

Chapter: IV

The Question of Tibet and British Strategy in the North-East Frontier

4.1: British Quest for Tibet:

The race of imperialism gained a radical momentum in the nineteenth century. The urge of dominating the less powerful states imbued with political ambition, cultural supremacy and the tendency of exhibiting military strength fastened the process of imperialism.¹ Towards the later part of the century, Asian powers like China and Japan joined the race and it ushered in a new dimension in the geo-politics of South Asia. Thus began the 'great game', a term coined by Arthur Conolly, an intelligence officer of the 6th Bengal Light Infantry and popularized by Rudyard Kipling. The term describes the strategic rivalry between Great Britain, Russia and China to establish supremacy in Asia.² In the bigger picture, the North East Frontier of India played a crucial role in the imperial power game because of the location of the region. During the late nineteenth century India shared a long boundary with Tibet, measuring up to 2000 miles.³ A major portion of this border line ran through the North-Eastern Frontier. The British Government was eager to make contact with Tibet, a country situated in the south-western frontier of China having close cultural, if not political tie with India. India, especially the provinces situated in the Himalayan foothills had regular trade relation with Tibet. The expansion of British colonial regime in India during the eighteenth century instilled a feeling of insecurity among the Tibetans. Tibet adopted a policy of

¹ Parker, Geoffre *The Geopolitics of Domination*, Rotledge, New York, 1988, p. i.

² Lintner, Bertil *Great Game East*, 2015, p. 1.

³ McKay, Alex '19th century British Expansion on the Indo-Tibetan Frontier: A Forward Perspective' in *The Tibet Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Tibet and the British Raj (Winter 2003), pp. 61-76, URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43302542> Accessed: 09-06-2020 15:16 UTC.

isolation in order to prevent the wave of modernization from hampering its political and cultural traditions. It might be speculated that the Tibetans were prompted by China, the suzerain power of Tibet to close its doors to outsiders.⁴ During the Company's regime, efforts were made to establish contact with Tibet. Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of Bengal sent two missions under George Bogle and Samuel Turner in 1774-75 and 1783-84 respectively.⁵ These missions reported about possibility of commercial and political gain in Tibet. But during that time the Company was more interested in expanding colonial rule in other parts of the subcontinent. The British did not interfere in the Tibet-Nepal wars in 1788 and 1791. China assisted Tibet in fighting the wars and this helped China to tighten her hold over Tibet. As a result, Tibet closed its doors for Europeans as instigated by China. Even the Tibetan Government denied entry to Westerners with permission papers issued by China. China, in a diplomatic move, refused to take responsibility of Tibet's actions.⁶

However, the British were desperately searching for a trade route to China through Tibet. Chinese tea and opium trade were valuable for them. Moreover, the Treaty of Segauli (1816) extended British rule up to the Himalayan foothill region in Kumaon and Garhwal. Following the First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-46), the victorious British gained control in Ladakh.⁷ In the meantime, with the information collected by the surveyors, the government was able to put the North-East Frontier in its administrative map. Assam was identified as a possible commercial highway by the colonial think tank. The northern frontier of Assam, bordering Bhutan, Tibet and China

⁴ Barpujari, H.K. *Problem of the Hill Tribes North-East Frontier, 1873-1962, vol III*, Guwahati, 1981, p. 150.

⁵ McKay, Alex, 2003, *op. cit*, no. 3, p. 62.

⁶ NAI, *Military Handbook of General Information on India*, 1930, p. 113.

⁷ McKay, Alex, 2003, *op. cit*, no. 3, p. 65.

was given a special place in strategy map. The acquisition of most of the territories of the North East Frontier provided the British with several favorable locations from which efforts were made to establish contact with Tibet.

After 1870, the British radicalized their approach towards Tibet. A boarding school was established at Darjeeling, which operated with an objective ‘to train up interpreters, geographers and explorers, who may be useful if at any future time Tibet is opened to the British.’⁸ The colonial authorities tried to collect knowledge about Tibet through various methods. They tried to influence the elite section of Tibet by offering them modern weapons, articles and other British products. The British plan was to penetrate into Tibet by making a section of the Tibetan society their allies. But the closed door of Tibet could not be opened up by the British. In the meantime, a Russo-phobia concerned the British Government. Major General Charles Macgregor in his work ‘Defense of India’ stated that the presence of Imperial Russia in Central Asia could be a serious threat for the defense of India.⁹ Though there was a debate among the senior military officers regarding the existence of the threat, the government did not nullify it. There were reports of increased Russian presence in Tibet towards the last decade of the nineteenth century. The progress of Imperial Russia in Central Asia was observed by the British Government with uneasiness and with fear. The government opined that the local merchants and travelers could be used to gather information about the nature of Russian influence in Tibet.¹⁰ The officers who supported an aggressive policy used this constructed Russo-phobia to initiate British expansion in Tibet. The British perception was that Russia was planning to extend its political influence over

⁸ NAI, FD-S, A.W.Croft to A.C. Lyall, Foreign Department, Simla, 18 April 1879, January 1882, nos. 722-25.

⁹ McKay, Alex, 2003, *op. cit*, no. 3, p. 71.

¹⁰ NAI, FD, June 1866, Nos. 191-193.

Lhasa and gradually they would try to destabilize the political supremacy of the British in the Indo-Tibetan frontier areas.¹¹ It was rumored that the Russians were manufacturing guns in Lhasa to arm the Tibetan army.¹² Viceroy Curzon took this as an opportunity to open Tibet for the British and in 1903 he proposed to send a mission to Tibet with an armed force. The Home Government approved the proposed mission and Younghusband led the mission in 1904. By August, 1904, the Younghusband Mission reached Lhasa, overcoming the stiff resistance of the Tibetans. This was not an annexationist expedition, and hence, the Tibetan Government was asked to sign rather a commercial treaty with the British. According to the Anglo-Tibetan Treaty of 1904, the Tibetans agreed to open three trade marts at Gyantse, Gartok and Yatung.¹³ The British traders were given access to conduct trade in these marts. Further, the Tibetans agreed to pay an indemnity of INR 2.5 millions to the British and till the payment of the indemnity, they allowed the British to occupy the Chumbi Valley on a temporary basis for three years.¹⁴ Curzon finally was successful in opening Tibet after a century old effort.

The Younghusband Mission displayed the failure of British strategy in the Himalayas as it antagonized China, which had far reaching consequences. It secured only some trade rights for the British. But China considered the actions of the British as a step towards annexation of Tibet. Therefore, in June, 1906, China signed a treaty with England, according to which England agreed neither to invade nor annex Tibet and not to interfere in Tibet's internal affairs in the future. China, in return promised to keep any

¹¹ NAI, FSP, *Captain Bower's Report on Russian Intrigues in Tibet*, August, 1895, No. 246.

