dealt by different approaches by the existing literature. The post-independence study has explored on the India's relations with China after the establishment of the PRC within the aspects of boundary question and Tibet factor. India's policy with China began with the friendly approach, and also maintained its diplomatic position in Tibet by establishing Indian Mission. However, after the PLA invaded Tibet the relations between India and China change with new dimension on diplomatic and political level. India attempted to establish friendly bilateral ties with China and by mid-1950s India recognised the Chinese government sovereignty over Tibet and signed the agreement of peaceful co-existence. During this time, the Chinese incursion into Indian territory was escalating, and soon the long stretch of the Himalayan boundary began to emerge as point of dispute between these two giants of Asia. The other factor that overshadowed the friendship was Tibet. The rise of the Tibetan resistance against Chinese oppression in Tibet and escape of the Dalai Lama further escalated diplomatic tension between India and China. The crisis in the Himalayan frontier was increasing by early 1960s which ultimately led to the outbreak of war. The existing historical literature throws light on the diplomatic failure, boundary question, and Tibet factor on the context of the hostilities between these two rival powers in Asia.

Neville Maxwell book entitled *India's China War* and Bertil Lintner's book entitled *China's India War*, both the authors had showed opposite perspectives on the Sino India War of 1962 arguing each other on their framework of understanding the historiography of this event. Neville Maxwell main argument in his book was that the implementation of the Indian Government 'forward policy' in the Himalaya frontiers led to the outbreak of war between India and China.<sup>34</sup> He also pointed out that Jawaharlal Nehru from very soon after the boundary dispute became a political issue in India began to speak of war with China as a possibility. The author further pointed out that since the beginning to end, Nehru and his colleagues were unwavering in their faith that, whatever India herself did along the borders, China would not attack. That was the basic assumption of the forward policy, a military challenge to a militarily far superior neighbour.<sup>35</sup> Bertil Lintner in his work argues that before the Lhasa revolt, the Chinese had established military outposts all over Tibet, including in areas close to the Indian

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<sup>34</sup> Maxwell, *India's China War*, pp. 191-221.

<sup>35</sup> Maxwell, *India's China War*, p. 197.

territory. New roads had also been built down to the Indian border opposite the NEFA in the east. It is not hard to arrive at the conclusion that China's own forward policy was more aggressive and assertive than India's.<sup>36</sup>

Bérénice Guyot Réchard book entitled *Shadow State India, China, and the Himalayas, 1910-1962* gives a new perspective on the understanding of contention between India-China in the eastern Himalayan region from the early to the mid-twentieth century. The book throws light on that how these two powers in Asia showed their presence in the NEFA region by using diplomatic policy to bring the people of the region under their shadow. She argues that a key dimension of the 1962 war has hitherto stayed buried, however. The conflict was preceded not just by militarily and diplomatic escalation between India and the PRC but by an older and increasingly tense shadowing contest to convince the eastern Himalayas' inhabitants that one state, and not the other, was better alternative. She further argues that the 1962 war did not halt China and India's tug of war for Himalayan people's allegiance and cooperation. In fact, it was its culmination. By invading NEFA, the PRC did not just aim to force a humiliated India to recognise its possession of the Aksai Chin. It also hoped to get, once and for all, the upper hand in their shadowing competition.<sup>37</sup> Calude Arpi book entitled *1962 and the McMahon Line*<sup>38</sup> highlights the accounts of British successful establishment of trade agreement with Lhasa and also traces out the British policy in the eastern Himalayas to find out the trade routes to Tibet conducting promenades, explorations and expeditions mainly in Tawang, Siang Valley and Lohit Valley in north-eastern Himalayas. This book explores British geopolitical interest on the Assam northern frontiers and explorations of the British officers in the tribal region. It further shows that the British diplomatic approach during Simla Convention and conclusion of the boundary demarcation in eastern Himalaya was created by the British Government to safeguard the region from China. The author argues that the British India Government adopted a policy towards Tibet to maintain her strong hold and balance of power in eastern Himalaya. However independent India Government did not adopt such a proper policy for which she had to face Chinese aggression in 1962.

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<sup>36</sup> Lintner, *China's India War*, p. xii.

<sup>37</sup> Guyot-Réchard, *Shadow States*, p. 235.

<sup>38</sup> Claude Arpi, *1962 and the McMahon Line Saga*, Lancer Publishers & Distributors, 2013.

B.M. Kaul entitled *The Untold Story*<sup>39</sup> where the author gives an account of his experiences and some crucial facts about the Sino-Indian War of 1962. He served as the Lieutenant General in the Indian Army and during the period from 1961-62 he served as the Chief of General Staff. He is also regarded as the architect of Indian military response to the Chinese aggression. Kaul personal account throws light in the insight of India-China War. He argues that so far as defence was concerned, neither Nehru nor any of his Ministers evolved a comprehensive defense policy.<sup>40</sup> He further argues that no doubt Chinese had treacherously violated our territory on many occasions and given us sufficient provocation. But we should not have fought against her in 1962 single handed until we were fully prepared.<sup>41</sup> Some other work such as *Documents of Indian Affairs*<sup>42</sup> published in the year 1960 edited by Girja Kumar and V. K. Arora provides some important accounts on the border disputes between India-China it was issued under the auspices of the Indian Council of World Affairs.

Alastair Lamb book entitled *The China-India Border; the Origins of the Disputed Boundaries*<sup>43</sup> published in the year 1964 throws light on the aspects of the background and the nature of the India-China border problem. The book also traces out the frontiers and peoples in the border region of the India with China. The administering the McMahon Line is dealt separately in one of the chapter of the book by the author. Lamb argues in this book that India did not attempt to offer the few concessions which she could in all justice have made rather than have persisted in her declarations of absolute right. Tan Yun-Shan book entitled *China, India and the War*<sup>44</sup> highlights the China's participation on the international affairs and its involvement during European War and Pacific War. The book further highlights some of the key aspects of the India-China relations.

B. N. Mullik book entitled *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal*<sup>45</sup> explores the invasion of China over Tibet and argued that quiet unmindful of the strain on Tibet's economy,

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<sup>39</sup> B.M. Kaul, *The Untold Story*, Bombay, Allied Publishers, 1967.

<sup>40</sup> Kaul, *The Untold Story*, p. 330.

<sup>41</sup> Kaul, *The Untold Story*, p. 480.

<sup>42</sup> Girja Kumar and V.K. Arora (ed.), *Documents on Indian Affairs 1960*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1965.

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

<sup>44</sup> Tan Yun-Shan, *China India and the War, Part I*, Calcutta, China Press Limited, 1944.

<sup>45</sup> B.N. Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal*, Bombay, Allied Publishers, 1971.

China went on increasing her forces in Tibet till the strength reached the peak figure of fourteen divisions in 1962. All this roused no protest from any country in the world, and in the United Nations Tibet was conveniently forgotten. Mullik further pointed out that the Pandit Nehru was never blind to China's imperialist ambitions. On the context of the NEFA Mullik has pointed out that the entire NEFA area bordering Tibet was under the administration of two part-time officers of district rank, and they hardly ever visited the interior region. Nominal administration was through agents amongst the various tribes called Gaon Buras or Dubhashis. Mullik further added that the Chinese waited for the suitable weather condition in NEFA by mid-September because the weather in NEFA and all the northern frontiers would normally clear. He further pointed out that the Chinese Army position on the whole of northern frontier of India-China in Ladakh, Sikkim and in NEFA to be well set for an offensive attack and there was no significant sign of offensive preparations in the central Sector of India-China border.

The other published secondary source includes *Indian Armed Forces Year Book 1955* compiled and edited by Jaswant Singh published by The Indian Youth. The book gives accounts of various departments of the Indian Army of this period. Similarly, another book titled *Military Year Book 1965 and 1966* compiled and edited by Sukhdeo Prasad Baranwal which gives account of the Chinese invasion of India. The book titled *Indian Armed Forces Year Book 1971* compiled and edited by Jaswant Singh investigates the Sino-Indian War 1962. The book published by 'Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India' entitled *China's Betrayal of India; Background to the Invasion* explores the event of war and the heroic resistance put by Indian soldiers and the magnificent response of the people of all parts of India in all walks of life to Prime Minister Nehru's call for united effort for the defence of the country's freedom.