¹² NAI, FDP, July, 1904, Nos. 258-387.

¹³ Majumdar, R. Raychaudhuri H. C. & Datta K. *An Advanced History of India*, New Delhi, 2009, p. 896.

¹⁴ McKay, Alex 'The British Invasion of Tibet, 1903-04' in *Inner Asia*, 2012, Vol. 14, No. 1, Special Issue: *The Younghusband 'Mission' to Tibet* (2012), pp. 5-25, URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/24572145>
Accessed: 07-07-2020 15:10 UTC.

other foreign power away from Tibet's internal matters and not to allow any foreign power to harm the territorial integrity of Tibet. China agreed to pay the indemnity imposed on Tibet and on payment of the amount the British evacuated the Chumbi Valley. The British rapidly gave up whatever success was achieved by the Younghusband Mission. Showing further hypocrisy, England accepted China's overlordship in Tibet in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. In this Agreement England and Russia acknowledged Chinese suzerainty and agreed to carry on political relations with Tibet through China.¹⁵ But China was skeptical about Tibet's attitude and the increasing presence of European traders in Tibet increased China's doubt. Since 1905, China continued to tighten her grip over Tibet. A new Imperial Commissioner was appointed by China in Tibet. General Zhao Erh-feng, the new Commissioner was a man of radical ideas. He established direct administrative control over in eastern Tibet. In 1910, his army invaded Lhasa in order to bring the whole country under Chinese occupation. The Dalai Lama was forced to flee to India. Lien-yu, the Chinese Amban (Chinese official at Lhasa) took charge of the Tibetan Government. China wanted to merge the 'five colours, i.e., China, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan.'¹⁶ From Tibet, China planned to encroach into India through the North East Frontier as there was no proper boundary line between India and Tibet. This act of aggression by the Chinese called for a reappraisal of the British strategy in the North East Frontier as well.

¹⁵ Anand Dibyesh 'Strategic Hypocrisy: The British Imperial Scripting of Tibet's Geopolitical Identity' in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (Feb., 2009), pp. 227-252, URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20619680> Accessed: 16-06-2020 15:19 UTC.

¹⁶ Barpujari, H.K. 1981 *op. cit*, no. 4, p. 153.

4.2: Linking the North-East Frontier with Tibet:

The North-East Frontier of India became a key asset for the British amidst the Great Game concerning Tibet. George Bogle in 1774 reported about the possibilities of establishing a trade route connecting Assam, Burma and Tibet. Sajal Nag observes that during the eighteenth century, the British colonial policy in was targeting the inland trade routes of Assam to link the Company's trade with Tibet.¹⁷ After 1826 the British policy in the region was aimed at protecting Assam, especially the Brahmaputra Valley. Most of the military operations conducted against the hill communities were the results of the 'depredation' of the respective communities on the plain regions. The government wanted to protect the plain territories and maintain control over the hills at the same time. However, efforts were taken then and now to access Tibet from the North East. It was found that Tibetan merchants regularly visited the markets at Sadiya in the eastern frontier and the markets in Udalguri in lower Assam since the eighteenth century.¹⁸ The Dafla, Mishimi and Aka communities exchanged different item with Tibetans. While the colonial government was dealing with the communities on the southern side of the North-East Frontier, efforts were made continuously to find a way to Tibet through the northern hills. Different expeditions, small or big, in the northern tract, were accompanied by surveyors. In times of peace, civil officers undertook tours in the hills inhabited by different communities and learnt their language and customs. The buffer zone the British created after 1826 was transformed into a highly profitable asset of the British Empire. Therefore, new buffer zone was needed to protect the North East Frontier from China and Russia.

¹⁷ Nag, Sajal *Roots of Ethnic Conflict: Nationality Question in North-East India*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 34.

¹⁸ Woodman, Dorothy *Himalayan Frontiers*, London, 1969, p. 112.

Tibet was important in the imperial game due to Tibet's location and Tibetan gold, which could be procured in a comparatively cheap rate. Strategically, any power that wanted to dominate Asia would prefer Tibet under its suzerainty. The British with a stable empire in India kept pressurizing China for commercial gain. In the Far East, trade with China became crucial for the British. The ports of China were not exclusively availed by them.¹⁹ Therefore, the British saw the North-East Frontier as a road to reach China by land. The decisive edge for the British was their capability to control the routes that passed through the 'tribal territories' of the northern tract of the North-East Frontier. Consciously or unconsciously, the British policies in the region were designed keeping the Tibetan factor in mind.²⁰ In the nineteenth century, many military expeditions were sent in the southern hills of Assam, but significantly less numbers of military operations were carried in the northern frontier. Because, the northern hills were bordering Tibet, and constant military actions there might instill a feeling of insecurity among the Tibetans. Therefore, the hill communities of present day Arunachal Pradesh were dealt with cautiously.

The region comprising the northern and north-eastern tracts of the North East Frontier of India had tremendous value for the colonial regime. Dorothy Woodman termed this region as the Assam Himalayas.²¹ The hills on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra (the present day state of Arunachal Pradesh) were inhabited by several communities, the most important ones being the Akas, Daflas, Mishings, Mishimis and Abors. These hills had little economic importance for the British. But from military point of view, the region acted as a shield for the British Empire in India due to the

¹⁹ Goswami, Priyam *Assam in the Nineteenth Century: Industrialization and Colonial Penetration*, Guwahati, 1999, p. 9.

²⁰ Bell, Charles *Tibet Past and Present*, London, 2000, p. 59.

²¹ Woodman, Dorothy, 1969, *op. cit*, no. 18, p. 108.

abundance of dense jungles and steep mountains. The region was surrounded by four foreign countries- China, Burma, Tibet and Bhutan. The Company completed the process of annexation of the erstwhile Ahom kingdom in 1838, with Upper Assam being brought under the Company's dominion. There were occasional 'depredations' and 'disturbances' from the hill communities and the government was less bothered about them. To stop the raids and protect the British subjects of the Brahmaputra Valley, the colonial regime followed a policy of conciliation towards the hill communities. The reasons that prevented the British from annexing the hills were manifold. The colonial authorities lacked proper knowledge about the strength of the hill communities and the economic potentiality of the hills was yet to be assessed. Therefore the system of the Ahom monarchs, i.e., the *posa* system was continued by the British.²² However, the establishment of the military headquarter at Biswanath indicated that the British wanted to keep a close eye on the hill communities. They were intimated to enter in formal agreement with the British Government in order to avail the *posa*. Apart from that, the government decided to pay the *posa* in cash, not in kind like the earlier arrangement.²³ During the times of 'disturbance' from the hill dwellers, the local government imposed economic blockades, in order to break the defiance of the concerned hill community. Small expeditions were sanctioned only when the blockades failed to settle disputes.²⁴ But until the last decade of the nineteenth century, no major military engagements took place in the northern hills.

²² Chakraverty, Archana 'British Policy towards Some Important Hill Tribes of North East Frontier Agency during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century' in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 50, Golden Jubilee Session (1989)*, pp. 406-413, URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44146073> Accessed: 08-06-2020 14:43 UTC.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 412.

²⁴ Gait, Edwards, *A History of Assam*, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 372-375.

While the British regime was strengthening the north-eastern border and annexing the southern kingdoms and principalities, attention was also given to establish a trade route with Tibet. The opening of China to westerners made it difficult for the British to maintain their trade privileges in China. At a time when the British were the sole ruler of India, the strategy makers found it convenient to approach China through land, more specifically via Tibet. It has been mentioned that Warren Hastings made an effort in the eighteenth century itself. In the meantime the discovery of tea and beginning of tea plantation on the north bank of the Brahmaputra required a review in the policy towards the hill communities. The shift in policy was visible with the promulgation of the Inner Line Regulations in 1873. On the basis of the Regulation, the Inner Line was drawn on the northern frontiers of Darrang and Lakhimpur districts.²⁵ The Line System was a policy of securing the directly administered territories by the British. The plain areas were marked within the Inner Line and the administrative officers were initially instructed to not to let any Europeans to cross the Line without permission. The territory beyond the Inner Line was demarcated with a separate line called the Outer Line, which signified the territorial limit of the British territories. The Outer Line was drawn up to the Burai River and Nizamghat.²⁶ The communities living in the territory between the Inner and Outer Lines were considered to be British subjects. Beyond the Outer Line, there was no authority of the British nor did they intervene in those areas. However, the Inner and Outer Lines did not define the boundary of the colonial territories; they only signified the extent of jurisdiction of the frontier officers. Despite the repetitive requests of local officers, the British

²⁵ Barpujari, H.K. 1981, *op. cit*, no. 4, p. 117.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 118.

Governments avoided the responsibility of directly administering the hill communities inhabiting the territories between the Inner and Outer Lines.

The British authorities made several attempts to find a secured route connecting Tibet with Assam. However, it was difficult for the survey parties to go deep into the territories of the hill communities. The Mishimis and Abors, who had trade connections with Tibet, were not willing to help colonial surveyors as that might result in their loss of monopoly in trade with Tibet.²⁷ During the Company regime, missionaries were approached to find a way that could connect Assam and Tibet. In 1835, Francis Jenkins invited the American Baptist Mission, working in Burma at that time to preach the gospel in the North-Eastern Frontier. The colonial government wanted to use the missionaries to pacify the unruly communities. On the other hand, the missionaries found Assam to be the centre for evangelical expansion in the Indian subcontinent. After the First Opium War (1839-42), the missionaries found it convenient to reach China through her western front.²⁸ This means the North East Frontier was their gateway to China. On the other hand the British Government used the indigenous communities to collect information regarding Tibet. In 1869, the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur District sent a group of Khamti and Mishimi men under Chowsam Gohain, a Khamti chief to Tibet. They were denied entry to Tibet; however the party was able to collect information about the trade route and the nature of the trade relation

²⁷ Dzuvichu, Lipokmar 'Colonial Routes and the Evangelical Imaginings of the 'Celestial Highway' in the Early Nineteenth Century Northeast Frontier' in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 66 (2005-2006), pp. 891-898, URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44145902> Accessed: 09-06-2020 15:18 UTC.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 895.

between Tibet and China.²⁹ While the missionaries and the amateur surveyors continued their quest to find a route to Tibet through the Assam Himalayas, local officers of the British Government were also engaged in the quest from time to time. J. F. Needham, the Assistant Political Officer of Sadiya extensively travelled the Abor Hills and tried to establish good relation with the Abors. In 1885 he travelled up to Rima and extensively surveyed the Hukawng Valley in the Indo-Burma border.³⁰ However, the events of 1893-94 (the Abor Expedition) foiled his endeavors. His successor Noel Williamson, the Assistant Political Officer of Sadiya, in an attempt to find a route to Tibet, reached up to Rima. He continued his tour and in 1908 he went beyond the Outer Line and reached Keboang without any hindrance. One of the tactics adopted by Williamson in his tour was distributing opium to the Abors and Mishimis inhabiting the hills. The hill people, if not all, then a section of them in return assisted him as porters and did not offer any resistance to his companions. The success of Williamson in entering deep into the Mishimi territory prompted Lancelot Hare, the Lt. Governor of East-Bengal and Assam to instruct Williamson to extensively visit the hills up to the Tibetan boundary.³¹ The objectives of the tour were to access the potentiality of the hills as a barrier for the plain areas of India and to gather information about the attitude of the hill communities.³² It was a crucial time for the security of the British Indian Empire in general and the North-East Frontier in particular. China was repeatedly defying the Indo-Tibetan border and encroached upon the northern hills. Williamson found no difficulty in his earlier tours and found the hill communities friendly towards the British. The

²⁹ Gregory, J. 'Account of an Attempt by a native Envoy to Reach the Catholic Missionaries of Tibet' in *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, vol. 14 no. 3, 1869, pp. 214-219 URL <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1799051>, accessed: 26-09-2020 14:02 UTC.

³⁰ Barpujari, H.K. (ed) *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. IV, Guwahati, 2007, p. 250.

³¹ NAI, FE-A, 1909, September, no. 299.

³² Bell, Charles, 2000, *op. cit.*, no. 20, p. 108.

government thought that if the British could successfully access Tibet through the North East Frontier, they could hit two birds with one stone. First, Chinese aggression on the North East would be prevented and second, trade with Tibet would be established on a firm basis.³³ For long, the colonial regime envisaged the hills on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra as a buffer zone and an appeasing policy towards the people living there was encouraged in order to maintain the buffer zone. But China foiled the long planned design by reaching up to Rima, near the Mishimi hills in 1910. They tried to construct a road connecting Tibet and Assam by employing the people of the Mishimi community.³⁴ The British strategists wanted to keep the buffer zone between Tibet and Assam free from any foreign power and efforts were made to maintain the *status quo*. Bhutan, the country bordering Assam and Tibet was given a subsidy of INR 100,000 for accepting British guidance in forming foreign policy.³⁵

In March 1911, Williamson travelled up to the Tibetan border and found that Menilkrai was taken by the Chinese army. He and his companions returned to Komsing where they were attacked by the Abors on 31 March. Williamson and forty two of his men were massacred by the Abors. The cause of this sudden aggression was the British encroachment on the traditional rights of collecting *posa* of the Abors. Colonial penetrations into their hills created a sense of insecurity in their minds and they were emboldened by the inability of the British troops during the Bordak massacre of 1894. The probability of introducing poll-tax in 1907 made the Abors more resentful towards

³³NAI, FE-S, November, 1911, No. 135.