## **Methodology**

The research work is based on both primary and secondary sources. The study has involved historical, empirical and descriptive study on India's policy towards Tibet and China. Among the primary sources used in study includes Foreign Department proceedings, correspondence, letters, telegrams, and government reports. Further the primary sources used in study are from Foreign and Political Department External files, External Affairs Department documents and files,

Ministry of External Affairs proceedings on North East Frontier Branch, and annual reports. The primary sources include data are collected from the National Archives of India, New Delhi; Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi; West Bengal State Archive, Kolkata; Assam State Archives, Guwahati; and Arunachal Pradesh State Archives, Itanagar. The secondary sources are the books and articles published on the subject.

### **Research Question**

1. Why did the British EIC establish connections with Tibet?
2. Why British dispatch a military expedition over Tibet?
3. What was the British approach towards Tibet vis-à-vis China after 1914?
4. How did British retain its political and diplomatic influence in Tibet after 1933?
5. What was India's diplomacy and strategy regarding Tibet and China after 1947?

### **Chapterisation**

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter of this thesis delves into the historical background of the India-Tibet relations which began under the governor-generalship of Warren Hastings. During this period, the first British envoy George Bogle was dispatched by Hastings to the court of Tashi Lama (Panchen Lama) to develop commercial and friendly intercourse between India and Tibet. The chapter also provides assessment on the historical past of Tibet's geography, polity, religion and culture; and, its relations with Chinese Empire. It highlights the early western missionaries mainly both Capuchin and Jesuit exploration in Tibet. Further, traces out the British political developments in the eastern Himalayan region and Tibet. This work also gives account of confrontation between Tibet and Nepal during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The chapter also shows the British trade with Tibet from Darjeeling-Sikkim region and also the opening of trade mart and demarcation of the India-Tibet boundary in Sikkim.

The second chapter delves into the British political motives within Central Asian geopolitics. The proposed chapter covers the period from the Curzon to Hardinge, providing insight into the geopolitical tensions involving British India, Russia and China in Tibet. In the beginning of twentieth century the British India Government was observing Russia growing

influence in Tibet. The contact between the authorities of Lhasa and Moscow was increasing and the British were not ready to acknowledge Russia influence over Tibet. Implementations Curzon's forward policy towards Tibet actually shows the British Government of India insecurities regarding Tibet. Later, after the British invasion of Tibet the British were diplomatically engaged in concluding agreements with Russia and China. The chapter gives an understanding of Tibet political status in Central Asian politics. And the power struggle between Britain, Russia and China in asserting their political influence in Tibet.

The third chapter traces out the British India's policy after the Simla Conference with Tibet vis-à-vis China. It also delves in the Sino-Tibetan crisis in the eastern Tibet and the British intervention during Sino-Tibet crisis. It delves into the role of the British officers involved in the India-Tibet relations and their attempts in establishing a contact with the Tibetan authorities. The British relations with Tibet during this period remained diplomatic and as intermediary between Tibetan and Chinese. Tibetan authorities appealed frequently to the British intervene diplomatically when they had a problem with China. The only failure of the British policy towards Tibet in this era was that they couldn't persuade the Chinese to make a permanent settlement with the Tibetan government. Furthermore, the chapter examines the diplomatic connection establish by the visits of the British officials in their mission to Lhasa.

This fourth chapter examines British influence in Tibet after the death of the Dalai Lama. The British policy to Tibet this time was based on the temporary diplomatic mission. During the final phase of the British India and Tibet relations the Political Officer in Sikkim and the Trade Agencies played a significant role in developing India-Tibet relations. The Sino-India rivalry over Tibet became acute in this time. The chapter explores the understanding of the geo-political situation between India, Tibet and China during the World War II and role of the frontier officers in continuing the British relations with Tibet vis-à-vis China. The British policy towards Tibet form mid-1930s existed on the continuance of mission by the officers till the end of their rule in India.