³⁴Barpujari, H.K. (ed) 2007, *op. cit*, no. 30, p. 249.

³⁵Bell, Charles, 2000, *op. cit*, no. 20, p. 297.

the colonial regime and the government officials.³⁶ Nonetheless, the killing of the Political Officer of Sadiya certainly had consequences. The Viceroy accepted the proposal of the Lt. Governor of East-Bengal and Assam to send an expedition against the Abors.³⁷ The proposed military operation would make a paradigm shift in the British strategy in the northern hills and North-East Frontier of Assam. The massacre of Williamson coincided with the growing Chinese aggression in the region. It was reported that the Chinese reached up to the Khamti territory in Burma, bordering India. Till now, the government tried to defend India by maintaining a safe distance from the buffer zone. But the proposed expedition was hoped to open the path for the British to extensively survey the territories inhabited by the hill communities. Ultimately, the British Government's motive was to find a suitable boundary line between India and Tibet. Viceroy Lord Hardinge communicated with Henry McMahon, the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India that this (the proposed expedition) would be an opportunity for collecting information for determining a suitable boundary between India and China. McMahon agreed and opined that if the process of demarcating the boundary line delayed, it would require more men power and money to explore the hills later.³⁸

4.3: Groundwork for the Boundary Line:

In his letter to the Secretary of State, dated 29 June, 1911, Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy pointed out the necessity of an expedition to establish full control over the

³⁶ Jacob, Cheryl Reshma *The Abor Expeditions of 1893-94 and 1911-12: Explorations in Identity, Mapping and Politics in the North-East Frontier of British India*, Unpublished PhD thesis, Ambedkar University, New Delhi. 2016 p. 140.

³⁷ NAI, FSE, Viceroy to Secretary of State, 29th June, 1911, August, Nos. 5-17.

³⁸ Nayak, P.K. 'British Strategy and McMahon Line: Arunachal A Means' in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 68, Part One (2007), pp. 553-564, URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44147865> Accessed: 09-06-2020 15:12 UTC.

Abors. He further pointed out that the expedition would help ‘in preventing Chinese intrigues within our limits and keeping her as far as possible from our present administrative area.’³⁹ The British Government had a grand plan for that, as a mission was planned to be sent to the Mishimi territory in order to prevent them from assisting China in any way and to demonstrate that the British could easily punish or reward them according to their behavior. This meant that the British wanted to intimidate the communities to stop them from helping the Chinese. The Secretary of State advised the Viceroy to demarcate a frontier between India and Tibet and to assure the hill communities of British protection from the Chinese. Hardinge was determined to expand the Outer Line towards Tibet and to establish a strong boundary line. In regards of the policy towards the hill communities, he favored a policy of maintaining nominal political control and to restrict them from violating the Tibetan boundary and the Inner Line. The Viceroy concurred that some measures should be taken after the expedition to inform the Chinese Government about the limits of the British Indian Empire in that front. He proposed the establishment of military outpost in the territories within the Outer Line for that purpose. However, the British Foreign Office was of the view that an expedition into a territory beyond British political control could provoke the Chinese; therefore it was advised not to formally inform China about the boundary of India without reviewing the results of the expedition.⁴⁰ Unlike the previous expeditions carried out in the North-East Frontier, the Abor Expedition of 1911-1912 drew much attention of the British Government, as it could provide the basis on which the external limits of the British Indian Empire in the North-Eastern Frontier would be determined; or the Expedition could lead to a standoff against China. Moreover the British Home

³⁹ Barpujari, H.K. 1981, *op. cit*, no. 4, p. 170.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 171.

Government used the situation as an opportunity to fix a boundary with Tibet and China. The officers accompanying the Expedition and the survey parties were instructed through a General Staff memorandum to find a suitable natural frontier, like a mountain chain. They were also advised to follow the principle of watersheds in determining a frontier and to include the tributaries of the lower Brahmaputra, Irrawaddy and Lohit rivers in India's side of the frontier.⁴¹

The Expedition was planned carefully and it decided that it would be a joint operation of the army and the police forces. The infantry regiment was comprised of the Gurkha Regiment and the 32 Sikh Pioneers and the artillery unit was raised with a company of the Bengal Sappers and Miners.⁴² The Police force included the Naga and Lushai Hills Police Force, Lakhmipur and Dacca Military Police Battalions. Major General H. Bower led the Expedition as the Commanding Officer.⁴³ The Expedition had the objective of punishing the Abors for the massacre of Williamson and his companions. Bower was also ordered to survey the Abor territory to the possible extent and to prepare a report to fix a suitable boundary between the British Indian Empire and Tibet. The Expedition began on 28 October, 1911 and the military actions continued up to December. The expeditionary force faced little resistance and the Abors were defeated without much casualty on the British side. The Meyong clan of the Abors, the actual perpetrators of the massacre, surrendered before the British force. But difficulties in accessing the terrain and unbearable climate of the hills prevented Bower from surveying and examining the boundary with Tibet. Nonetheless, some of the hitherto unexplored areas of the Abor Hills were surveyed. A.H.W. Bentinck, the Deputy

⁴¹ Woodman, Dorothy, 1969, *op.cit*, no.18, pp. 146-147.

⁴² Sappers and Miners were military engineers of the Artillery regiments of the British Army. Their function was to demolish opponent's fortifications using trenches.

⁴³ Barpujari, H.K. (ed) 2007, *op. cit*, no. 30, p. 253.

Commissioner of Lakhimpur who accompanied the Expedition, explored several Abor villages till January, 1912. He met the village headmen and subverted them to be loyal to the British Government and offered them trade privileges in the plains.⁴⁴ That was a colonial maneuver of making alliance with the Abors.

The partial success in surveying the Abor hills by the Abor expeditionary force was not enough for the British Government. Knowledge about the region was a necessity at that time for framing further strategy. Therefore, a simultaneous mission was dispatched towards the territory between Bhutan and the Dihong River inhabited by the Hill Miris. The mission, led by G.C. Kerwood, the Sub-Divisional Officer of Lakhimpur had the task of befriending the Hill Miris and gather knowledge about the territory up to the Tibetan boundary.⁴⁵ The report of the mission was expected to help in demarcating a frontier between India and Tibet. The mission explored about 1400 square miles up to the plateau inhabited by the Apatanis. He noticed the availability of Tibetan arms, beads and bell metal utensils in almost every village and reported about the prevailing Tibetan influence in the region.⁴⁶ The Abor Expedition was accompanied by W.C.M. Dundas as the Assistant Political Officer. After the military actions were over, he was ordered to visit the Mishimi territory with the objective of extending colonial influence over the community and to find a scientific frontier with the neighboring countries. The Mishimi hills was already encroached by the Chinese and therefore Dundas was advised to be passive if he encountered the Chinese.⁴⁷ Dundas decided to complete the mission from two fronts. He took the route by the Lohit Valley and Captain F.M. Bailey marched through the Dihong Valley, along the Sesseri River.

⁴⁴ Barpujari, H.K., 1981, *op. cit*, no.4, p. 174.

⁴⁵ NAI, FSE, Miri Mission, November, 1912, nos. 599-690.

⁴⁶ Nayak, P.K., 2007, *op. cit*, no. 38. pp. 553-564.

⁴⁷ NAI, FSE, May, 1912, nos. 201-337.

Bailey discovered a route to Tibet along the Dihong River and scouted a Tibetan village named Alenpo and reported of sighting hundreds of Chinese soldiers in the village. On the other hand, Dundas reached up to Menilkrai where China set up a flag in 1910. Both Dundas and Bailey observed that the Mishimis were friendly towards the British and they expected British protection from the Chinese soldiers.⁴⁸ Dundas reported the need of a road through the Mishimi territory for the swift movement of the British troops in order to counter the aggressive design of the Chinese. He further recommended the establishment of a military outpost at Walong to monitor the movement of China in the frontier.⁴⁹

Based on the reports of these investigative missions, C.S. Bailey, the Lt. Governor of Eastern-Bengal and Assam, opined that the hills should be brought under British political control. He further observed that it would be difficult to maintain control in the hills from a post in the plains.⁵⁰ Generally after any expedition in the hills, the British troops would be called back, leaving the hill communities on their own. This was misjudged by the communities and whatever result was achieved by the expedition vanished rapidly. The absence of colonial troops in the hills possibly encouraged China to encroach upon the buffer zone. Therefore, the Government of India initially proposed to establish a post under a Political Officer at Rotung in the Abor hills. In fact, it was proposed that there would be another two posts at Kobo and Menilkrai respectively.⁵¹ But the Secretary of State declined the proposal on the ground that the creation of posts would increase expenditure and responsibility. He did not want to expand political dominion beyond the Inner Line. However, the Chief Commissioner of Assam

⁴⁸ NAI, FE-B, May, 1912, No. 545.

⁴⁹ Barpujari, H.K., 1981, *op. cit*, no.4, p. 178.

⁵⁰ NAI, FSE, Secretary, Eastern Bengal and Assam to Secretary, Government of India, 22 February, 1912.

⁵¹ *Ibid*.

convinced the Secretary of State by informing him about the strategic importance of the hills. The Chief Commissioner observed

‘The Mishimi Mountains impose a screen behind which progress of the policy and movement of the Chinese near our vulnerable northeast salient cannot be observed from within our administrative border and it is imperative that we should be able to watch this progress.’⁵²

The Government of India feared that if there was no presence of British in the hills, it would be difficult to negotiate with China in case of further Chinese encroachment. China might misjudge that the British had no authority over the hills and that could further encourage China to extend her frontier towards India. The Secretary of State was convinced and he accepted the proposal of maintaining British troops at Pasighat, Kobo and Balek.⁵³ But the post at Rotung was sanctioned as a trade post as it was situated on the bank of the Brahmaputra and it was navigable easily.⁵⁴ The policy of establishing a trade post in the Abor hills was another colonial maneuver of assuring the communities of equal trade rights with the plains in order to prevent further disturbance. On the basis of the reports of these survey missions, the government decided to establish political control over the hills beyond the Inner Line. In October, 1912, the north-eastern hill territories of Assam were divided into three administrative divisions. The region east to the Subansiri and Siyom was formed as the Eastern or Mishimi-Khamti Section with headquarters at Sadiya. The Eastern Section was to be administered by a Political Officer. The Abor hills to the west of the Subansiri, now termed as the Central Section was placed under Captain G.A. Nevill as the in-charge of

⁵² NAI, FSE, 1912; November, No. 619.

⁵³ NAI, FSE, 1912, 16 October, No. 684.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

the trade post at Rotung. The Western Section incorporated the territories of the Akas, Daflas and Hill Miris and it was also put under Nevill as the Assistant Political Officer.⁵⁵ These administrative divisions laid the foundations of the North East Frontier Agency.⁵⁶

However, the Lt Governor of Eastern-Bengal and Assam emphasized on surveying the territories under the Western Section before extending political control in the region. Darrang and North Lakhimpur subdivision were troubled by the raids from the frontier communities inhabiting the Western Section. Nevill wanted to survey the hills bordering Darrang and North Lakhimpur before exercising political control in the Western Section.⁵⁷ In the meantime the military department drew the attention of the government towards Tawang, a territory between Bhutan and the Aka territory and termed it a “dangerous wedge of the territory.”⁵⁸ Tawang was divided by the Sela range, Tawang proper to the north of Sela and the southern region up to the villages of Rupa and Shergaon, thirty miles away from Udalguri. Since the establishment of the Tibetan monastery in the seventeenth century, Tawang proper was considered to be an integral part of the Tibetan district of Tsona. The Tawang monastery was controlled by the Drepung monastery of Lhasa. The district governors of Tsona used to spend their winter at Tawang. Tibetan merchants visited Tawang and then reached up to Udalguri in Assam to exchange wool, silver and gold dust with rice. The British administration started an annual fair at Udalguri to attract Tibetan merchants.⁵⁹ The Chief of the

⁵⁵ Reid, Robert *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam, from 1883-1941*, 1997, pp. 248-249.

⁵⁶ Nayak, P.K., 2007, *op. cit.*, no. 38, pp. 553-564.

⁵⁷ NAI, FSE, 1913, September, Nos. 261-337.

⁵⁸ NAI, FSE, 1914, February, No. 317.

⁵⁹ Nyman, Lars-Erik ‘Tawang—A Case Study of British Frontier Policy in the Himalayas’ in *Journal of Asian History*, 1976, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1976), p. 153, URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/41930219> Accessed: 20-06-2020, 11:32 UTC.