The fifth chapter delves into the post-independence developments in India's policy towards Tibet and China. The India's relation with China since the end of the British rule was defined by the Chinese expansionist ambitions. The approach of the Indian Government on the boundary issue was to settle through negotiations. However, the Chinese Government never

accepted the traditional boundary demarcated during the British rule. Another issue that overshadowed the India-China relations was Tibet. The Tibet uprising followed by the Dalai Lama escape into India created tense atmosphere between two nations. The tension further escalated in early 1960s in the Himalayan frontiers which ultimately led to clash. This chapter will explore boundary issue and Tibet problem between India and China. The chapter also traces the transition in India-China relations after the establishment of PRC.

The conclusion of the thesis addresses that the British policy after the Simla Conference towards Tibet saw shift in diplomatic approach and the involvement of the British officers in India-Tibet relations. The Political Officer of Sikkim continued to develop link with the authorities in Lhasa. However, the British Government supplied the arms ammunition to the Tibetan Government but did not indulge directly with the Sino-Tibetan crisis which was occurring in the eastern frontier of Tibet. Charles Bell Mission to Lhasa has little impact to the authorities both in New Delhi and at Whitehall in London. Hereafter the British mission under different officers attempted to develop link with Lhasa. China on the other hand was encroaching Tibetan territory and also in the eastern Himalayan of India. After 1947, the new independent India Government continued same policy of the British toward Tibet but soon it was shattered after the PLA troop's occupation of Tibet. The boundary question and Tibet factor remained hurdle in the India-China relations. The outbreak of 1962 war finally overshadowed further hope of strengthening the ties between India and China.

## **Research Findings**

India's policy towards Tibet and China has been the most debated subject and has received attention of scholars. British policy towards Tibet vis-à-vis China the scholars have engaged with the question of the diplomatic relations between India, Tibet, and China with different approaches. Most scholars have considered that British relations with Tibet began with the quest of establishing diplomacy and gaining control of commercial activities. My research reveals that the British main motives in extending their influences on the eastern Himalaya region were focused on developing trade route to Tibet. The research also reveals the role of the British officers in developing the trade route into the region. The research reveals that the British

adopted various strategies to gain political control in the Himalayan states to gain access to Tibet and the clandestine activities of the British agents within Tibet actually hampered the development of British early attempts to establish 'direct' contact with the Tibetan Government. However, Tibet's 'close door policy' and Chinese influence were the major factor in obstructing India and Tibet ties.

The research also reveals that the British policy towards Tibet allowed the Tibetan Government to maintain its distinct identity in the geopolitics of Asia. After the British military invasion over Tibet the British policy shifted into gaining diplomatic recognition within the other powers like Russia and China and the question of Tibet for the British remained more or less temporary diplomacy. The research reveals that the British policy towards Tibet vis-à-vis China after the tripartite talk between India, Tibet, and China shifted towards 'indirect' diplomacy. The British Officers on the frontiers and the Political Officers played crucial role in shaping the British ties with Tibet vis-à-vis China. The role of the British Officers in channelizing the correspondence between the authorities in Delhi, Lhasa, and Peking certainly influence the British Governments both in India and Britain. The research reveals that the British failed to gain a geopolitical settlement with the China. The continuation of the British Missions in Tibet was the strategy of the British Government to extent its support to the Tibetan Government in the geopolitics of Asia.

The research reveals that the after the end of the British rule in India the independent Government of India approach towards Tibet and China was highly diplomatic in nature. India wanted Tibet to stay out of China's influence and also maintained close diplomatic relations with China. The research reveals that the Tibet issue and the boundary question became important factor in India and China relations. The boundary conflict between India-China had its origin to the colonial period. India's 'inheritance right' and China's 'historical claim' over the Himalaya border escalated the conflict between these two rival powers in Asia. The defeat of India in the war with China was the failure of the Indian Government in re-organizing Indian armed force after independence.

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