General Staff observed that Tawang might be used by the Chinese to establish influence over Bhutan. He further pointed out that a suitable boundary must be drawn in the neighborhood of Tawang. These inputs from the military department prompted the government to survey the region before taking any decision.⁶⁰ Accordingly, Nevill's proposal of visiting the Western Section was approved by the Foreign Department and he was instructed to visit and gather information from the territories inhabited by the Akas, Mijis and other communities in the Western Section. Most importantly he was ordered to observe the route to Tawang. Nevill was also given instruction to find ways of improving trade with the region and he would have to report the nature and extent of Tibetan influence in Tawang.⁶¹ Starting in December 1913, Nevill surveyed an area over four thousand square miles inhabited by the Akas, Mijos and Daflas. From his meetings with the heads of several clans of these communities, he understood that if the material condition of these communities could be improved by the British, they would remain loyal.⁶² He suggested the establishment of a well guarded trade post. He further suggested that a medical facility in the form of a dispensary could be established in the Aka territory. This, he believed, would help in extending colonial influence among the communities. Nevill understood that if the British take step like introduction of improved agriculture for the material improvement of the communities, political control in the hills could be achieved easily.⁶³

In April 1914, Nevill reached Tawang after crossing the Sela range. He found Tawang to be a magnificent valley to the north of the Sela range. He communicated with the Monpas, the community living in the region surrounding Tawang. They

⁶⁰ Nyman, Lars-Erik , 1976, *op.cit*, no. 59, p. 161.

⁶¹ NAI, FSE-B, 1914, January, Nos. 84-92.

⁶² NAI, FPE-B Proceedings, May, 1914, Nos. 84-92.

⁶³ Barpujari, H.K., 1981, *op. cit*, no. 4, p. 189.

differed from the other communities of Assam Himalaya in terms of culture and language. They were constantly disturbed by the raids of the Akas and the other hill communities. Regarding the extent of Tibetan influence, he observed that up to the border of Assam, Tawang was controlled by the monks. All the villages had to pay a tax to the monastery and for the Monpas, the taxation became a burden. The monks on the other hand remained faithful to the Drepang Monastery of Lhasa. Nevill speculated that the Tawang monastery would not give up its right over the territory without any opposition. He suggested to avoid any military action and to compensate the monastery of its losses once the government assumed political control of the hills.⁶⁴ Regarding the ‘raids’ of the hill communities, he firmly advised to take measures to stop these ‘raids’ and opined that a number of police out posts would be enough for that purpose. Endless ‘raids’ of other communities and the excessive taxation imposed by the Tawang monastery led the Monpas to poverty. Neville met their headmen and realized that they could be convinced to come under British administration. He foresaw that if the Monpas would be given protection, they could help yielding good amount of revenue from the fertile valley of Tawang.⁶⁵ He reported that it was the ‘psychological moment’ for the British, as almost every community he met was favorable to the British and hence the time was suitable for establishing colonial control over the hills.⁶⁶

However, the hill people were not naturally friendly towards the British. They were ever skeptical about the presence of colonial people in their homelands. But under the circumstance of getting caught between two giants, the British in one side and the Chinese in another, they preferred the former. The Monpas especially were

⁶⁴ NAI, FSE, Nevill to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, 2 July, 1914, Nos. 64-66.

⁶⁵ NAI, FP, Report by Captain G.A. Nevill on the Debong Survey and Exploration Expedition, sec-E, December, 1914. Nos- 156-184.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

continuously harassed by other communities and the Tibetan monks. The prospect of security and welfare under the British attracted them. The politics of the hills was controlled by the chiefs. These chiefs were gifted with less advanced matchlocks, telescopes, medical equipments, opium etc and they were treated as important persons.⁶⁷ They began to consider the British would help to maintain their dominance over their respective communities. They assisted the British surveyors and thus the strategy of subversion helped in gaining the support of the hill people.

These explorations and surveys affirmed the long planned strategy of fixing a strict boundary of India in the Tibetan frontier. The Political Officers, who supervised these surveys and the Chief of the General Staff, concurred that the water partings of the Tsangpo and the Subansiri should be the boundary between the two countries in the Eastern Section of the north-eastern frontier of Assam. The Chief of General Staff also agreed that the Tawang tract, in the south of the Sela Pass should be the boundary in the Western Section and the watershed of the Dibong should be the boundary in the Central Section.⁶⁸ However, by the time government could introduce further administrative measures, the tide of the events was shifted by the Simla Convention.

4.4: Simla Conference and the McMahon Line:

The Simla Conference of 1914 was the outcome of the British attempt to thwart China's aggressive designs on Tibet which targeted the complete subjugation of Tibet. Tibet was temporarily saved by the outbreak of the October Revolution in 1911 and the fall of the Manchu dynasty. The Revolution resulted in the formation of the Republic of China. Chinese troops were withdrawn from most of the Tibetan territories. The Dalai

⁶⁷ McKay, Alex, 2003, *op. cit*, no. 3, p. 70.

⁶⁸ Nayak, P.K. 2007, *op. cit*, no. 38. pp. 553-564.

Lama ended his exile and returned to Lhasa in July, 1912. The Tibetan Government declared that Tibet was now an independent country.⁶⁹ The Dalai Lama entered into an agreement with Mongolia towards the end of 1912. Mongolia was a province of China, but following the Revolution it formed an autonomous regime. This action of the Dalai Lama was interpreted by the Chinese President Yuan-Shih-Kai as a step towards autonomy. Therefore he boldly claimed that the lands within Mongolia, Turkestan and Tibet were part of China and the people inhabiting those regions were citizens of China.⁷⁰ He did not stop at making statements only, as China dispatched troops to Eastern Tibet. The Republic of China seemed more determined than the Manchu imperial regime in making Tibet a part of China. If that happened, the provisions of the Anglo-Chinese Treaty of 1906 would become null and void. If China succeeded in establishing direct control over Tibet, India's security would be in danger. The British needed Tibet as a buffer zone, as a shield between China and India. The best possible way for them to prevent China was not war, but diplomacy. The British minister at Peking submitted a memorandum to the Chinese Foreign Office on 12 August, 1912, according to which the British government made it clear that without a formal discussion regarding Tibet, England would not recognize the Republic of China.⁷¹ China demanded that Tibet should also be a part of the proposed negotiation. Accordingly, in May, 1913, the British Foreign Office invited both the Chinese and Tibetan governments to a tripartite conference in India in order to settle the question of Tibet in a peaceful manner.⁷² The British government understood that China's aggressive policy in Tibet was the consequence of the Younghusband Mission.

⁶⁹ Anand, Dibyesh, 2009, *op. cit.*, no. 15, p. 240.

⁷⁰ Barpujari, H.K. 1981, *op. cit.*, no. 4, p. 191.

⁷¹ Mehra, P. *The North-Eastern Frontier A Documentary Study of the Internecine Rivalry Between India, Tibet and China*, Vol 2: 1914-54. New Delhi 1982, pp. 66-68.

⁷² Woodman, Dorothy, 1969, *op. cit.*, no.18, p. 154.

Moreover, the political scenario in Europe was already in a chaotic condition. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, there was a clear division among the European powers. Germany, Austria and Italy were forming the Triple Alliance, whereas England bought France and Russia to her side to form the Triple Entente. These alliances, though made in secret, were known to all. Under these circumstances, England did not prefer to wage any war in Asia because Russia, her secret ally, had political and economic interests in Asia. Before commencing the proposed conference with China and Tibet, England diplomatically satisfied Russia by granting her some facilities in Central Asia and Afghanistan so that Russia would not interfere in the matter.⁷³ China was intimated that the conference was to settle the issue of Tibet. But the British government's primary objective was to finalize the boundary line between India and Tibet. All the surveys in the Assam Himalayas after the Abor Expedition had already provided the ground on which the boundary would be demarcated. So the British strategy regarding the whole issue of China and Tibet was based on the legworks of the survey parties and diplomacy.

The tripartite conference was scheduled to be held in Simla. Henry McMahon, the Foreign Secretary, Government of India was selected as the Chairman of the conference and he was also to represent the British Government. He was assisted by Archibald Rose and Charles Bell, two experienced British officers. China sent Chen I-fan, also known as Ivan Chen as her delegate; whereas Tibet was represented by Lonchen Shatra, an influential minister of the country. The Simla Conference began on 13 October, 1913. McMahon did not hurry in the proceeding of the Conference because the reports of the survey parties were yet to be completed. He wanted the reports to be

⁷³ Woodman, Dorothy, 1969, *op. cit*, no.18, pp. 150-151.

finalized as the boundary line depended on those reports.⁷⁴ Lonchen Shatra lost no time in demanding Tibet's sovereignty. He further refused the terms of the Anglo-Chinese Treaty of 1906. He laid claim over a portion of China's territory. To support his claim, he presented some old records. On the other hand Ivan Chen demanded suzerainty over Tibet on the ground that Tibet had been an integral part of China since the times of Chengis Khan. However he could not produce any document apart from the records of Chao Erh-fang's conquests.⁷⁵ It was clear that both the Chinese and Tibetan delegates were keenly interested in Tibet's sovereignty, whereas the British wanted to restore Tibet to the pre 1904 condition in order to have a buffer zone between India and China. McMahon realized that Chen and Shatra would grow impatient and that would be the proper time to compel both of them to accept a compromise. Ultimately Chen and Satra requested him to propose a solution.⁷⁶

McMahon produced a draft according to which Tibet was to be divided into two zones, Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet. China would be the suzerain power of Tibet. However, China was barred from interfering in Outer Tibet, which would be autonomous. In Inner Tibet, the Tibetan Government would retain its rights, though China was allowed to appoint officials there and to station Chinese troops in Lhasa.⁷⁷ This draft was accepted by all the delegates as they put their initials in it. The draft contained the proposed boundary between India and Tibet. McMahon drew a red line on the map indicating the boundary between India and Tibet. He followed the suggestion of the military authorities in marking the boundary. Based on the reports of the surveys, the Chief of the General Staff noted that 'the line should follow some prominent

⁷⁴ NAI, FSE, October, 1914, Nos. 134-396.

⁷⁵ Nayak, P.K. 2007, *op. cit*, no. 38, pp. 553-564.

⁷⁶ Woodman, Dorothy, 1969, *op. cit*, no.18, p. 164.

⁷⁷ NAI, FSE, October, 1914, Nos, 134-396.

geographical features, preferably the main watershed of the mountain system and also that, to facilitate effective occupation...the communication up to the frontier should be such as to afford reasonable access to the line selected.’⁷⁸ McMahon’s map extended the boundary of India to the north of Walong in the Lohit Valley and in the Subansiri section the boundary line was drawn several miles north of Tawang. Both Shatra and Chen were not instructed by their respective governments about settling any issue regarding the Indo-Tibetan boundary line. Shatra raised objection about the inclusion of Tawang in Indian side of the map. But Charles Bell persuaded him to surrender Tawang. Shatra reluctantly left the decision to the Tibetan authorities at Lhasa. The Tibetan Government acknowledged the assistance of the British in the Conference and ‘for the future welfare of Tibet’, Tawang was ceded to India.⁷⁹ However in return, the Tibetan delegate expected for British aid and support in defending Tibet from Chinese aggression in future. Sir B.J. Gould, the Political Officer of Sikkim termed the transfer of Tawang to India as ‘a *quid pro quo* deal’ for the British.⁸⁰ But Peking refused to acknowledge the action of Chen although he initialed the draft and refused to accept the division of Tibet.⁸¹ The Chinese Government stood firm in their demand of suzerainty over the whole of Tibet. China’s refusal compelled McMahon to finalize the draft with some modification and signed the Convention along with the Tibetan delegate on 3 July, 1914.⁸² The Chinese delegate showed no sign of disagreement towards this bilateral agreement.

⁷⁸ NAI, FSE, 1915, September Nos. 76-101.

⁷⁹ Nyman, Lars-Erik, 1976, *op. cit*, no. 52, p. 155.

⁸⁰ NAI, FP-S, Memorandum by Gould, 1940, nos. 26-36.

⁸¹ Barpujari, H.K., 1981, *op. cit*, no. 4, p. 205.

⁸² Nayak, P.K., 2007, *op. cit*, no. 38, pp. 553-564.

The Convention signed by Lonchen Shatra and Henry McMahon finalized the boundary line between India and Tibet along the North-Eastern Frontier. The 890 kilometers long boundary line, known as the McMahon Line, brought an end to the British efforts of stabilizing a boundary in the North-Eastern Frontier. From the junction between India, Tibet and Bhutan, the line covered the territories up to the junction of India, Tibet and Burma. The line began at 92° 40' E, 27° 18' N, on the east of Bhutan and after crossing the Namjang River, it followed the eastern range of the Himalayas towards the east. After crossing the Subansiri and Tsari rivers to the south of Migyitun, the Line followed a north-eastern direction to cross the Tunga Pass. Thereafter it ran across the Siang River and followed the watershed of the Dihong and its tributaries. The Line culminated in the tri-junction of India, Tibet and Burma after crossing the Lohit River.⁸³ Thus McMahon put an end to the British quest of a definite boundary in the northern part of the North-Eastern Frontier. Though the Simla Conference failed to achieve a unanimous solution in the issue of Sino-Tibetan relations, it gave a definite shape to the northern extent of the British controlled territories in the North-Eastern Frontier as desired by the Military Department. It was for the first time that the British Government in India entered into bilateral agreement with a foreign power to finalize the boundary of the Frontier. Moreover the McMahon Line was expected to put an end to the Chinese encroachment in the North-Eastern Frontier.⁸⁴

Apart from the boundary line, the British earned right of sending British representatives to Lhasa. According to the Trade Regulations signed with Tibet, the British were permitted to send trade agents accompanied by small troops to the marts of Gyantse, Yatung and Gartok and to jointly try cases of disputes between British subjects

⁸³ Nayak, P.K., 2007, *op. cit*, no. 38, p. 562.

⁸⁴ NAI, FSE, November, 1914, nos. 36-38.

and Tibetans. These marts were to be connected with Telegraph lines from the Indian frontier.⁸⁵ The inclusion of Tawang in India gave access to the British the shortest route to Tibet. McMahon compared Tibet with Mongolia. The expansionist design of the Republic of China led to a clash with Russia and Mongolia was the centre of that clash.⁸⁶ Likewise, Chinese aggression towards the North-East Frontier must be stopped by turning Tibet into a buffer zone. For that reason McMahon did not want to solve the issue of Tibet's sovereignty. Instead he manipulated the Tibetan delegate to accept the boundary line between India and Tibet. When Chen, the Chinese delegate refused to finalize the draft proposed by McMahon, he (McMahon) concluded the Convention by signing it with the Tibetan delegate. China's exit from the Conference implied that she lost the chance of establishing suzerainty over Tibet and the British considered Tibet as a sovereign country. McMahon would not have signed the Convention with Tibet if the country was under China's dominance. McMahon was backed by the British Foreign Office as the Secretary of State assured Tibet of British military and diplomatic support whenever required, but the Tibetan delegate would have to finalize the draft. Apart from Tawang, the British were not interested in territorial gain, as the mountainous region had little economic potentiality. But the British interest was to demarcate a boundary line, which was achieved through the shrewdness of McMahon. Outer Tibet ultimately became the buffer zone as desired by the British as China was barred from interfering in Outer Tibet. Russia was kept in dark about the clauses of the Convention and the beginning of the First World War, in which Great Britain and Russia were allies, ended the possibilities of Russian protests.

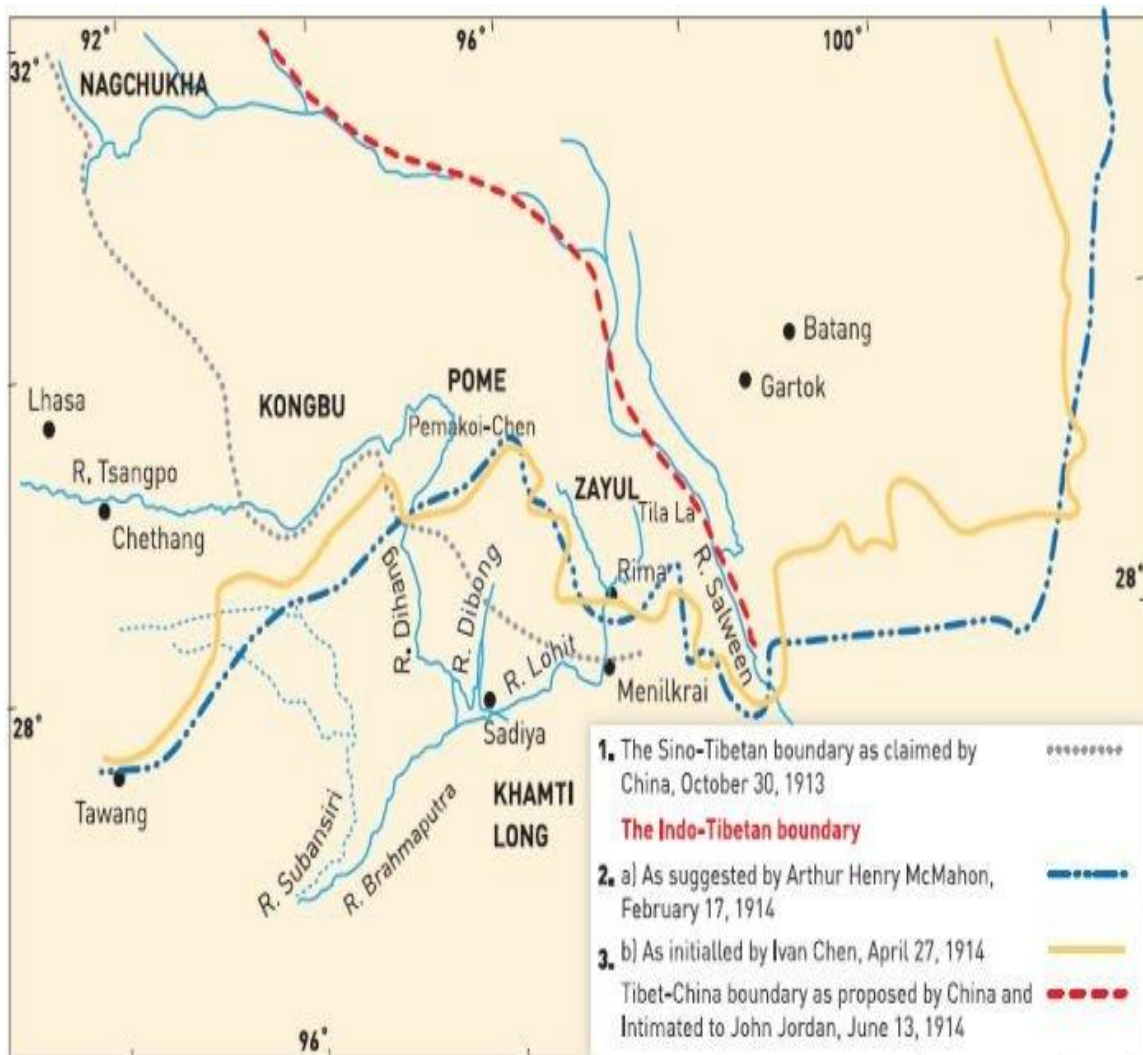
⁸⁵ Barpujari, H.K. 1981, *op. cit*, no. 4, p. 211.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 213.

However, the British Government realized that the North-East Frontier should not be left aside on the assumption that the McMahon Line would not be sufficient to defend the frontier. McMahon himself opined that the Republic of China was more expansionist and the economic forces of the country would lead her expansion in the future.⁸⁷ The British authorities desired to strengthen the Tibet frontier by establishing military posts in the areas pointed out by the survey reports. The delineation of the boundary line in the north brought the erstwhile semi-independent hill communities of present day Arunachal Pradesh under direct British rule. The administrative divisions formed after the Abor Expedition of 1911-12 and subsequent surveys were later united as the North-East Frontier Agency. However, following the Simla Conference, the events took a different tide. As the First World War began in Europe, its repercussions could be felt in India also. Bounded by the Home Government, the British Government in India temporarily left aside the matter of the North-East Frontier. The McMahon Line is still a factor in the border dispute between India and the People's Republic of China.

⁸⁷ NAI, FSE, 1914, October, No. 346.

Map: 2



Map showing the Indo-Tibetan boundary. Source: *The Frontline*, December, 2008,

URL: <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/article30198658.ece>